At first the New England settlers built their homes behind high fences called “stockades.” They were fearful of the unknown—of Indians and animals.

Soon they began spreading out, beyond the fences, into small towns with names like Greenfield, Springfield, and Longmeadow. The names described the land. Many of those early settlements were just a row of houses strung alongside abandoned Indian fields that the English settlers found and took. They lived with Indians as neighbors, although their animals sometimes made that difficult.

The Native Americans hunted animals: they had no horses, cows, sheep, or hogs. The Indians soon discovered that those English grazing animals could destroy their cornfields. In 1653 the people of the town of New Haven agreed to work for 60 days to build fences around fields planted by neighboring Indians. New England’s courts ordered colonists to pay the Indians for damage done to their fields by wandering animals.

As the colonists began to prosper, they built towns in America that were something like the villages they left behind in Europe. They were compact, easy to defend, and friendly. Castles and manor houses dominated European towns; in New England’s villages it was the meetinghouse that stood out. The meetinghouse was used as a church, a town hall, and a social center. It was usually placed at one end of a big field that was called a common, because everyone used it in common. Sometimes, when there were sheep to chew the field’s grass and keep it short and green, the common was called a green. Houses were built around the green. The houses nearest the meet-

People in New England villages were usually friendly and neighborly to each other. They had to be. A family needed the neighbors’ help to clear rocks out of a field or raise a barn roof. There was one cowman who looked after everybody’s cows. But if a stranger came hanging around with no invitation from a local family, he was chased out of town.

Chairs were rare and costly in the 17th century. This one belonged to Governor Endicott.
The Puritans had so many rules and laws that they were often broken. Another popular punishment, especially for scolding women, was the ducking stool. The sinner was tied on and lowered into the stream or village pond.

Puritans liked to give their children names that were reminders of goodness and holiness. Some we still find occasionally, like Constance, Faith, or Hope; and some seem strange: Joy-from-Above, Kill-sin, Fear, Patience, Wrestling-with-the-Devil.

A footwarmer for churchgoers.

Inghouse belonged to the most important people in town: the minister and the church leaders.

Many villages had a stream. The tumbling water of the stream turned a big wheel, and that provided power for the mills where wood was sawed and wheat ground into flour.

As the town grew other buildings were added: a general store, a blacksmith's shop, a furniture maker's shop, a candle maker's.

If the town was large enough, there might be an inn. Almost always there was a school.

The Puritans cared about schooling. By 1636 they had founded Harvard College. It was amazing that they had a college so soon after they arrived, although Harvard did get off to a rocky start. The first teacher beat his students, fed them spoiled meat, and ran off with college money.

Then they got a college president, Henry Dunster. He was so good that students began coming to study with him from Virginia and

A whole booke of psalms, also known as the Bay Psalm Book, was the first book ever printed in the English colonies.
Bermuda and even England itself. Of course, they were all Puritans. Because of their religion, Puritans weren’t allowed to attend college in England. That was one reason it was so important to have Harvard succeed. To do that it had to have a supply of students. So, in 1642, the Massachusetts Bay Colony passed a law saying that parents must teach their children to read.

The Puritans wanted everyone to be able to read the Bible, even those who weren’t going to Harvard. So the next thing they did was pass a law that said:

*It is therefore ordered, that every township in this jurisdiction, after the Lord has increased its number to 50 householders, shall then forthwith appoint one within their town to teach all such children as shall resort to him to write and read, whose wages shall be paid either by the parents or masters of such children, or by the inhabitants in general.*

In plain English, that means that every town with 50 or more families must have a schoolteacher.

Do you see something unusual in that law? Read that bit at the end, “shall be paid...by the inhabitants in general.” Do you know what that means? It means that everyone in the town has to pay for the education of the children. Not just the parents. That is what public education is all about. It guarantees that every child, not just those with wealthy parents, can go to school. In America, it all began with that school law in 1647.

I know what you’re thinking. Why did they have to go and do it? Who needs school anyway? But you don’t really mean it. It isn’t fun to be ignorant.

In the 17th century much teaching was done by parents, or in church, or, if you were an apprentice, by your master. But the Puritans could see that sometimes that wasn’t enough. Some parents just weren’t good teachers, even though many Puritans were highly educated themselves.

The Puritans thought it important that everyone read the Bible. In Boston and the larger towns some children were ac-

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**Blowing Thy Nose**

Many little Puritan boys and girls had to study a book called *The School of Good Manners*. It reminded them to “stand not wriggling with thy body hither and thither, but steady and upright,” or that “when thou blowest thy nose, let thy handkerchief be used.” Naughty children were whipped with a birch stick or cane. “Spare the rod and spoil the child” was a firm belief even of kind parents and teachers.

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Harvard College (above) had a very English class consciousness for many years. Until 1769 the roster of students was not listed in alphabetic order, but according to social status. That meant that if you were from an important family, you were listed ahead of somebody of lowly rank.
Several generations learned their ABCs from the New England Primer (right), which used rhymes to help children remember letters. This might be all you got if you were a girl—very few had as much schooling as boys. Eventually taught to read the Bible in its original languages. So little Puritan boys and girls of six and seven learned to read Latin and Greek, and a few learned Hebrew, too. That sounds hard, and it was, but learning languages is good training for the mind. Many of this nation's greatest thinkers came from Puritan stock.

