

# Finding Answers with Founding Documents...

## **City Upon a Hill (Model of Christian Charity)**

by John Winthrop

**Social Studies: 10th Grade United States History/ 12 Grade Government**

### **Essential Questions:**

- Considering the time and occasion of this sermon, why do you think Winthrop's message became a founding document?
- What does the phrase "city upon a hill" imply about the great promise, purpose, and/or hope of America?

### **Standards:**

1. ACOS 10th Grade U.S. History I, Standard #1
  - Compare effects of economic, geographic, social, and political conditions before and after European explorations of the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries on Europeans, American colonists, Africans, and indigenous Americans.
  - Comparing European motives for establishing colonies, including mercantilism, religious persecution, poverty, oppression, and new opportunities
2. ACOS 10th Grade U.S. History I, Standard #2
  - Compare regional differences among early New England, Middle, and Southern colonies regarding economics, geography, culture, government, and American Indian relations.
  - Explaining the role of essential documents in the establishment of colonial governments, including the Magna Carta, the English Bill of Rights, and the Mayflower Compact
3. ACOS Appendix C, Literacy Standards #1, #2, #4, and #5

- “Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.”
- “Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.”
- “Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social studies.”
- “Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis.”

### **Objectives:**

1. Identify and explain the ideals and principles expressed by John Winthrop’s “City Upon a Hill.”
2. Establish the “old world” context for the sermon and distinguish it from the hope and promise offered by the “new world.”
3. Summarize the features of a “city upon a hill” and how they might inspire others to make America their new home.

### **Materials:**

1. Bell Ringer Activity: Printed or projected copy of a “City Upon a Hill” annotated document page
2. Before Activity: Printed copies of the “New Hope in the New World” activity sheet.
3. During Activity: Printed copies of the “Building A City Upon a Hill” activity sheet.
4. After Activity: Printed copies of “The City Today” activity sheet.

## **Procedures:**

1. Bell Ringer strategy: Bell Ringer Question based on the “City Upon a Hill” excerpt
  - a. Students will analyze the selection and annotations from the “City Upon a Hill” document and answer the question at the top: “Considering the time and occasion of this sermon, why do you think Winthrop’s message became a founding document?”
2. Before strategy: “New Hope in the New World”
  - a. To better understand the “New Jerusalem” and the new standard that Winthrop hoped to establish in the New World, students need to contrast the traditional ways of the Old World from the new opportunities that would eventually flourish in America.
  - b. Sixteen blue boxes containing brief old and new world descriptions have been mixed up near the top of the sheet. Again, the blue boxes consist of EITHER old ways (descriptions of the status quo in the Old World) or new opportunities (descriptions of changes/freedoms that would eventually come to fruition in the New World).
  - c. Students should decide whether each description represents the Old World or the New World and organize them accordingly by writing them in the appropriate column at the bottom of the page. Old world descriptions should be written in the green boxes entitled “Ways of the Old World” while new world descriptions should be written in the red boxes entitled “New World Opportunities.”
3. During strategy: “Building A City Upon a Hill”
  - a. Winthrop’s vision for the New World inspired the creation of a “New Jerusalem” that included some of his ideas while eventually incorporating additional components promoted by other movements such as the Enlightenment.

- b. For this activity, it's recommended that students work with a partner, but this can easily be an individual activity if preferred by the teacher.
  - c. Students (pairings or individual students) should draw a city upon a hill that includes manifestations or illustrated representations for each of the 12 components/ideals listed in the box near the top of the page.
  - d. To make sure all 12 components/ideals are represented in the picture, students should record the number for each component within the drawing next to the illustration that depicts it.
  - e. Students may draw in the space provided on the activity sheet or they create their city on larger poster sized boards or sheets if you want them to put more time, color, and creativity into the activity.
  - f. Allow the students to be creative and original in their depiction of the city just as long as they address all 12 components/ideals from the box.
  - g. Optional: Consider allowing the students to present their creations, explain how each image represents the component/ideal, and/or allow for a gallery walk that allows each student to walk around the room and look at the pictures created by their classmates.
4. After strategy: "The City Today"
- a. Instruct students to reflect on the Before and During Activities they completed. Also, ask them to consider the current state of our nation.
  - b. For this activity, consider organizing the class into groups of 2-4 students in order to help all students generate more examples and better solutions. Again, this activity may also be individual work if the teacher prefers.

