

## Historical Background

After the Pequot War, a war between New England settlers and Indians in 1636-1637, New England was free of major Indian wars for about forty years. During this period, the region's Native American population declined rapidly and suffered severe losses of land and cultural independence.

Between 1600-1675, New England's Native American population fell from 140,000 to 10,000, while the English population grew to 50,000. Meanwhile, the New England Puritans launched a campaign to convert the Indians to Protestantism. One leading missionary convinced about 2000 Indians to live in "praying towns," where they were expected to adopt white customs.

In 1675, the chief of the Pokanokets, Metacomet (whom the English called King Philip), forged a military alliance including about two-thirds of the region's Indians. In 1675, he led an attack on Swansea, Massachusetts. Over the next year, both sides raided villages and killed hundreds of victims. Twelve out of ninety New England towns were destroyed. This war was called King Philip's War.

Relative to the size of the population, King Philip's War was the most destructive conflict in American history. Five percent of New England's population was killed--a higher proportion than Germany, Britain, or the United States lost during World War II. Indian casualties were far higher; perhaps 40 percent of New England's Indian population was killed or fled the region. When the war was over, the power of New England's Indians was broken. The region's remaining Indians would live in small, scattered communities, serving as the colonists' servants, slaves, and tenants.

## Document A: King Philip's Perspective (ORIGINAL)

So Philip kept his Men in Armes. Plimoth Gouverner required him to disband his Men, and informed him his Jealousy was false. Philip answered he would do no Harm, and thanked the Governer for his Information.

The three Indians were hungry, to the last denied the Fact; but one broke the Halter as it is reported, then desired to be saved, and so was a littell while, then confessed they three had dun the Fact; and then he was hanged. And it was reported Saussomon before his death had informed of the Indian Plot, and that if the Indians knew it they wold kill him, and that the Heathen might destroy the English for their Wickedness, as God had permitted the Heathen to destroy the Israellites of olde. So the English were afraid and Philip was afraid, and both increased in Arms. But for forty Yeares Time, Reports and jealousys of War had bin very frequent, that we did not think that now a War was breaking forth; but about a Week before it did, we had Cause to think it would. Then to endeavor to prevent it, we lent a Man to Philip, that is he would come to the Ferry we would come over to speak with him. About four Miles we had to come; thither our Messenger come to them; they not aware of it behaved themselves as furious, but suddenly appeased when they understood who he was and what he came for, he called his Counsell and agreed to come to us; came himself unarmed, and about 40 of his Men armed. Then 5 of us went over, 3 were Magistrates. We sate very friendly together. We told him our business was to endeavor that they might not receive or do Rong. They said that was well; they had dun no Rong, the English ronged them. We said we knew the English said the Indians ronged them, and the Indians said the English ronged them, but our Desire was the Quarrell might rightly be decided, in the best Way, and not as Dogs decided their Quarrells. The Indians owned that fighting was the worst Way; then they propounded how Right might take Place. We said, by Arbitration. They said that all English agreed against them, and so by Arbitration they had had much Rong; many Miles square of Land so taken from them, for English would have English Arbitrators; and once they were persuaded to give in their Armes, that thereby Jealousy might be removed, and the English having their Arms wold not deliver them as they had promised, untill they consented to pay a 100po, (100 pounds)and now they had not so much Sum or Muny; that they were as good be Idled as leave all their Livelihood.

We said they might chuse a Indian King and the English might chuse the Governor of New Yorke, that nether had Case to say either were Parties in the Differance. They said they had not heard of that Way, and said we honestly spoke, so we were perswaided if that Way had been tendered they would have accepted. We did endeavor not to hear their Complaints, said it was not convenient for us now to consider of, but to endeavor to prevent War; said to them when in War against English, Blood was spilt, that engaged all Englishmen, for we were to be all under one King; we knew what their Complaints wold be, and in our Colony had removed some of them in sending for Indian Rulers in

