

# Native Americans: The Wampanoag Tribe

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The Wampanoag tribe of Native Americans is famous as the group that helped the Pilgrims of Plymouth Colony. They participated in the first Thanksgiving with the Pilgrims in 1621.

The Wampanoags traditionally lived in what is now Massachusetts and Rhode Island. The tribe was made up of many groups, each living in separate areas. Wampanoag leaders were called sachem, and sachems could be men or women. Women owned the land in the Wampanoag tribe.

The tribe lived mostly in one area, fishing, hunting and growing food. The principle crops were corn, squash and beans, called the “three sisters.”

When the Europeans arrived in the early 17th century, the Wampanoags were exposed to diseases they had never had before. Many became ill and died. The Europeans also took tribal members as slaves, selling them in European ports.

The Pilgrims arrived in 1620. The Wampanoag helped the Pilgrims through their first hard years, selling them land and giving them food. One Wampanoag in particular, a man named Squanto, helped the Pilgrims learn to farm corn and fish in the area.

The Puritans, a different group of English settlers, arrived in the Massachusetts area around 1630. Their relationship with the Wampanoag was not as friendly. The Puritans and other English settlers often took the Wampanoags’ land without paying for it. By 1675, the tension was so great that the Wampanoags and the English went to war. The war was called King Philip’s War, after a Wampanoag sachem named Metacomet who had taken the English name of Philip.

By the time the war was over in 1676, only 400 Wampanoags were left in Massachusetts. The rest had been killed in the war or taken as slaves.



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**Vocabulary List**

Each of the vocabulary words below are used in the reading passage. As you read the passage, pay attention to context clues that suggest the word's meaning.

1. tribe
2. traditionally
3. principle
4. exposed
5. ill
6. tension
7. slaves

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**Context Clues**

Using context clues from the sentences in the passage, underline the correct meaning of the word in boldface.

1) The Wampanoag **tribe** of Native Americans is famous as the group that helped the Pilgrims of Plymouth Colony.

- a. group or family    b. team    c. workers    d. neighbors

2) The Wampanoags **traditionally** lived in what is now Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

- a. usually    b. always    c. hardly    d. never

3) The **principle** crops were corn, squash and beans, called the “three sisters.”

- a. favorite    b. worst    c. smallest    d. basic

4) When the Europeans arrived in the early 17th century, the Wampanoags were **exposed** to diseases they had never had before.

- a. introduced    b. hidden    c. sacrificed    d. given

5) Many became **ill** and died.

- a. worried    b. mute    c. blind    d. sick

6) By 1675, the **tension** was so great that the Wampanoags and the English went to war.

- a. excitement    b. stress    c. competition    d. confusion

7) The rest had been killed in the war or taken as **slaves**.

- a. animals    b. officers    c. servants    d. money