

Notes from a Wampanoag Child

for Your Classroom



Autumn 1620

The coat-men are still here, but we have had no contact with them. Some of the older warriors say that the strangers carry weapons that can take a swift bird from flight at a great distance.

After a time, scouts returned to where the ship was and found that it had gone. I busied myself practicing my hunting skills and helping to get ready for our move into the valley. My wish was that the strangers had gone back across the sea where they came from. I could tell that this is what the others wished as well, especially the elders. Our wishes, though, were not granted. The coat-men have been seen at Patuxet, where some of our People once lived.

Several years ago, when I was a young child, a great sickness came to our People. Many villages were almost wiped out. Patuxet was one of these. Maybe the sickness still lingers there, for some report that the coat-men are half the number that they were and that they are beginning to ache for food. There is much discussion about what to do. Some say that since they brought women and children with them it is a sign that they mean us no harm, and that we should help them. It is clear that they have no skill in hunting or fishing. Others say that they may be a valuable ally for us. Still others worry that they may war against us or kidnap our young men as other coat-men have before.



Two men living at Pokanoket with the Sachem Massasoit have lived among the coat-men and call them “English.” Samoset is a Sagamore of the Abenaki who has been visiting our Sachem for some moons now. Tisquantum lived at Patuxet until he was kidnapped by some other English many years ago and was taken across the sea and sold into slavery. He returned to Patuxet after the sickness, and found that his people were dead or gone. Both of these men speak the strangers’ language. After seeking counsel from his advisors, Massasoit decided to send Samoset to the English to find out why they are here, and to see if they intend to live peaceably amongst us.

Diary entry of 12-year-old Pometacomet, a fictional member of the Pokanoket tribe of the Wampanoag nation.

Wampanoag Words

Wetu: Wampanoag house made by constructing a framework of bent saplings and covering it with woven cattail or reed mats (summer wetu) or bark (winter wetu).

Sagamore: chief/sachem (different nations used different words for their leaders)

Sachem: chief