

# Early Explorers and Settlers

Sir Walter Raleigh



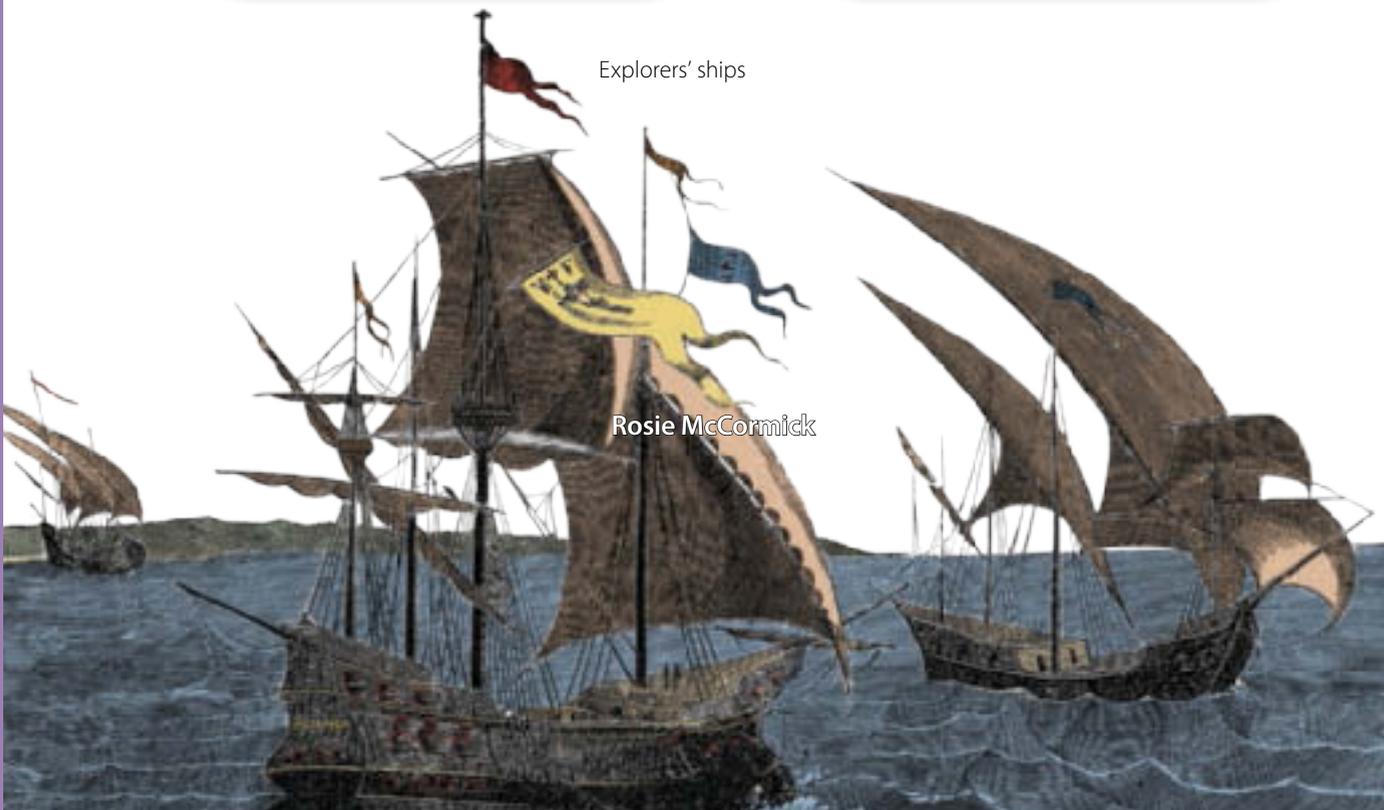
Squanto and Pilgrims



Puritan school



Explorers' ships



Rosie McCormick

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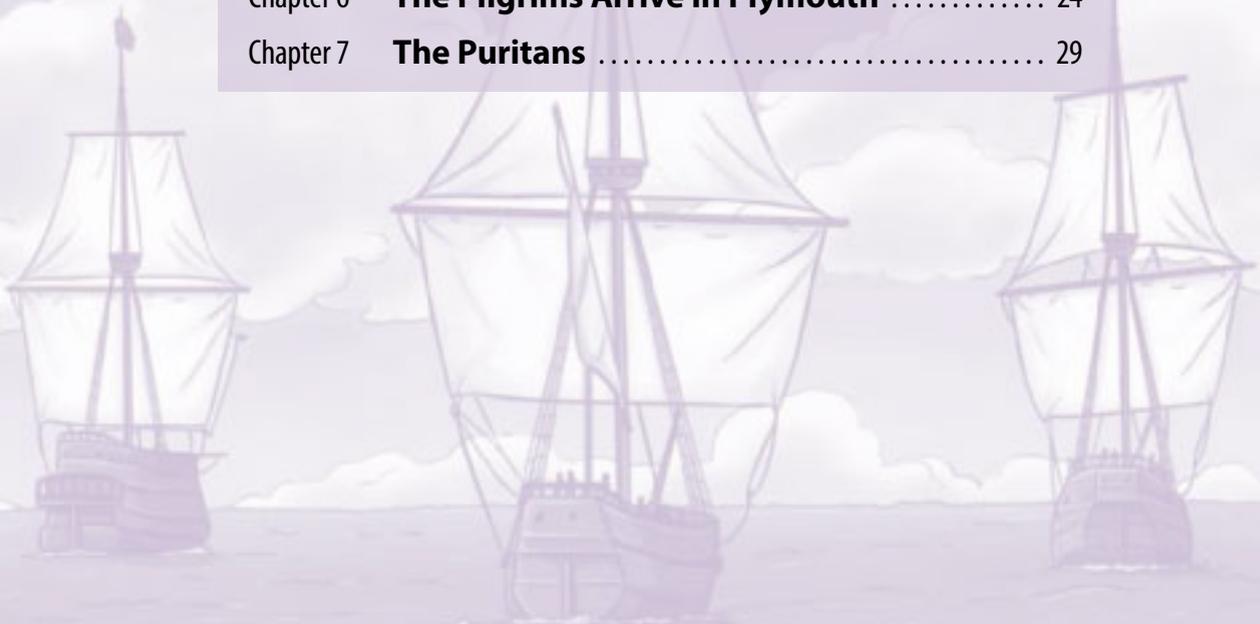
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# Early Explorers and Settlers

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# The Conquistadors

Christopher Columbus was an explorer who sailed across the Atlantic Ocean and arrived in the Americas in 1492. King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain had paid for his voyage. The fact that Christopher came upon land mostly unknown to Europeans made the king and queen happy. They hoped to find many riches in the Americas.



