The Great Dying

1616–1619 | Supported reading · Words first

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

Talk before you read

Point, speak, draw, or write. Use your home language first if it helps. Take one word at a time with a teacher or partner.

The teacher page at the end gives all seven steps of the vocabulary routine. These everyday and general academic words are teaching choices, not an official WIDA word list.

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?

Try these starters: “This happened in ___. I learned ___. The picture shows ___. My word is ___. It means ___.”

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.

Calderón's seven-step vocabulary routine

1. Say and show each selected word. Invite learners to repeat it three times.

2. Place the word in a meaningful sentence connected to this event. Read the sentence aloud and point to the word.

3. Give a precise definition. Clarify which meaning fits this context.

4. Restate it in friendly language using an example, object, gesture, or picture.

5. Briefly highlight a useful sound, spelling pattern, word part, or verified home-language connection. Do not invent cognates.

6. Partners practice the word aloud in a complete sentence. Listen, prompt, and provide feedback before asking for writing.

7. Explain how learners will use the word in the reading and final explanation. Revisit it and check that each learner can use or explain it.

Adapted for this lesson from Margarita Calderón's seven-step vocabulary handout. The routine is a teaching adaptation, not a reproduced worksheet.

Offer oral rehearsal, a bilingual glossary, extra processing time, text-to-speech, and a choice of spoken, drawn, dictated, or written response. Consult WIDA Can Do Descriptors for language scaffolds. Clear type and spacing can aid access but are not a dyslexia treatment.

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.