

Tyler's ACTS Scholarship Application

The Pilgrims at first just started out as everyday church-goers; people who just lived their everyday lives as Christians. However, this would not last for long. Over the years in the second half of the sixteenth century, gradually but surely, the church became more corrupt and vile. People started to take notice of this, and they started to doubt the church and live in defiance of it. Some called themselves Puritans, who wanted to purify the church from corruption, and the more radical ones were called Separatists, who thought that the church was too far gone and that everyone should separate from the church's beliefs. It was bad enough under Queen Elizabeth, but when a new ruler came, King James, they started to be persecuted, captured and/or killed. Once they knew the church was entirely corrupt, they stopped following the church and instead had Bibles smuggled into the country so they could read God's word for themselves. They would hold meetings in people's houses, and they would have to be on the lookout in case, at any moment, the king's troops just blew through the door and threw all of them in jail. After they started witnessing these tragic events, they started thinking of a way to escape, and for two years they planned it out and got ready to leave. If they got caught, the punishment would be that of committing treason.

They had hired a big boat and a captain to take them across the Atlantic and to the east coast of America. However, the captain they'd hired double-crossed the Pilgrims as the church and King James also paid him to turn in the Pilgrims that were trying to escape. Once the Pilgrims were captured, they were thrown in jail for trying to escape and other charges. The few belongings they had left were stripped from them and taken away.

However, this did not stop the Pilgrims from trying to escape, or discourage them from believing in their religion. This actually strengthened their beliefs and made them plot to escape evermore boldly. The men knew that the crown was watching their every move like a hawk, and that the men couldn't go together with the women and children. The men knew they had no choice, so they separated from the women and children. They had hired another boat and a captain, and told them to go into a river to pick them up and bring them to Holland. They sent the women and children first, so that they could be safe, with the idea that even if the men couldn't go or they died, then the women and children could have a better life. They put all of them on a little raft and sent them down the river, hoping to meet up with them down the river at night.

Their plan backfired, however, as the river was fast and they got to the rendezvous a day early. They were seasick, and so they stood up and tried to get out. Unfortunately, there were armed guards rushing towards them, and they got stuck in the marsh. They couldn't move, and the men were already on the boat, helpless. The captain saw the situation, and knew he couldn't get caught, so he started to sail across the ocean. As

soon as they started sailing, a huge storm came in. For two weeks the storm blew them towards Norway, away from their destination- Holland. By the time it was over, they had made it out and started to sail to Holland. They later found out that hundreds of

1-Tyler

ships had been lost in that storm, and that they were one of the only ships that survived. It took them another year to get the women and children across to Holland.

Once in Holland, they stayed there for twelve years. It was a hard twelve years, because they couldn't get jobs. Since they couldn't get jobs, they had to have their children work in their places. "By the time they had settled in 1609, they were barely surviving," were the words of Dr. Foster. They did manage to acquire a printing press, and also printed 15 different books while in Holland, sending them all across the world. After the king saw the seal of the books being written, his men sailed down to Holland and destroyed the printing press.

After their press was destroyed, they decided to return to England, where they would get on the Mayflower and the Speedwell and go to America. Halfway through the journey, the Speedwell had a fatal leak, and they had to go back. Now they only had the Mayflower left. They knew that the Mayflower couldn't hold all of them, so half agreed to stay, and half agreed to go. Finally, the Mayflower embarked on its 8-week journey to America with its 102 passengers.

After they landed, they had several struggles, and they knew that they needed a form of government, so they made the Mayflower Compact, which was a set of laws that they swore an oath to keep. The winters were the hardest. In the first winter, most of the women died due to the cold whilst wrapping their kids up and hugging them so that the kids could stay warm. Most of the children survived, but by the time spring came around, there were only 51 people left in the colony. After that they befriended the Natives, who helped them grow corn and other crops, and they treated the Natives as equals. There was one instance where they judged one of their townspeople with one of the Natives as a witness, and that townspeople was executed for their crimes.

It's crazy to think that after all they went through, all the persecution and the storms and the hardship, that they endured and later thrived, and even made their own government! The Pilgrims had so much faith, and in the end, God rewarded them for it. It's also baffling to me that the thought of questioning their faith didn't even seem to be an option. In our culture, it comes across people's minds all the time when we're going through hardship. The only thing they questioned was when they'll get to their destination and how God will help them throughout their journey. The perseverance and courage that it took to achieve what they did throughout history is astonishing.

Their story is similar to my dad's, uncle's and grandma's story. My uncle was about to

turn thirteen, and they lived in Managua, Nicaragua. When a boy turned thirteen, the local militia would go and take them to “cortar café”, which is Spanish for “cutting coffee” or “harvesting coffee”. This was just code for taking my uncle and sending him to fight in the militia. If you’ve ever seen *Blood Diamond* and the child soldiers, that’s what they would’ve done to him, and my father too once he turned thirteen. My grandma, or their mother, did not want him sent off to certain death, and so she sold all her belongings and decided to flee to the United States in search of a better life. She hired a Coyote— someone who you pay to help you cross the border— and he guided them across the desert into the US. It was a large group of asylum seekers that were crossing as they walked throughout the night. As my dad (who was 6 at the time) recounts, a bunch of lights were turned on and my grandma told them to “surrender” to the authorities. The INS had caught them, and they requested political asylum due to the threat of sending my uncle to the militia.

Luckily, after years of legal back and forth, they let my grandma, dad, and uncle remain in the US. They have built a new life here and they have been able to prosper in the US. They’ve all become citizens too! It was here where my dad met my mom, and so they had me and my sister. Without the bravery of my grandma, my mom would not have met my father and might have married someone else, and I certainly wouldn’t be here, and neither would my sister.

No amount of time in history class will show the dedication, bravery, stamina, and faith these brave and courageous people had. All in all, the Pilgrims changed the world, and they played a huge role in the forming of what America is today. In the same thread, my grandma displayed courage and bravery to do what needed to be done to protect my uncle and my dad. I do hope that my story and my words demonstrate my understanding of what the Pilgrims mean to this country, what standing firm in your convictions and faith looks like, and show you why I would be the ideal candidate to earn this scholarship.

2-Tyler