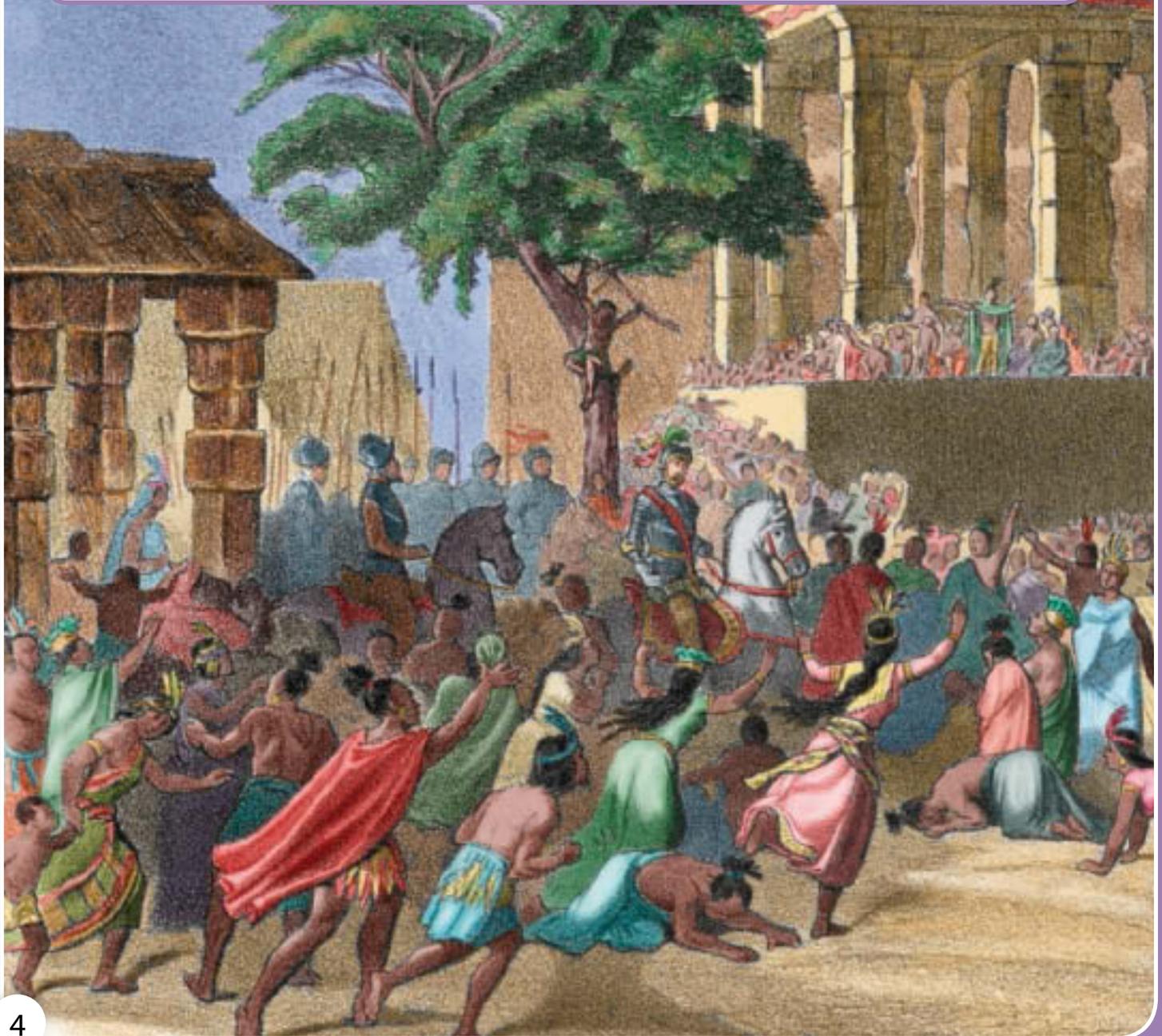
The Spanish, and the Portuguese who followed, soon discovered that some places in Central and South America, as well as in Mexico, were rich in gold and silver. People just had to dig it out of the ground. The Spanish and the Portuguese sent conquerors to take control of the land and the people. Spanish conquerors were called conquistadors.



This is what gold looks like when it is first taken out of the ground.



Hernán Cortés and Francisco Pizarro were Spanish conquistadors. They helped to make Spain rich. Hernán Cortés conquered the Aztec of Mexico and took their land. Francisco Pizarro conquered the Inca of Peru. The Spanish killed many people with their swords and guns. Some also died from diseases the Spanish brought with them, while others were forced to dig for gold and silver.



Spanish ships in particular, sailed across the Atlantic with gold and silver taken from Mexico, and Central and South America. This made some European kings and queens jealous. They wanted their countries to become rich too! And Spain and Portugal were not only searching for riches in the Americas, they were setting up colonies there also.



## Queen Elizabeth and the Lost Colony

Some of the other European countries, including England, sent their traders and fishermen to the “New World” to make money. One ruler, Queen Elizabeth of England, wanted English settlers to go there and also take land, just as the Spanish and Portuguese had done.



To do this, Queen Elizabeth needed someone brave enough to set off on a dangerous voyage to find land that could be settled on. She chose Sir Walter Raleigh.

