

The Great Dying

1616–1619 | Grade 4 · Explain with evidence

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.

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.

Think, talk, and show evidence

1. State the main idea. Support it with two details from the reading.
2. Explain a change or challenge described in the text. Which words support your answer?
3. Use one vocabulary word in a new sentence about this event.
4. What can the image and caption help explain? What can they not tell you?

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.

The Compact organized a colonial community but did not give everyone equal political rights. Women and many others did not sign. It did not transfer Native ownership of land.

Compare the two readings. Explain one similarity or difference using a detail from each. Their order does not prove that one caused the other.

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.4.1: refer to details; RI.4.2: main idea and summary; RI.4.3: explain events; RI.4.7: interpret visual information; W.4.2 and SL.4.1: 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.