

The Great Dying

1616–1619 | Grade 2 · Read & notice

Teacher note: this topic includes loss, violence, discrimination, or criminal allegations. Preview and choose a suitable reading together. No reenactment of harm is needed.

Words to know

loss — no longer having someone or something

survive — stay alive or continue after difficulty

evidence — information that helps support or question a claim

Look closely



Aquinnah cliffs and Gay Head Lighthouse

Read the story

A terrible sickness spread through many Native communities near the coast. Many people died. Families lost loved ones. Survivors kept caring for each other. Native nations continued, and their descendants live here today.

Think, talk, and show evidence

1. What happened in this reading? Tell one fact.
2. Who or what is this reading mostly about?
3. Choose a word from the word bank. Explain it in your own words.
4. Look at the picture and its caption. What does it help you notice? Is it from the time of the event?

Follow-up reading: Mayflower, Compact, and Patuxet

1620

Mayflower passengers crossed the ocean. Some men signed an agreement about rules called the Mayflower Compact. The newcomers built Plymouth at Patuxet, a Wampanoag place. Native people had lived there long before.

How are the two readings alike or different? Tell a partner one connection. Which event came first?

Teacher guide & source trail

Original classroom adaptation. Suggested reading levels are instructional choices, not standardized readability certifications. Use professional judgment and learner feedback.

ELA practice: RI.2.1: ask and answer questions; RI.2.2: identify a main topic; RI.2.7: use images and words; W.2.2 and SL.2.1: explain and discuss.

These tasks support selected skills in the [Massachusetts 2017 ELA framework](#); they do not establish mastery of an entire standard.

Answer guidance

Factual anchor: A terrible sickness spread through many Native communities near the coast. Many people died. Families lost loved ones. Survivors kept caring for each other. Native nations continued, and their descendants live here today. Epidemics preceded the Mayflower and devastated Patuxet and other communities. Losses varied by location; one percentage cannot describe every nation. Scholars disagree about the precise disease responsible.

Accept accurate main ideas and explanations supported by the text. Vocabulary meanings are in the opening word bank. For picture questions, use the caption and credit below; distinguish what is visible from what is inferred. For comparison, accept a specific connection supported by both readings. Do not require personal accounts of trauma.

Continue the inquiry

[Research source for this event ↗](#)

[Research source for follow-up ↗](#)

[Event page, accessible HTML reading, and vocabulary game ↗](#)

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[Image source and rights record ↗](#)

The PDF contains selectable English text and embedded fonts. For adjustable text and browser reading tools, use the event's [HTML page](#). External sources may need adult guidance.