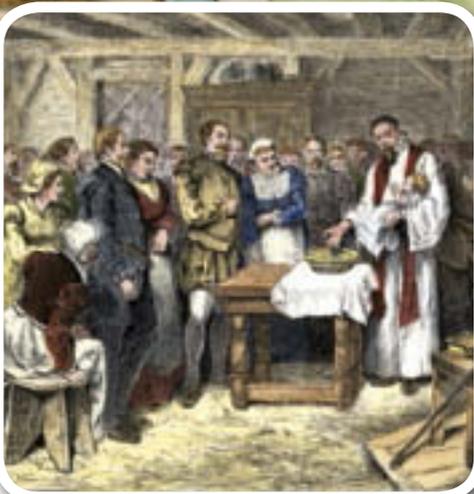
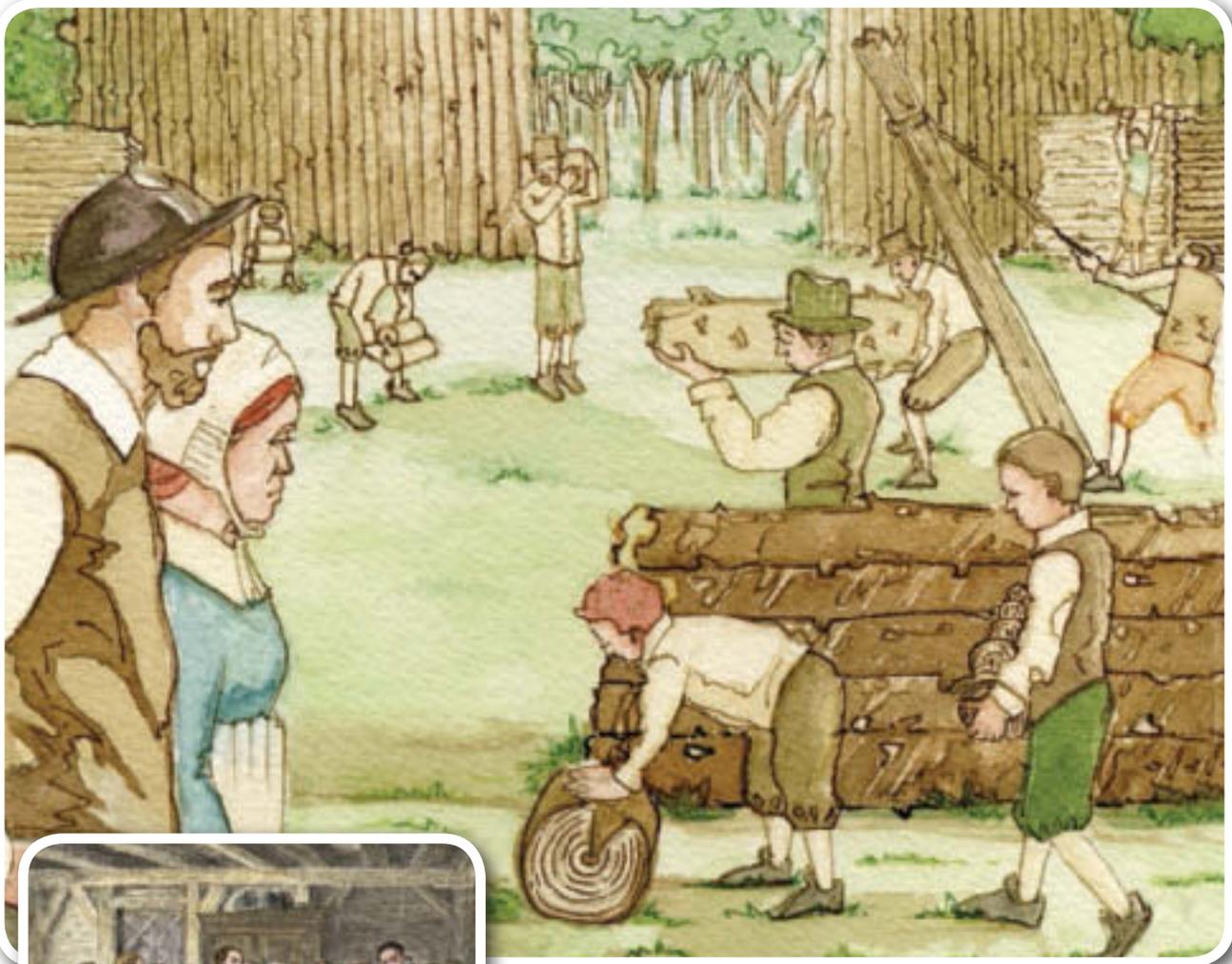


Sir Walter set sail to explore the eastern coast of North America. He needed to find the perfect place to build an English colony. Sir Walter found just the spot! When he returned, he sent a group of men to Roanoke Island, just off the coast of what is today North Carolina.



Sir Walter felt sure that they would be able to set up an English colony on this small island.

