

William Bradford – Discussion Questions and Talking Points

From D2L Posts:

1. Leaving his child behind. Death of his wife. No emotion on his part. Another marriage; more children; many children died in childbirth.
2. Did he only care about helping the Separatists settle in a new land and start a new church, or did he only do it for the fame? He puts aside his life to focus on the group. A rebel, since he joins an “illegal” church. Interested in religion from a young age. A very strong individual. Strong beliefs in his faith.
3. Different sides to himself – courageous or brave; a leader – or a spiteful side, about the brash seaman?
4. Many references to God and the Bible.
5. Separatists = Pilgrims.
6. Writing style – run-on sentences; double consonants; different spellings.
7. His views on the Native Americans. Ignorance from the people of England. Indians are uncivilized? No religious tolerance? Are they trying to convert them (131, top)? Gives them no credit for anything. Too critical of them?
8. His references to women being too weak to travel.
9. Originally a manuscript; later published.
10. They did not end up where they were meant to arrive: Cape Cod, rather than Virginia.
11. Mentions of a reverend and a military officer; what other kinds of people did they bring on board?
12. The story of John Howland, overboard, and grabbing a rope. The way he wrote about it sounded like it was “no big deal.” Common?

Other Things:

1. His references to the Indians.
2. His references to the Land.
3. His references to his “Poor People” – why does he do this?
4. His purpose for writing.
5. He doesn’t appear often in his history. Why not? Why third person (they = Pilgrims)?
6. His reason for writing – for the group; for others back home; to justify themselves; to prove their success; to separate themselves from the Puritans.
7. Elements of Travel Literature – ocean voyage; storms; temptation to return home; outbreak of dissension; confrontation with strange peoples; struggles to survive in a hostile land.
8. Elements of Epic Literature – reviews the origins of a people; wanderings, struggles, triumphs; emphasizes the power and cruelty of enemies; emphasizes the superiority and eventual triumph of an oppressed and suffering people.
9. Pilgrims compared to the Jews – the Jews were led by Moses out of slavery in Egypt into the Promised Land (Canaan); both groups were certain they worshipped the one true God; both fled from oppression; both suffered for their religious ideals; their leaders led followers out of bondage; they believed they were a chosen people, specially favored by God; the idea of a Promised Land – i.e., New England, New Eden, New World Jerusalem.
10. Providences – divine interventions in the affairs of men; examples of God’s direction action (and intervention) in the world; general providences (the rising and setting of the sun) worked for the general good of mankind; special providences (see examples in the text) worked for the good of the elect few; self-serving interpretations of God’s providences.