Try and take yourself back to Puritan times, and see what you think of Sunday churchgoing. Those Puritan ministers gave sermons that lasted for hours and hours. Sometimes there was an intermission for lunch, and then everyone went back to hear more. There was no heat in the meetinghouse, and New England can get very cold. People brought warming boxes with hot coals in them to keep their feet from freezing. Sometimes they brought their dogs to church for the same reason.

A church official held a tickling rod to wake up anyone who looked as if he might be falling asleep. The dog whippers took out dogs who barked. If you were a troublemaker and wiggled and made noise you could get locked up in the town stocks. You'd have to sit there with your hands and feet stuck into a wooden contraption and everyone would make fun of you.

We know you wouldn't like that kind of life, but maybe things weren't so bad for the Puritan boys and girls. Maybe some of them even looked forward to the sermons. Remember, in Puritan Massachusetts there were no movies and no TVs. At first, there were no newspapers, no magazines, and only a few books. The Puritans were intelligent people who could read and think well. Maybe that will help you understand why everyone tried to listen to the weekly sermon and why Puritans sometimes spent all week talking about it.

### Feeling Blue

Rules banning work, trade, and playing on Sundays—the Sabbath—are still called "blue laws," because the Puritan minister's sermon was boring. Another was put in the stocks after kissing his wife on his return home from the meetinghouse. Another was excommunicated from the church and put in the stocks after an argument with his wife. Rachel died of grief after her husband, Joseph, died in the meetinghouse.
19 Statues on the Common

Anne Hutchinson wasn't the only strong woman to trouble John Winthrop and the Massachusetts Bay Puritans. Her best friend was a problem, too.

Mary Dyer was Puritan and pious. Winthrop called her a "very proper and fair woman." That was when he first knew her. But Dyer followed the ways of Anne Hutchinson, and when Anne Hutchinson was cast out of Massachusetts, Mary Dyer and her husband, William, and other believers went with her.

Later, Mary Dyer took a trip back to England and found other truths for herself. She became a member of the Society of Friends, the people who were known as Quakers. Quakers call their church services "meetings." In a Quaker meeting everyone is equal, anyone may speak out, and there are no ministers. Now, in the 17th century equality was not fashionable. Besides, Quakers refuse to swear oaths of allegiance to anyone but God. But oaths of loyalty to king and country were expected in England and everywhere in the 17th century.

You need to understand that the church and the government were all part of one package in the Old World. It was the church that gave the "divine right" of the church, always been wanted to maintain, and the self. What happened? Why, the new church and the old church were a problem. Quakers didn't do well without ministers. So what happened? By the authority of the colonies. The harsh laws of the colonies. Quakers were still there. Time she was tried. The time she was tried. She was in the gallow's.

The men and women. The horse and so. Do you do what I say, she will rise. She would have the gallow's.

The Puritans had her in the gallow's. The gallow's. She was in the gallow's. Some Puritans tried to get rid of Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson. But most Puritans tried to be fair to Mary. She was just leaving the ocean. What "could hard" Perry Miller persuade were a to the belief. He was a to the belief.
that gave the king his right to govern. It was called the "divine right of kings." It was the government that gave the church support and lands. That was the way it had always been. It seemed as if people like the Quakers wanted to mess things up. The Quakers believed in toleration, and they believed each person could think for himself. What happens if you let people think for themselves? Why, the next step might be for them to say that the king's church and the king's priests weren't needed. And Quakers did say something like that when they sat in their meetings without ministers.

So maybe you can see why Quakers were hated and persecuted by the authorities in England. They weren't liked any better in the colonies. The magistrates of the Massachusetts Bay Colony passed harsh laws to keep them away, but that didn't stop them. Some Quakers seemed determined to be martyrs, and Mary Dyer was one of them. She came to Boston and was sent away. She came back. This time she was tried, with two Quaker men, and all three were led to the gallows.

The men were hanged, but at the last minute Dyer was put on a horse and sent off to Rhode Island. She came back again. Now what do you do with a woman who cares so much about her religion that she will risk death to preach its message? You'd think the Puritans would have understood that devotion. Maybe they did, and that's what scared them.

The Puritans tried Mary Dyer again. This time they offered her life if she would leave Massachusetts forever. She refused. Mary Dyer was hanged, on June 1, 1660, on the Boston Common in front of where the State House stands today. Her death was too much for some Puritans. In 1661 the law was changed. Today, statues of Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson can be seen on the Common.

But most Puritans thought they had done everything they could to be fair to Mary Dyer. Remember, it was a different world then, a world just leaving the Middle Ages. A few people in Europe were beginning to question the old ideas. But those questions traveled slowly across the ocean. When people started talking of toleration, the Puritans "could hardly understand what was happening in the world," writes Perry Miller, a historian of the Puritans. "They could not for a long time be persuaded that they had any reason to be ashamed of their record of so many Quakers whipped, blasphemers punished by the amputation of ears, [dissenters] exiled...or witches executed. [According to the beliefs] in Europe at the time the Puritans had left, these were achievements to which any government could point with pride."