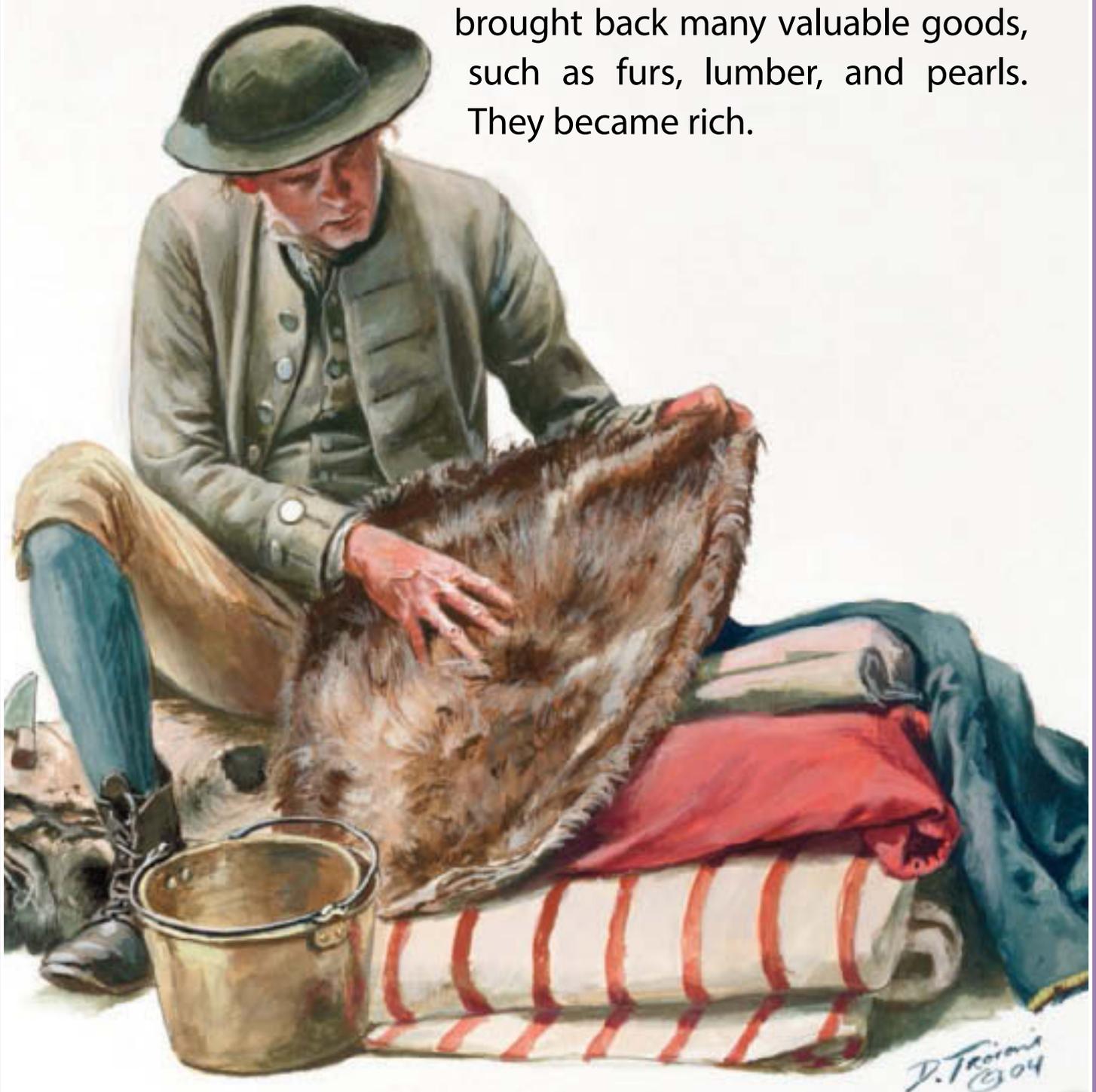
The first group of English settlers sent to Roanoke Island did not last long. Life there was too difficult, and they returned to England, leaving only fifteen men behind. Sometime later, Sir Walter sent a second group of English men, women, and children to Roanoke Island to try again. For a while, things went well.



A child, named Virginia Dare, was born there. But less than three years after they arrived, these settlers had all disappeared. No one knows for sure what happened to them.

## The English Travel to Virginia

For a while, the English did not send any more settlers to the New World, though they did continue to trade and fish there. These English traders brought back many valuable goods, such as furs, lumber, and pearls. They became rich.



Eventually, some of these traders went to the new ruler of England, King James, with a plan. They wanted to try again to set up an English colony in the New World. And they wanted to send settlers to search for gold and silver. King James agreed. The traders hurried off to find ships, supplies, and men.



Just before Christmas in 1606, three ships sailed into the Atlantic Ocean. They were named the *Susan Constant*, the *Godspeed*, and the *Discovery*. One hundred and five male passengers and thirty-nine sailors were on board. Also on board was a letter from King James telling the settlers what to do and how to behave when they arrived in the New World.



