Puritan Literature Introduction
What is a Puritan?

• It is a broad term, referring to a number of Protestant groups that, beginning about 1500, sought to “purify” the Church of England.

• What does the term “purify” mean?

• Why might a group of people want to “purify” their church?
About the Puritans:

• In England during the 1500s and 1600s, a group of Protestants called Puritans led a movement to “purify” the Church of England.

• Puritans wished to return to the simpler forms of worship and church organization described in the New Testament. They did not believe that the clergy or the government should or could act as an intermediary between the individual and God.
About the Puritans continued:

- The first and most famous group of English Puritans landed in 1620, on the tip of Cape Cod, just before Christmas. There they hoped to build a new society patterned after God’s word.

- They were followed ten years later by seven hundred more Puritan settlers. By 1640, as many as twenty thousand English Puritans sailed to what they call New England.

- For the Puritans the everyday world and the spiritual world were closely related.
Puritans believed in what’s called *predestination*. What is this?

• God had chosen the souls that would be saved prior to their birth, and therefore, people were saved by grace rather than their own acts.

• Doubt centered around this theology on whether or not a particular individual was one of the saved (the “elect”) or one of the damned (the “unregenerate”).
How would one know if they were saved or damned?

• One did not really know, however there were two principal indications of the state of your soul, neither were completely certain.

• 1. You could *feel* the grace arriving in an intensely emotional fashion. The inner arrival demonstrated your outward behavior.

• 2. After receiving your grace, you were “reborn” as a member of the community of saints, and you behaved like a saint.
How did the Puritans feel about government?

• Puritans believed that people should enter freely into agreements concerning their government.

• However, because they believed the “elect” should exert great influence on the government, their views tended to be undemocratic, with little room for compromise.
• **Primary Source:** source created by people who actually saw or participated in an event and recorded that event or their reactions to it immediately after the event.

• **Secondary Source:** source created by someone either not present when the event took place or removed by time from the event.