what the Crime concerned Indians Lives, which they very lovingly accepted, and agreed with us to their Execution, and said so they were abell to satisfy their Subjects when they knew an Indian sufered duly, but said in what was only between their Indians and not in Townships, that we had purchased, they wold not have us prosecute, and that that they had a great Fear to have any of their Indians should be called or forced to be Christian Indians. They said that such were in every thing more mischievous; only Disemblers, and then the English made them not subject to their Kings, and by their lying to rong their Kings. We knew it to be true, and we promising them that however in Government to Indians all should be alike, and that we knew it was our King's will it should be so, that altho we were weaker than other Colonies, they having submitted to our King to protect them, Others dared, not otherwise to molest them;so they expressed they took that to be well, that we had littell Case to doubt, but that to us under the King they would have yielded to our Determinations in what any should have complained to us against them.

But Philip charged it to be dishonesty in us to put off the Hearing the just Complaints, therefore we consented to hear them. They said they had bine the first in doing Good to the English, and the English the first in doing Rong; said when the English first came, their King's Father was as a great Man, and the English as a littell Child; he constrained other Indians from ronging the English, and gave them Corn and shewed them how to plant, and was free to do them any Good, and had let them have a 100 Times more Land than now the King had for his own Peopell. But their King's Brother, [Massasoit] when he was King, came miserably to die by being forced to Court, as they judge poysoned. And another Greavance was, if 20 of their honest Indians testified that a Englishman had dun them Rong, it was as nothing; and if but one of their worst Indians testified against any Indian or their King, when it pleased the English it was sufficient. Another Grievance was, when their King sold Land, the English would say, it was more than they agreed to, and a Writing must be prove against all them, and some of their Kings had dun Rong to sell so much. He left his Peopell none, and some being given to Drunknes the English made them drunk and then cheated them in Bargains, but now their Kings were forewarned not for to part with Land, for nothing in Comparison to the Value thereof. Now home the English had owned for King or Queen, they would disinheret, and make another King that would give or sell them these Lands; that now, they had no Hopes left to keep any Land. Another Grievance, the English Catell and Horses still increased; that when they removed 30 Miles from where English had any thing to do, they could not keep their Corn from being spoiled, they never being used to fence, and thought when the English bought Land of them they would have kept their Catell upon their owne Land. Another Grievance, the English were so eager to sell the Indians Lickers, that most of the Indians spent all in Drunkness, and then ravened upon the sober Indians, and they did believe often did hurt the English Cattel, and their King could not prevent it. We knew before, these were their grand Complaints, but then we only endeavored to persuaid that all Complaints might be righted without War, but could have no other Answer but that they had

not heard of that Way for the Governor of Yorke and an Indian King to have the Hearing of it. We had Cause to think in that had bine tendered it would have bine accepted. We endeavored that however they Should lay down the War, for the English were to strong for them; they said, then the English should do to them as they did when they were too strong for the English.

*Source: John Easton, an official from Rhode Island, met King Philip in June of 1675 in an effort to negotiate a settlement. Easton recorded Philip's complaints. However, Easton was unable to prevent a war, and the fighting broke out the following month.*

## Document B: Colonists' Perspective (ORIGINAL)

Various are the reports and conjectures of the causes of the present Indian warre. Some impute it to an imprudent zeal in the magistrates of Boston to christianize those heathen before they were civilized and enjoining them the strict observation of their laws, which, to a people so rude and licentious, hath proved even intolerable, and that the more, for that while the magistrates, for their profit, put the laws severely in execution against the Indians, the people, on the other side, for lucre and gain, entice and provoke the Indians to the breach thereof, especially to drunkenness, to which those people are so generally addicted that they will strip themselves to their skin to have their fill of rum and brandy....

Some believe there have been vagrant and jesuitical priests, who have made it their business, for some years past, to go from Sachem to Sachem, to exasperate the Indians against the English and to bring them into a confederacy, and that they were promised supplies from France and other parts to extirpate the English nation out of the continent of America. Others impute the cause to some injuries offered to the Sachem Philip; for he being possessed of a tract of land called Mount Hope...some English had a mind to dispossess him thereof, who never wanting one pretence or other to attain their end, complained of injuries done by Philip and his Indians to their stock and cattle, whereupon Philip was often summoned before the magistrate, sometimes imprisoned, and never released but upon parting with a considerable part of his land.