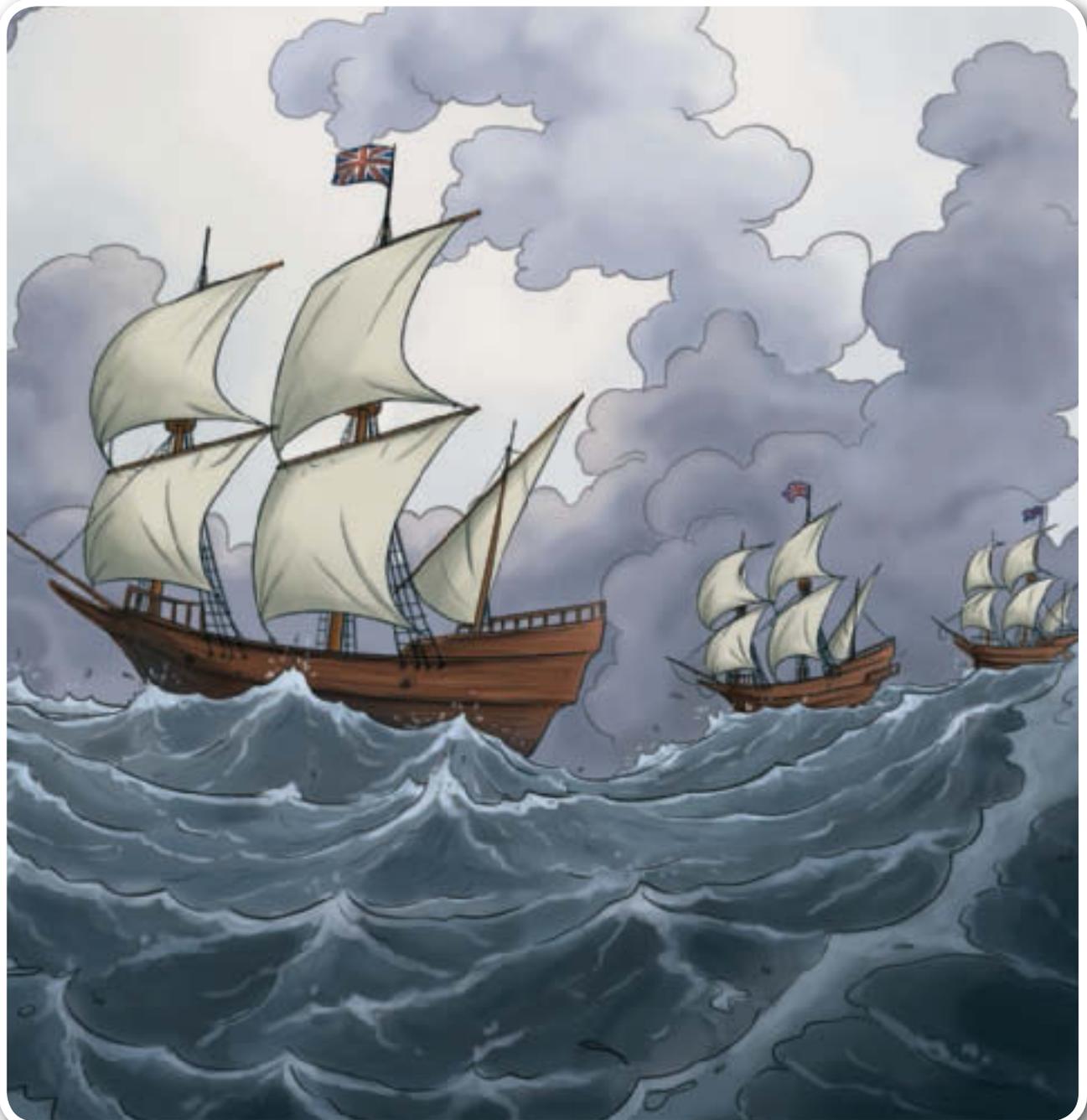
Soon after these English settlers set out, the winds died down and the sailing ships went nowhere. For six weeks, the three ships sat in the Atlantic Ocean, waiting for a wind to fill the sails and take them west.



As they waited, the settlers ate food they had planned to use in their new home. They drank the water they had brought with them. And as the weeks went by, they became sick.



Finally, strong winds did arrive. But the winds were so strong that they blew the ships in the wrong direction. Bad storms swept across the ocean, and enormous waves pounded the ships. Eventually, four months after leaving England, the three ships reached what is today Virginia.



## John Smith and the Powhatan

Shortly after arriving in Virginia, the king's letter was read out loud. The king wanted the settlers to find a good place to settle, where they would not be seen by passing Spanish ships. The land should also be near a wide, deep river.



This colony was to be named Jamestown, after King James. The settlers were to search for gold and silver as soon as they could.

A number of men had been chosen to run the colony. One of them was a young adventurer named John Smith. John Smith was a natural leader. But the other chosen leaders of the colony didn't like John Smith. He was not rich and powerful. They refused to treat such an ordinary person as an equal. Instead, they left John Smith tied up on one of the ships.



This was a big mistake. The other leaders chose swampland to settle on. The land was also bad for farming. The damp swampland was good for one thing though—mosquitoes that carried a disease called malaria. The settlers were also not near clean drinking water.



To add to their problems, the Powhatan—the Native Americans whose land the settlers had taken—were not happy that they had arrived.

Eventually, John Smith became the leader of the colony. Even though half the settlers died in the first few months, John Smith persuaded those who survived to get to work. They chopped down trees, and they built homes. A strong log wall was built around the settlement.



That first winter was very difficult for the settlers. They were all cold and very hungry. John Smith knew they would have to make peace with the Powhatan. They needed to trade with the Native Americans for food. John Smith set off to do just that.



John Smith became friends with Chief Powhatan, the leader of the Powhatan, and with his daughter Pocahontas. The Powhatan agreed to trade corn and meat for axes and blankets. The food the Powhatan gave to the settlers was enough to last them through the winter. In the spring, those who had survived were able to plant their own crops.



Pocahontas helped the settlers a lot. She encouraged her father to give the starving settlers food. And she may even have saved John Smith's life. After she married a settler by the name of John Rolfe, Pocahontas traveled all the way to England and met King James.



## Enslaved People in the Colonies

As the settlers got to know the Powhatan, they saw that they grew tobacco plants and smoked tobacco in pipes. The English settlers had not found gold, but they had found a plant that could make England rich. They realized that if they grew their own tobacco, they could ship it back to England and sell it.



Many different Native American groups smoked tobacco. They made beautifully carved tobacco pipes.



Before long, people in England were smoking lots of tobacco from Virginia. In fact, Jamestown was making so much money that the colony's farmers wanted to grow even more tobacco. To grow more tobacco, they needed more people. Some people came from England to do this hard work, but before long, there was a need for many more workers.

