



Day 11 Colonization Unit
50 Minutes

The Puritans

Lesson Title

Life and Beliefs of the Puritans in New England

Grade Range: 4–8

Time: 60 minutes

Materials:

- *Puritans of New England* PowerPoint (10 slides)
- Article: *Life in Puritan New England*
- Reading comprehension exercises (teacher choice)
- Student notebooks or graphic organizers

Lesson Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Explain why the Puritans came to New England
- Describe daily life, gender roles, and religious beliefs of Puritan communities
- Analyze how Puritan beliefs shaped government and society
- Connect Puritan values to later American patriots

Lesson Structure Overview

- **Slides & Discussion:** 20 minutes
- **Article Reading:** 20 minutes

- **Reading Comprehension Activities:** 20 minutes

Part 1: Slide Presentation (20 Minutes)

Slide 1 – Who Were the Puritans?

Teacher Script:

“Today we’re going to learn about the Puritans, one of the most influential groups in colonial New England. The Puritans were English Protestants who believed the Church of England needed to be purified. Because of their beliefs, many Puritans were treated unfairly in England. This led them to make a dangerous journey across the Atlantic Ocean to start new communities in New England.”

Slide 2 – Why Did the Puritans Come to New England?

Teacher Script:

“The Puritans came to New England for religious reasons, but it’s important to understand something clearly. They wanted religious freedom for *themselves*, not for everyone. They believed God wanted them to build a perfect Christian society that others could look to as an example. This belief will affect how they treated people who disagreed with them.”

Slide 3 – Puritan Beliefs

Teacher Script:

“Puritans believed the Bible was the most important authority in life. They valued hard work, discipline, and self-control. Life was meant to be serious and focused on serving God. This explains why Puritan communities had strict rules and high expectations for behavior.”

Slide 4 – Puritan Government and Society

Teacher Script:

“In Puritan New England, religion and government were closely connected. Laws were based on religious beliefs, and only certain people—usually church members—were allowed to vote. The community watched one another closely to make sure everyone followed the rules. This system helped maintain order, but it also limited personal freedom.”

Slide 5 – Daily Life in Puritan New England

Teacher Script (connect to article):

“This slide connects directly to the article you’ll read shortly. Puritan families lived very simply, often in small

one-room houses. The fireplace was used for cooking and warmth, and smoke filled the house, especially in winter. Everyone worked—adults and children—and education was very important so people could read the Bible.”

Slide 6 – Puritan Religion in Practice

Teacher Script:

“Religion shaped almost every part of Puritan life. Church attendance was mandatory, and punishments could be severe for people who disobeyed religious rules. However, the Puritans were not completely joyless. They sometimes allowed celebrations, music, games, and even drinking wine or beer.”

Slide 7 – Puritans and Dissenters

Teacher Script:

“Not everyone agreed with Puritan beliefs. People like Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson challenged Puritan leaders. Instead of allowing different viewpoints, Puritan leaders banished them. This shows that Puritan society valued unity over individual freedom.”

Slide 8 – The Puritan Legacy

Teacher Script:

“The Puritans left a lasting mark on New England and American culture. They emphasized education, community responsibility, and civic duty. However, their strict rules and punishments remind us that early America struggled to balance freedom with control.”

Slide 9 – Discussion Questions

Teacher Script:

“Before we move on to our reading, let’s think about these questions. You don’t need to answer out loud unless called on—just think about them as we read the article next.”

(Briefly read through the four questions.)

Slide 10 – Famous Patriots of Puritan Heritage

Teacher Script:

“Many leaders of the American Revolution came from Puritan families. John Adams, Samuel Adams, John Hancock, and Paul Revere grew up in New England communities shaped by Puritan values like education, civic responsibility, and resistance to authority. These ideas helped influence the American Revolution.”

Part 2: Article Reading – “Life in Puritan New England” (20 Minutes)

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/13-colonies/events-of-the-13-colonies/life-in-puritan-massachusetts>

Teacher Directions:

- Distribute or display the article
- Students may read independently, with partners, or as a guided read

Suggested Teacher Prompts While Reading:

- “Underline details that describe daily life in a Puritan home.”
- “Circle examples of how children were treated differently than today.”
- “Highlight sentences that show how important religion was.”

Explicit Connections to Slides:

- One-room houses → Slide 5
- Gender roles → Slides 5–6
- Mandatory church & punishments → Slide 6
- Education and literacy → Slides 3 and 8

Part 3: Reading Comprehension Activities (20 Minutes)

Choose either online or printable reading comprehension. Each activity contains a reading passage and seven multiple choice questions.

[Life in Puritan Massachusetts Online Reading Comprehension - Lexile 900](#)

[Life in Puritan Massachusetts Printable Reading Comprehension - Lexile 900](#)

Optional Writing Prompt:

[Rules, Rules, and More Rules](#)

Imagine living in a place where strict rules control almost everything you do—how you dress, what you say, how you act, and even what you’re allowed to enjoy. This was everyday life in Puritan Massachusetts, where leaders believed that strong rules and religious expectations were necessary to keep order. People who broke these rules could face harsh punishments or public embarrassment.

Choose a **character from a book, movie, or video game** who was forced to live under **unreasonable rules or unfair expectations** (for example, James in *James and the Giant Peach* or the Baudelaire orphans when they lived with Count Olaf). Write a paragraph explaining the rules the character had to follow, why those rules were unfair, and how the situation is similar to life in Puritan Massachusetts.