Your Name

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Course Number

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# American Colonial Society

## **Assignment 1**

## *Background: Pilgrims and Puritans*

American history has many complex realities, which are very interesting. The migration of people to America from England is an important part of history. The migrated people brought their religious beliefs with them and these religious ideals are clearly shown in the Colonial American literature writings. Religion had a strong bond to the early American life and it had a strong effect on all aspects of the lives of people. The history of colonial times is expressed in the colonial literature. It tells the rules of the pilgrims and Puritans to live life and the punishments were decided upon violation of those rules.

Two different groups of settlers, which came to America, were the Pilgrims and the Puritans. These two groups had problems with the Church of England. The puritans wanted to refine the church while the Pilgrims wanted to isolate it. The pilgrims were the Separatists who left England upon disagreeing with King James’s religious ideas and interpretation of Bible teachings. In 1620, the pilgrims arrived in America. With a yearning to spend life in a society free of the holy persecution and united by strong religious beliefs, they would have suffered in England for their beliefs. The puritans were a large group that came to settle in America, ten years after the pilgrims reached America. This group landed in the Massachusetts Bay colony.

## *William Bradford: Of Plymouth Plantation*

Born in England, William Bradford joined the Separatists community and traveled to the New World. At first, these people were known as "Old Comers," but after the manuscript by Bradford was discovered, in which he had called the people who left Holland "saints" and "pilgrims," the term Pilgrims was coined and the Separatists came to be known as the Pilgrims.

William Bradford in ‘Of Plymouth Plantation’ tells about the experience of the Pilgrims in the New World and their early colonial life in America. Bradford writes about God’s Providence by offering the example of the sailor who mistreated the pilgrims and was punished through illness or even death. Bradford states:

There was a proud and very profane young man, one of the seamen, of a lusty, able body, which made him the more haughty; he would always be condemning the poor people in their sickness, and cursing them daily with grievous execrations, and did not tell them, that he hoped to help cast half of them overboard before they came to their journey's end, and to make merry with what they had; and if he were by any gently reproved, he would curse and swear most bitterly. But it pleased God before they came half seas over, to smite this young man with a grievous disease, of which he died in a desperate manner…....... (Levine, Elliott and Gustafson 142)

William Bradford presents his humility before God by stating that whatever that is done for the will of God are God’s providence.

## *Mary Rowlandson: A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration*

Mary Rowlandson was a respectable puritan who, in her narrative, has conveyed an understanding of her society, and their social relationships to the insights of the Native American's. Her narrative mentions all from her capture to her return. She has written about her relationship to God and the Bible, calling her capture, a trial from God that she has to withstand with faith. There are continual references mentioned in the narrative that depicts God's will in her capture.

“Yet the Lord still showed mercy to me, and helped me; and as he wounded me with one hand, so he healed me with the other”. (R. S. Levine 273)

When she was wounded, she had a strong belief in God’s will. She calls the misery a condition arranged by God.

“There I left that Child in the Wilderness, and must commit it, and myself also in this Wilderness-condition, to him who is above all.” (R. S. Levine 274)

On the death of her sick daughter, she grieved for her but she also states that God has put the child out of suffering and misery.

# **Assignment 2**

## *Letters from an American Farmer: Interesting details*

Crevecoeur, in his letter III, Letters from an American Farmer examines the American Identity. The right to freedom and liberty is very dear to every individual. The depiction of America as an ideal society for people with no religious intolerance, disciplined and hardworking people, and no aristocratic class is the most interesting thing about this letter and the way he describes the people from different nations. The description of the perfect nature of this New World helps distinguish America from Europe and to be a much better place. James, the farmer states, “The rich and the poor are not so far removed from each other as they are in Europe.” (R. S. Levine 636) James is a generous and simple character who looks at the cultural differences between the American model of the civilization and that of the European nation-state.

“Here, individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men,” (R. S. Levine 638)

He views the Scottish as violent and nasty, the Germans as the most industrious, and the Irish as the least industrious as they love to drink and quarrel.

## *Autobiography of Thomas Jefferson: Interesting details*

Thomas Jefferson's autobiography is an interesting piece of writing. Jefferson has mentioned very little about his personal life. The most interesting thing in his autobiography is his support to justice and equality. He highlighted the importance of history and politics to increase our knowledge of the world around us. Jefferson insisted on representing the notion of equality but his interests and his social position were in contrast to the notion. The described events and writing about the slave system in his autobiography are the center of attention for the readers. The "Notes on the State of Virginia'' by Jefferson is also worth the attention and focus. The interesting thing about this book are the themes that are "individual liberty," "constitutional government," and the "separation of church and the state." He writes about his belief that the blacks and the whites could not live together.

## *Background Reading*

The American dream was always seen highlighted in the works of the colonial American writers and poets. The "Letters from an American Farmer" makes me wonder how the American society had struggled to become a perfect civilization and how the melting of different nations and identities create a new world. I wonder what kind of a world it would have been. The autobiography of Thomas Jefferson makes me wonder how racism and implementation of equality and justice in the society would have worked in the society. Both pieces of writing make me remind of the speech "I Have a Dream" by Martin Luther King Jr. about the American dream and identity. The background reading helped in understanding the viewpoints of the writers about the issues in the society, which they highlighted.

# Works Cited

Levine, Robert S, et al. *The Norton anthology of American literature. A : American literature 1865-1914*. 9th. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2017.