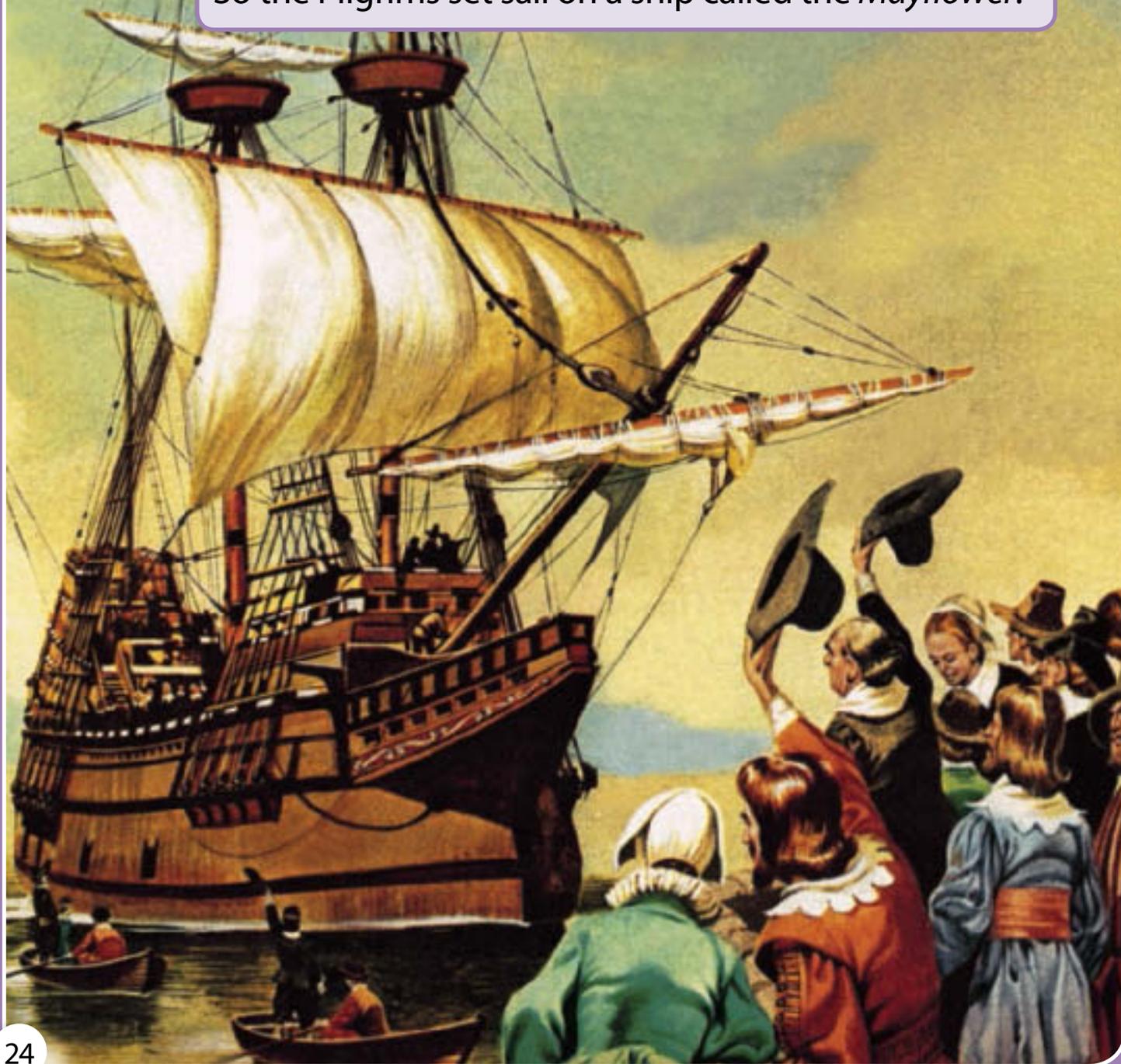


Over a period of time, people were enslaved and brought from Africa to work on large farms, called plantations. These plantations were mostly in English colonies in the South. Enslaved Africans were not free. They did not choose to plant tobacco. These enslaved people were bought and sold like the tobacco they were growing. This is a sad part of our history.



## The Pilgrims Arrive in Plymouth

One group of people, called the Pilgrims, set off for Virginia for different reasons. They did not want to grow tobacco or find gold. Instead, they wanted to pray to God in their own way. This was not possible in England. So the Pilgrims set sail on a ship called the *Mayflower*.



The *Mayflower* was a small ship, and there was not much room for its 102 passengers and thirty sailors. The passengers slept mostly on the floor and in hammocks below the main deck. For the first month, the voyage went well. Then stormy weather arrived, and some passengers became very ill.



The storms at sea were so bad that the *Mayflower* was blown off course. The Pilgrims never arrived in Virginia. Instead, they arrived in what is today Massachusetts, in New England. The place they chose to settle had once been a Wampanoag village. The Pilgrims named their new home Plymouth.



The Pilgrims had also arrived as the weather was turning cold. It was too late to plant crops, and somehow the settlers needed to get through the cold winter months.

The Pilgrims set about building homes. Because it was so cold, the women and children slept on the *Mayflower*. Many people died due to the cold, sickness, and lack of food. People began to lose hope, but then spring came, and help arrived too!



A Native American by the name of Squanto, who spoke English, showed the Pilgrims how to plant crops on land that was new to them.

Squanto also showed the Pilgrims how to hunt and fish. With more food to eat, the Pilgrims grew strong again. To celebrate, Squanto and members of the Wampanoag joined the Pilgrims for a feast of thanksgiving.



They ate roasted deer and turkey. They ate the fish they had caught and the vegetables they had grown. Once again, Native Americans had helped people from another land to survive.

