

Assignment 1: The Mayflower Compact – America’s First Social Contract

Background: In 1620, the Mayflower passengers spent nine stormy weeks crossing the Atlantic Ocean towards the warm lands of the Virginia colony. Instead they would land and settle in present-day Massachusetts. There were 35 Pilgrims (a religious sect) and 70 others. On November 11, 1620, the boat reached Cape Cod, in present-day Massachusetts. In order to keep the group together and to maintain order, the Pilgrim leaders drew up the Mayflower Compact. Most of the adult men signed the compact. The passengers created the first permanent English settlement in New England. The Mayflower Compact became the basis for the government of the Plymouth Colony. The document is remarkable for its time because it created a government of ordinary citizens, not just members of the ruling class.

Document.

In the name of God, Amen. We, whose names are underwritten, the Loyal Subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord, King James, by the Grace of God, of England, France and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, &c.

Having undertaken for the Glory of God, and Advancement of the Christian Faith, and the Honour of our King and Country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia; do by these presents, solemnly and mutually in the Presence of God and one of another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil Body Politick, for our better Ordering and Preservation, and Furtherance of the Ends aforesaid; And by Virtue hereof to enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions and Offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the General good of the Colony; unto which we promise all due submission and obedience.

In Witness whereof we have hereunto subscribed our names at Cape Cod the eleventh of November, in the Reign of our Sovereign Lord, King James of England, France and Ireland, the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth. Anno Domini, 1620.

Assignment:

Name: _____

What are the three main things that the signers of the compact agreed to do?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Explain how the Mayflower Compact is an example of a social contract?
