

Reader's Theater for Thanksgiving

Bound For Plymouth (story excerpt)

The characters in this story and ninety-six other people (including the ones we now call pilgrims, planters, servants, and sailors) and two dogs were actually aboard the **Mayflower** in 1620.

Narrator Well into the morning watch, about seven o'clock on the morning of November 9, 1620, you could hear children complaining about the morning meal. Spirits were low among all the voyagers, as the night before had been a particularly stormy one.

Elizabeth Aren't you boys finished eating your porridge yet?

Henry Is *that* what it is, Cousin Elizabeth? I couldn't tell for sure.

Joseph (*disgusted*) Is it my imagination, or is it grayer and lumpier than it was yesterday? I think they're mixing sawdust in to make it go further.

Elizabeth (*aggravated*) Don't complain so much. You ought to be thankful that there's hot food, or *any* food fit to eat left at all.

Constance Yes, everyone knows the water has turned sour and brackish, we're almost out of flour, and the salt beef is maggoty.

Ellen (*out of breath*) **Please** hurry up and finish. I have to wipe out all the bowls and spoons and clean the tables before they punish me for wasting time.

Elizabeth Come here, Ellen, and give me the rag. I'll help you quickly before Schoolmaster Soule arrives.

Narrator Elizabeth felt sorry that anyone could treat a girl as sweet as Ellen so poorly, and often kept her company and assisted with her chores.

Joseph Oh, no. Schoolmaster Soule will be ringing that *pesky* bell of his any time now.

Henry Well, in that case, let's make ourselves scarce before he spots us. The smell down here is making me ill.

Narrator While the boys hurried off to the upper decks with an air of superiority, the girls prepared for their upcoming lesson, placing books and slates on the communal tables to form a schoolroom.

Ellen (*upset*) They stole two apples, Miss Elizabeth. I saw them, and they'll blame *me*. (*starting to cry*) You know I am always blamed if food is missing!

Elizabeth Don't worry so, Ellen. I'll tell my father it wasn't you.

Constance It's really unkind of them to treat Ellen like that. After all, she's only eight, and she can't help it if her father indentured her. I am sure *they* wouldn't like to work hard every day for seven long years without payment! She is doing the best she can.

Elizabeth Especially if it was emptying latrines and slop buckets every morning, like her little brother, Jasper, has to do.

Narrator Just then Schoolmaster Soule appeared, holding his switch in his left hand and ringing his bell with his right.

Schoolmaster Come along, children, I will not abide tardiness. Punctuality is a virtue. Take your places! There's plenty of room. No need to push and shove. I cannot understand why it takes you so long to take your places when we've been doing the same thing since the beginning of this voyage.

All Readers Good morning, Schoolmaster Soule.

(end of excerpt)



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