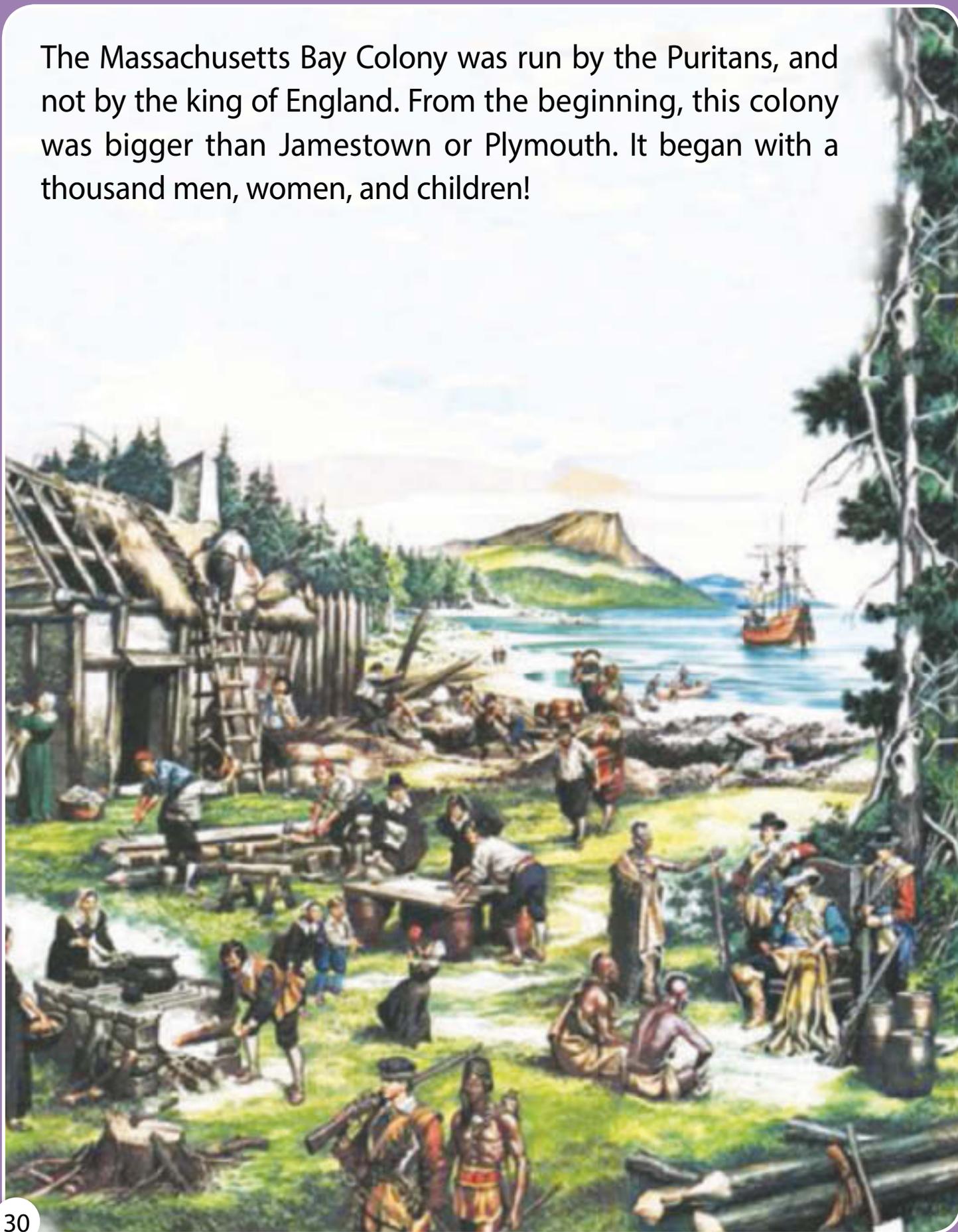
## The Puritans

Just a few years after the Pilgrims' first feast of thanksgiving in Plymouth, another group of people came to New England. They were called the Puritans. Like the Pilgrims, the Puritans left England because a king would not let them worship as they wanted.



King Charles I was happy to get rid of the Puritans. The king signed a paper called a charter, giving them permission to start a colony in Massachusetts Bay.

The Massachusetts Bay Colony was run by the Puritans, and not by the king of England. From the beginning, this colony was bigger than Jamestown or Plymouth. It began with a thousand men, women, and children!



Massachusetts Bay Colony was a little more successful from the start. The Puritans had brought lots of food and tools with them. They began building a city called Boston, as well as a number of towns.

