

Historical Background

After the Pequot War, a war between New England settlers and Indians in 1636-1637, New England was free of major Indian wars for about forty years. During this period, the region's Native American population declined rapidly and suffered severe losses of land and cultural independence.

Between 1600-1675, New England's Native American population fell from 140,000 to 10,000, while the English population grew to 50,000. Meanwhile, the New England Puritans launched a campaign to convert the Indians to Protestantism. One leading missionary convinced about 2000 Indians to live in "praying towns," where they were expected to adopt white customs.

In 1675, the chief of the Pokanokets, Metacomet (whom the English called King Philip), forged a military alliance including about two-thirds of the region's Indians. In 1675, he led an attack on Swansea, Massachusetts. Over the next year, both sides raided villages and killed hundreds of victims. Twelve out of ninety New England towns were destroyed. This war was called King Philip's War.

Relative to the size of the population, King Philip's War was the most destructive conflict in American history. Five percent of New England's population was killed--a higher proportion than Germany, Britain, or the United States lost during World War II. Indian casualties were far higher; perhaps 40 percent of New England's Indian population was killed or fled the region. When the war was over, the power of New England's Indians was broken. The region's remaining Indians would live in small, scattered communities, serving as the colonists' servants, slaves, and tenants.

Document A: King Philip's Perspective (Modified)

King Philip agreed to come to us; he came unarmed, and about 40 of his men armed. We sat very friendly together. We told him our business. They said that they had done no wrong; the English wronged them. We said that both sides thought the other side wronged them, but our desire was to avoid war. The Indians agreed that fighting was the worst way; then they asked how we might avoid war. We said, by negotiation. They said that they lost many square miles of land through negotiation.

They said they had been the first in doing good to the English, and the English were the first in doing wrong. They said when the English first came, their King's Father prevented other Indians from wronging the English, and gave them corn and showed them how to plant, and let them have a 100 times more land than now the Indian King had for his own people.

And another grievance was, if 20 of their honest Indians testified that a Englishman had done them wrong, it was as nothing; and if but one of their worst Indians testified against any Indian, when it pleased the English it was sufficient.

Another grievance was, the English made them drunk and then cheated them; that now, they had no hope left to keep any land.

Another grievance, the English cattle and horses still increased and kept spoiling their corn. They thought when the English bought land of them they would have kept their cattle upon their own land, but the English didn't use a fence.

Vocabulary

Grievance: complaint

Source: John Easton, an official from Rhode Island, met King Philip in June of 1675 in an effort to negotiate a settlement. Easton recorded Philip's complaints. However, Easton was unable to prevent a war, and the fighting broke out the following month.

Document B: Colonists' Perspective (Modified)

In New England, there are many different theories for what caused the present Indian war. Some blame the people of Boston for trying to Christianize the Indians and for forcing the Indians to observe their laws. They think the Indians are too rude and uncivilized.

Some believe there have been Catholic priests, who have made it their business, for some years past, to turn the Indians against the English and to promise weapons from France.

Others blame the Indian leader, King Philip. Some English tried to get his land and brought him to court and sometimes imprisoned him.

The Puritan government of the Massachusetts believes that God is punishing them for their behavior. Recently, men have been wearing long hair and wigs made of women's hair; and women have been cutting, curling and laying out the hair. People have not been going to town meetings. The Puritans think that God has allowed the Indians to rise against them.

The English have contributed much to their misfortunes, for they first taught the Indians the use of guns, and let them attend trainings, and showed them how to handle their guns.

The loss to the English in the several colonies, in their habitations and stock, is reckoned to amount to 150,000 pounds. About 1200 houses have been burned, 8000 head of cattle, great and small, killed, and many thousand bushels of wheat and other grain burned, and over 3000 Indians, men, women, and children destroyed.

Source: The English government sent Edward Randolph to New England to report on the causes for the wars with the Native Americans. He wrote this report in 1685.

Guiding Questions

Name _____

DOCUMENT A

Sourcing: *Always source the document before you begin to read!*

1. Who wrote this account? Was the author a colonist or a Native American?
2. When was this account written? (before or after King Philip's War?)
3. Given who wrote it, do you think it's fair to call the document *King Philip's Perspective*? Why or why not?

Contextualization: *Begin reading the document after you've sourced it.*

4. What was happening in New England that led to this meeting?
5. What are 3 complaints that the Native Americans made to John Easton?

DOCUMENT B

Sourcing: *Always source the document before you begin to read!*

6. Who wrote this account? Why would the English government care about what was happening all the way across the ocean in New England?
7. When was this account written? (before or after King Philip's War?)
8. What do you predict the author will say were the causes of King Philip's War?

Close reading: *Begin reading the document after you've sourced.*

9. What are three different theories that the colonists have for why Indians attacked English settlements? Do the colonists blame themselves? Explain.

10. Based on Document B, how would you describe the colonists' attitude towards Native Americans?

Corroboration: *Compare the accounts in Documents A and B.*

Using evidence from Documents A **and** B, what do you think caused King Philip's War of 1675?