But the government of the Massachusetts...do declare these are the great evils for which God hath given the heathen commission to rise against them.... For men wearing long hair and perewigs made of womens hair; for women...cutting, curling and laying out the hair....For profaneness in the people not frequenting their meetings....

With many such reasons...the English have contributed much to their misfortunes, for they first taught the Indians the use of arms, and admitted them to be present at all their musters and trainings, and shewed them how to handle, mend and fix their muskets, and have been furnished with all sorts of arms by permission of the government....

The loss to the English in the several colonies, in their habitations and stock, is reckoned to amount to 150,000 l. [pounds sterling] there having been about 1200 houses burned, 8000 head of cattle, great and small, killed, and many thousand bushels of wheat, pease and other grain burned...and upward of 3000 Indians men women and children destroyed.

*Source: The English government sent Edward Randolph to New England to report on the causes for the wars with the Native Americans. He wrote this report in 1685.*

## Guiding Questions

Name \_\_\_\_\_

### DOCUMENT A

**Sourcing:** *Always source the document before you begin to read!*

1. Who wrote this account? Was the author a colonist or a Native American?
2. When was this account written? (before or after King Philip's War?)
3. Given who wrote it, do you think it's fair to call the document *King Philip's Perspective*? Why or why not?

**Contextualization:** *Begin reading the document after you've sourced it.*

4. What was happening in New England that led to this meeting?
5. What are 3 complaints that the Native Americans made to John Easton?

### DOCUMENT B

**Sourcing:** *Always source the document before you begin to read!*

6. Who wrote this account? Why would the English government care about what was happening all the way across the ocean in New England?
7. When was this account written? (before or after King Philip's War?)
8. What do you predict the author will say were the causes of King Philip's War?

**Close reading:** *Begin reading the document after you've sourced.*

9. What are three different theories that the colonists have for why Indians attacked English settlements? Do the colonists blame themselves? Explain.

10. Based on Document B, how would you describe the colonists' attitude towards Native Americans?

**Corroboration:** *Compare the accounts in Documents A and B.*

Using evidence from Documents A **and** B, what do you think caused King Philip's War of 1675?

## How important was Weetamoo to the Wampanoag resistance?

Examine the documents below. Then consider the question above.

### Document A: Women and the American Story

Weetamoo was born between 1635 and 1640 on the shores of what is today known as Cape Cod. Her father, Corbitant, was the sachem, or leader, of the Pocasset people, one of the tribes of the Wampanoag Confederacy that lived throughout the territory we today call New England. Weetamoo had one younger sister, but no brothers, so she knew from an early age that she would become the sachem of the Pocasset people... Weetamoo grew up in a world that was changing fast. Just before she was born, European diseases brought by the first traders had killed 90 percent of the Wampanoag population. Rival tribes had started to try to take over Wampanoag land. At the same time, the Puritan English settlers were spreading out from their first settlement at Plymouth. When she became sachem, Weetamoo had to figure out how to protect her people from all of these threats.

One of her strategies was to marry men who would make her position stronger. Her first marriage was to the sachem of the Saugus, another tribe of the Wampanoag Confederacy. When he died shortly after their wedding, she married Wamsutta, the son of the Massasoit, the great sachem of the Wampanoag Confederacy. Her sister married Wamsutta's younger brother Metacom. These marriages brought the Pocasset people close to the center of Wampanoag power. At the time of her marriage, the Wampanoag Confederacy was following a policy of peaceful negotiation with the English, and used their English allies to keep aggressive neighboring tribes away.

