

RESOURCE LIBRARY

ACTIVITY : 2 HRS 25 MINS

The Mayflower's Atlantic Crossing

Students research how the Gulf Stream affected the 1620 *Mayflower* voyage and produce a Museum Box to showcase their findings.

GRADES

3 - 5

SUBJECTS

Earth Science, Oceanography, English Language Arts, Geography, Human Geography, Physical Geography

CONTENTS

1 Image, 2 PDFs, 3 Links

OVERVIEW

Students research how the Gulf Stream affected the 1620 *Mayflower* voyage and produce a Museum Box to showcase their findings.

For the complete activity with media resources, visit:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/the-mayflower-s-atlantic-crossing/>

DIRECTIONS

1. Engage students' interest by discussing historical travel times.

Ask: How long do you think it would take for a ship to travel from England to Massachusetts?
Show students the map *The Mayflower Route* and have them identify the approximate locations of England and Massachusetts. Ask them to brainstorm things that might affect the travel time. After they've shared ideas, explain that today the voyage takes a week, and it's very comfortable. This was not always the case. Back in 1620, when the *Mayflower* sailed to the

New World from England, the passengers and crew faced a dangerous two-month journey. The passengers' voyage was made more difficult because of the tug of the Gulf Stream on their ship and strong autumn storms in the Atlantic Ocean.

2. Have students read about the Gulf Stream and how it affected the *Mayflower* voyage.

Distribute the handout *The Mayflower* and the Gulf Stream and have students read it independently or in small groups.

3. Have students research what the crossing was like for passengers and crew.

Give each student a copy of the worksheet *Mayflower* Five Ws and an H. Have students use the provided Plimoth Plantation website to research and answer the questions, which will help students synthesize what they find in their research and prepare them for the next step of sharing their new knowledge with their classmates.

4. Have students use the Museum Box virtual tool to showcase what they learned.

Have students use their completed worksheets to create a virtual, interactive Museum Box, independently or in small groups. The Museum Box virtual tool allows students to create a display on any topic with individual information cubes that can feature graphics, text, videos, and audio clips; the result is an interactive diorama. To see an example of a completed Museum Box, click on the provided example featuring items collected by the abolitionist Thomas Clarkson. Allow students time to create Museum Boxes and view their classmates' completed boxes.

5. Synthesize the learning experience with thoughtful questioning.

Regroup for a whole-class discussion. Ask:

- *How did the Gulf Stream make the *Mayflower* voyage longer and more difficult? (Possible response: The fast current slowed the *Mayflower* as the ship attempted to sail against it. It may have helped push the *Mayflower* farther north than the crew intended.)*
- *How did the Atlantic Ocean's currents influence the weather the *Mayflower* encountered on the second half of the voyage? (Possible response: The warm water of the Gulf Stream fuels storms and can lead to the formation of tropical storms and hurricanes. The *Mayflower* got caught in several storms that blew it off course, and one cracked one of the ship's beams.)*
- *Imagine the crew of the *Mayflower* knew about the Gulf Stream and how it would affect their crossing. What might they have done differently to make it easier? (Possible response: They might have sailed directly across the current at a narrow point rather than sailing against it. Or they might have chosen to sail during a less stormy period.)*

6. Have students write a journal entry.

Ask students to write a journal entry to help them summarize their research findings. Provide this writing prompt on the board: *Imagine you were a passenger on the Mayflower. Describe what it was like to experience the storms, cramped living conditions, and delays the passengers and crew experienced.*

Modification

In Step 2: If students have difficulty with the reading passage on the handout *The Mayflower* and the Gulf Stream, read aloud the passage and have them track the text with their index fingers as you read.

Modification

Students can complete this activity without using the Museum Box virtual tool. Instead, have students make their displays out of paper, cardboard, and other traditional materials.

Informal Assessment

Evaluate students' Museum Boxes for accuracy, creativity, and completeness.

Extending the Learning

Have students compare and contrast [Benjamin Franklin's map of the Gulf Stream](#) with a more modern [satellite image of the current](#).