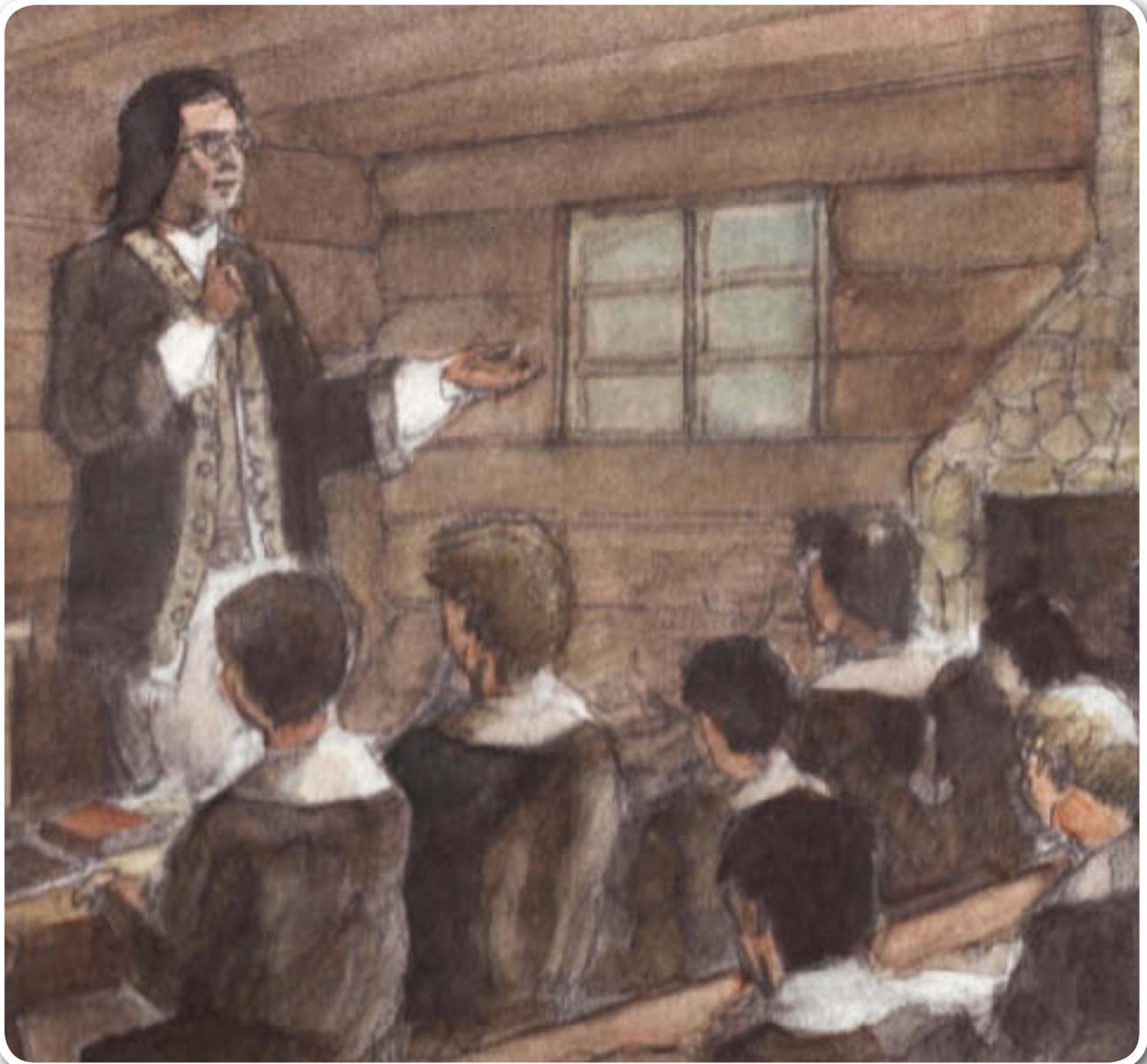


With things going so well in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, more Puritans arrived. Within ten years, there were over ten thousand people living there.



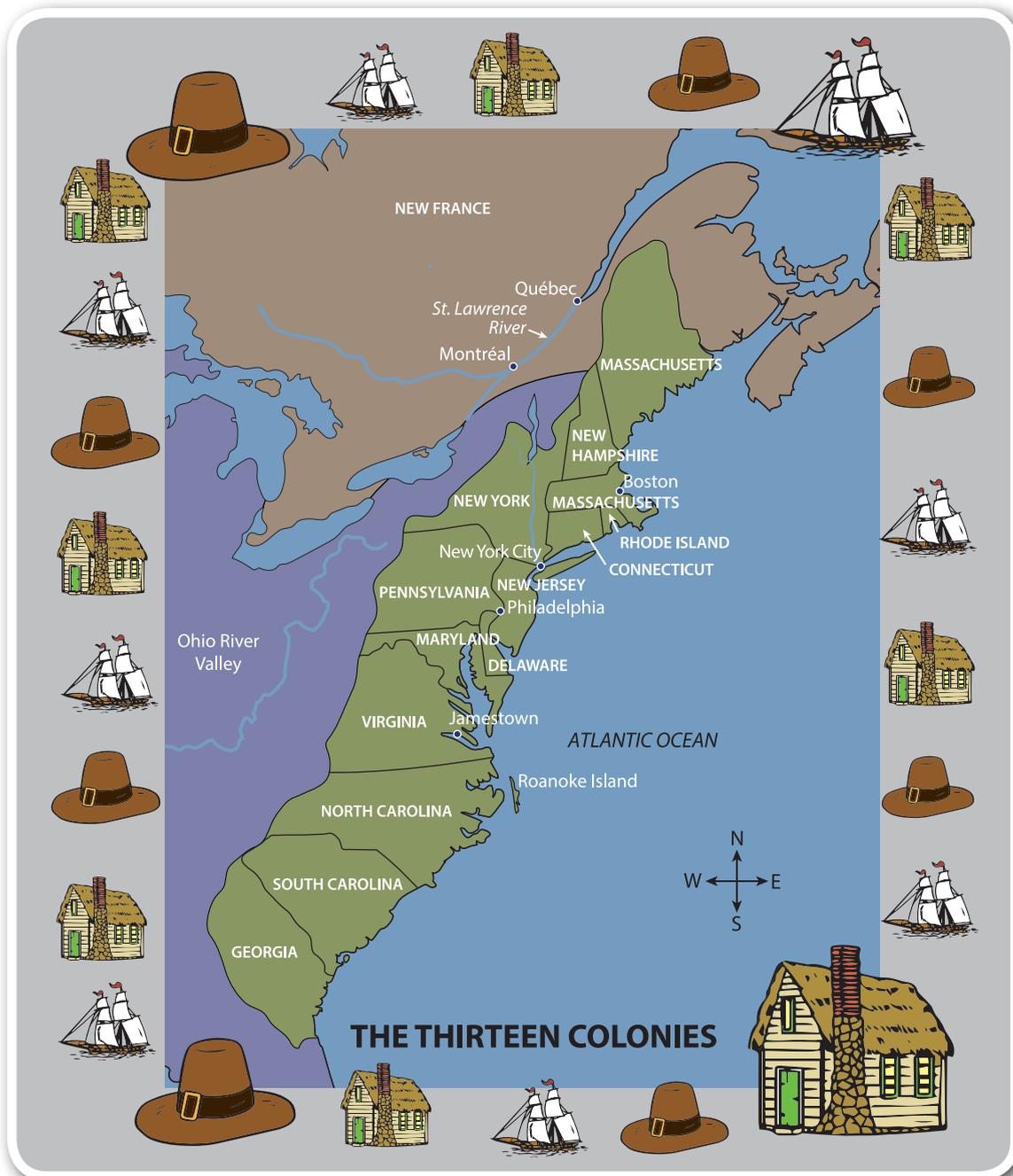
This colony also did well because the Puritans made sure that everyone worked. Even young people had to work. The Puritans believed that children should be taught job skills they could use when they became adults. This way they would always be useful.

The Puritans also wanted their children to learn to read and write. They wanted everyone to read the Bible. Because education was so important to them, Puritan law said that every town must have a school.



All the townspeople had to pay for the school and the teacher. We still pay for public schools this way. The Puritans also started Harvard College.

After a while, the Puritans and others began moving to areas farther away. New settlements began in what would become Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New Hampshire. Before long, there were thirteen colonies. Although they didn't know it at the time, the colonists were helping to create a new country—the United States of America.





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Tobacco pipes of the Native Americans, and a peace pipe with war-eagle feathers at top. The pipes are carved from pipe-stone, red steatite. Handcoloured lithograph from George Catlin's Manners, Customs and Condition of the North American Indians, London, 1841. / © Florilegium / Bridgeman Images: 21b

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