

The *Mayflower* was anchored off the coast of the New World. Myles Standish and a party of sixteen left the ship and went ashore. It was the first time they had set foot on the new land.

They had walked for about a mile when suddenly they spotted something moving ahead of them. Five Indians!

The Pilgrims wanted to meet the Indians. But it seemed that the Indians did not feel the same way. They whistled to their dog, which had dashed ahead to greet the strangers. Then Indians and dog slipped into the woods without a sound.

Later on, other scouts saw still more signs of Indians. They passed fields where corn had once grown. They found gardens full of weeds, and fruit trees that had once been cared for. They even found deserted Indian homes. Inside were bowls, trays, baskets of acorns, and pieces of fish. Indians had slept and eaten there not long before. There were even some human bones lying about. But there was not a living person.

"There is some strange mystery here," said Governor John Carver. "This has been an Indian town. It has been here for a long time, too. But where has everybody gone? A whole village does not just disappear into thin air."

Weeks went by, but still there was no answer. Finally the Pilgrims could wait no longer: They had to build a village. Why not use this fine spot? And so they settled down in Plymouth.

One March morning the men were holding a meeting. Suddenly there came a scream

from some children playing outside. The next moment an Indian appeared in the doorway.

Every man leaped to his feet and made a dive for sword or gun. But the tall, bronze figure did not move. His sharp black eyes went from face to face.

"Welcome, Englishmen!" he said.

The Pilgrims looked as if they had seen a ghost. An Indian greeting them in their own language!

The Indian told them that his name was Samoset. He lived far north, in Maine. It was there he had learned English from the crews of fishing boats.

Samoset talked with the Pilgrims for the rest of the day. And he cleared up the mystery that had been worrying them since they had first seen Plymouth. He told them that the Patuxet Indians had once lived there. They had farmed those fields that the Pilgrims had taken over. But now all of them were dead. A great sickness had struck the tribe. Everyone in the village had died.

Now the Pilgrims knew why they had found Indian bones. The last Patuxet had died and there was no one left to bury him. This was why they had found deserted fields and gardens. This was the reason they had not been attacked in the three months they had lived there. The few Indians they had seen were just curious neighbors. They did not belong here either.

The Pilgrims gave thanks that their steps had been guided toward Plymouth. Where else could they have found such a perfect spot—unclaimed by anyone?

## CHECK YOUR READING

1. When the five Indians saw the Pilgrims, they
  - A made signs of peace
  - B laughed and stared
  - C hurried out of sight
2. The Pilgrims found Indian gardens that were
  - A newly planted
  - B full of vegetables
  - C overgrown with weeds
3. Inside the Indian houses they found
  - A food and dishes
  - B scalps and weapons
  - C only useless junk
4. After seeing the deserted Indian village, the Pilgrims felt
  - A frightened
  - B puzzled
  - C pleased
5. What did the Pilgrims decide to do with the Indians' land?
  - A Stay away from it
  - B Try to destroy it
  - C Build homes on it
6. When Samoset appeared at their meeting, the men
  - A grabbed for their weapons
  - B welcomed him with signs
  - C pretended not to notice him
7. The Pilgrims were greatly surprised by the
  - A clothes Samoset wore
  - B words Samoset spoke
  - C gifts Samoset brought
8. Samoset had come from
  - A a neighboring village
  - B far north in Maine
  - C an Alaskan island
9. Samoset said that the Patuxet Indians had been
  - A frightened away by ghosts
  - B wiped out by sickness
  - C driven off by enemies
10. The Pilgrims thought that choosing Plymouth as a landing place was
  - A foolish
  - B sad
  - C lucky