OBJECTIVES

Subjects & Disciplines

Earth Science

- [Oceanography](#)
- English Language Arts

Geography

- [Human Geography](#)
- [Physical Geography](#)

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- explain what the Gulf Stream is and how it works
- analyze how the Gulf Stream affected the 1620 voyage of the Mayflower
- gather, organize, and interpret informational text
- create an interactive display illustrating the Gulf Stream's effect on the crossing

Teaching Approach

- Learning-for-use

Teaching Methods

- Brainstorming
- Discussions
- Reading
- Reflection
- Research
- Writing

Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

- 21st Century Student Outcomes
 - Information, Media, and Technology Skills
 - Information Literacy
 - Learning and Innovation Skills
 - Creativity and Innovation
- Critical Thinking Skills
 - Applying
 - Creating
 - Understanding

- Geographic Skills
 - Acquiring Geographic Information
 - Analyzing Geographic Information
 - Answering Geographic Questions
 - Organizing Geographic Information

National Standards, Principles, and Practices

IRA/NCTE STANDARDS FOR THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

- **Standard 1:**

Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

- **Standard 8:**

Students use a variety of technological and informational resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM STANDARDS

- **Theme 2:**

Time, Continuity, and Change

- **Theme 3:**

People, Places, and Environments

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHY STANDARDS

- **Standard 1:**

How to use maps and other geographic representations, geospatial technologies, and spatial thinking to understand and communicate information

- **Standard 15:**

How physical systems affect human systems

- **Standard 17:**

How to apply geography to interpret the past

OCEAN LITERACY ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES AND FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS

- **Principle 1c:**

Throughout the ocean there is one interconnected circulation system powered by wind, tides, the force of the Earth's rotation (Coriolis effect), the Sun, and water density differences. The shape of ocean basins and adjacent land masses influence the path of circulation.

- **Principle 3a:**

The ocean controls weather and climate by dominating the Earth's energy, water and carbon systems.

ISTE STANDARDS FOR STUDENTS (ISTE STANDARDS*S)

- **Standard 1:**

Creativity and Innovation

- **Standard 3:**

Research and Information Fluency

- **Standard 6:**

Technology Operations and Concepts

Preparation

What You'll Need

MATERIALS YOU PROVIDE

- Paper
- Pencils
- Pens

REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY

- Internet Access: Required
- Tech Setup: 1 computer per learner, Projector, Speakers

PHYSICAL SPACE

- Classroom
- Media Center/Library

GROUPING

- Large-group instruction

OTHER NOTES

Before starting this activity, register your class at the E2BN: Museum Box website. Afterward, the use of the virtual tool is free.

BACKGROUND & VOCABULARY

Background Information

Ocean currents such as the Gulf Stream affect both navigation and climate. Analyzing the 1620 voyage of the *Mayflower* illustrates how the Gulf Stream affected that historic crossing. Ocean currents still influence ocean travel and commerce and dictate climate patterns.

Prior Knowledge

["colonization of New England"]

Recommended Prior Activities

- None

Vocabulary

Term	Part of Speech	Definition
climate	<i>noun</i>	all weather conditions for a given location over a period of time.
current	<i>noun</i>	steady, predictable flow of fluid within a larger body of that fluid.
Gulf Stream	<i>noun</i>	warm current that starts in the Gulf of Mexico and travels along the eastern coast of the U.S. and Canada before crossing the North Atlantic Ocean.
transatlantic	<i>adjective</i>	across the Atlantic Ocean.

For Further Exploration

Images

- [NOAA: The Gulf Stream by Benjamin Franklin](#)

Websites

- [Nantucket Historical Association: The Gulf Stream Charts of Benjamin Franklin and Timothy Folger](#)
- [NASA: Wind Driven Surface Currents—Western Boundary Currents Background](#)
- [Pilgrim Hall Museum](#)
- [NASA: Ocean Motion and Surface Currents](#)

FUNDER

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