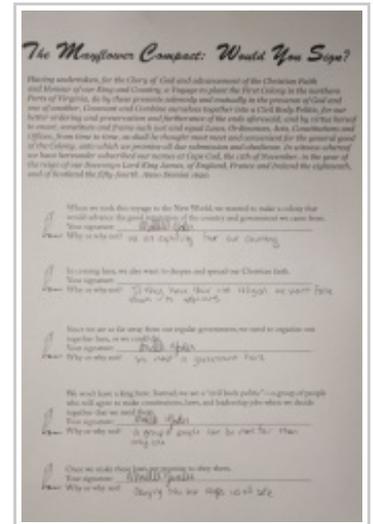


The Mayflower Compact: Would You Sign?

Imagine this: you have been crammed onto a 90 foot sailing ship with 127 other people for more than two months—66 days to be exact. This isn't any cruise ship, either. There are no bathrooms (people just wash up on deck and throw waste overboard); food is scarce and mostly stale; and since this is the open, churning Atlantic ocean, people are seasick all over the place. Finally, finally, you have reached land...but with no sign of civilization as you know it.

In other words, you're standing in the shoes of our Pilgrim ancestors.

On November 11, 1620, faced with these realities, they made a historic decision: they created the Mayflower Compact, our earliest "Constitution." Their words later inspired our Founding Fathers. But here's our challenge: what about you? Is this a document that you could sign, too?



What You Need:

- Mayflower Compact Worksheet (download here)
- Pen or pencil
- Some curious kids

What to Do:

1. Of course you can always just print out our worksheet and hand it over. But for maximum learning, we have another suggestion: try setting the scene. Read our "imagine" section above, and invite kids to picture themselves on the boat and onshore. Or, if they need a more immediate cue, ask what might happen if they were on some desert island reality show with a bunch of people. How would they make sure that everyone got along? What rules would be most important, and who would be in charge?
2. Now hand around the Mayflower Compact worksheet, and read it aloud together. Invite your kids to talk it over. What would they agree with? What would they not? Why?
3. We think you can expect a very interesting conversation—one that you and your kids remember for a long time!