Wamsutta became the great sachem when Massasoit died in 1661. As the sachem of the Pocasset, and the wife of the great sachem of the Wampanoag, Weetamoo's stature in the community grew. But trouble was brewing. The English colonists of Plymouth kept demanding more and more land from the Wampanoag, and the English government started to view the Wampanoag as enemies rather than allies. In 1662, Wamsutta was brought at gunpoint to Plymouth to answer for the crime of selling land to people other than the Plymouth government. While he was there, he became suddenly ill and died. Weetamoo and Metacom both believed he was poisoned, and they lost faith in the English as allies from that point forward. Metacom became the great sachem of the Wampanoag, and tensions with the English continued to rise.

Weetamoo dissolved her marriage, and committed her warriors to Metacom's cause. Metacom started attacking English settlements in 1675. He was trying to stop the further spread of English people into Wampanoag lands. This was the start of Metacom's War. The English call the conflict King Philip's War (the English called Metacom "Philip" in their official documents after his father petitioned them for an English name for his sons). At this critical moment,

#### Vocabulary

- **Cape Cod:** A peninsula in Massachusetts Bay.
- **diplomacy:** The skill of managing political relationships.
- **Great Sachem:** The leader of the Wampanoag Confederacy.
- **hides:** Animal skins.
- **Narragansett:** A Native American tribe that has lived in present-day Rhode Island since pre-European contact.
- **Pocasset:** One of the original tribes of the Wampanoag Confederacy.
- **Puritans:** A group of English Protestants who left England for the New World to start their own settlements where religion would govern daily life.
- **sachem:** Name for a clan or tribe leader in Native communities in the Northeastern United States.
- **Saugus:** One of the original tribes of the Wampanoag Confederacy.
- **Wampanoag Confederacy:** A group of Native tribes that cooperated for mutual security and support in southeastern Massachusetts.



Weetamoo had to make a choice: continue trying to negotiate with the English, or fight for the rights of her people. Her fourth husband decided to side with the English. But Metacom was her brother-in-law twice over, the great sachem of her people, and he was fighting to try to protect all of the Wampanoag from English aggression. Weetamoo dissolved her marriage, and committed her warriors to Metacom's cause. In the early days of the war, she further committed to Metacom by marrying his ally, the Narragansett sachem Quinnapin.

By the summer of 1675, Weetamoo's marital and family connections meant that she commanded the allegiance of every major tribe in Metacom's alliance. She was a powerful sachem, and a feared enemy of the English people. When writing about the war, a Puritan leader described her as second only to Metacom in terms of "the mischief that has been done, and the blood that has been shed in this War."

Metacom, Weetamoo, and Quinnapin led raids against English settlements in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island in 1675 and 1676. Outnumbered and outgunned, the allies had to stay one step ahead of the English while they tried to do enough damage to drive the English out of their lands. During this time Weetamoo gave birth to a baby, who died shortly after it was born. This personal tragedy does not seem to have slowed her down, which shows her mental strength and determination.

King Philip's War proved disastrous for Weetamoo and her people. After a strong start, vicious English counterattacks wore away at the tribal alliance. Wampanoag society was destroyed. At least 750 Wampanoag were killed during the war, and all the Wampanoag who were captured were sold into slavery. Weetamoo drowned while crossing a river on her way to battle. Her body was found by English soldiers on August 3, 1676. She was so feared that the soldiers mounted her head on a pole outside an English settlement as proof that she had been defeated. The sight of her head sent captive Native warriors into a frenzy of grief, proof of the love she inspired in her people. Her endeavors may have failed, but her life story stands as a testament to the ways women in Native communities fought back against the aggression of European settlers.

*Women and the American Story. "Life Story: Weetamoo (c.1635-1676)." New York Historical Society. Last modified October 16, 2020. <https://wams.nyhistory.org/early-encounters/english-colonies/weetamoo/>.*

*\*There are more primary source accounts about Weetamoo available at [www.remedialherstory.com](http://www.remedialherstory.com).*

### **Questions for Analysis**

**1. How important was Weetamoo to the Wampanoag's resistance? How do you know? Find evidence in the document.**

**2. Why do you think the sources in the previous activity did not include her?**