- c. The students should brainstorm and identify at least 5 shining, bright aspects of America and record them in the first table (yellow table) on the left-hand side.
- d. Beside each bright spot, students should provide a real-world example as evidence of this glowing aspect of America.
- e. Then, students should move on to the second table (green table), brainstorm, and identify 5 areas for urban renewal (i.e...areas in which America can improve). A simple term or phrase will suffice.
- f. Beside each area for renewal, students should offer a solution that may address the problem or update our city in a positive fashion.
- g. If time permits, allow each group to share their answers.

# Background Information

## City Upon a Hill

*"For we must consider that we shall be a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us..."*

—John Winthrop

*"Winthrop's address comes down to us as a cultural artifact, an integral part of our national legacy, and the city it envisions at its climax is a key to the social-symbolic game through which the United States has perpetuated itself as America."*

—Sacvan Bercovitch

*"America is, and always will be, a shining city on a hill."*

— Ronald Reagan

*"I think America is still a bright, shining city on a hill—not because we're perfect but because we struggle in our imperfections every day."*

— Condoleezza Rice

The English colonization of North America's eastern seaboard began with the failed "Lost Colony" of Roanoke (Virginia) in 1585. The first successful colony of



Jamestown (1607) was a near failure that endured a "starving time" and rebounded with the cultivation of tobacco. More successes and failures would follow as English investors created a series of joint stock companies for the purpose of carving out colonies in the New World and pursuing money-making endeavors. In 1620, Separatists (Pilgrims) hoping to distance themselves from the Church of England by creating their own religious community settled near the Massachusetts Bay in what became known as the Plymouth Colony. Then, in



the late 1620s, a group of wealthy Puritans also seeking to separate from the “corruption” of the Anglican Church formed the Massachusetts Bay Company to establish a utopia of both Puritan theology and a capitalist pursuit of profit.



John Winthrop became the governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and led the first wave numbering over 700 colonists to Massachusetts Bay in 1630. While on board one of the passenger ships, known as the *Arbella*, Winthrop delivered his famous “Model of Christian Charity” that would become better known as the “City Upon a Hill” sermon. Facing the daunting tasks of taming the wilderness, native resistance, and potential



squabbling from within, Winthrop was determined to inspire his followers with righteous and motivational thoughts to help them overcome the upcoming challenges of settlement. As a clear reference to the statements of Christ in Matthew 5 (“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.”), Winthrop captured the Judeo-Christian aura of Jerusalem and lifted up their new

settlement in Massachusetts Bay as the next beacon of light for the world to idolize, follow, and place its hope upon as a model of righteousness. The words uttered by Winthrop would be referenced time and time again over the centuries as Americans contemplated their mission, purpose, and position on the world stage and in the ideals they sought to enshrine among their fellow citizens.

The Puritans instilled the so-called “Puritan Work Ethic” as a cornerstone of American values. This work ethic drove a dozen generations of Americans to endure self-sacrifice in order to achieve ambitious goals that would ultimately build the most powerful and arguably the most independent nation on Earth. Winthrop’s message or recipe for success was grounded in an unwavering faith in

God's guidance, the fear of God's wrath, and the devotion they must have to the community of believers through Christian charity. Even though subsequent generations may or may not prescribe to Christian theology, many would celebrate the words as the dawning of America's greater purpose to be brightest source of liberty and opportunity to lead the free world.

Clearly, casting America as the "New Jerusalem" is another example of American exceptionalism that boasts a degree of superiority over the rest of the world. Nevertheless, the flood gates of immigration across several centuries, and the rise of American influence during the 20th century as the leader of the free world, have continued to echo the sentiments of Winthrop and validate many of the exceptional claims. America is not perfect and remains a work in progress, but the wisdom, ideals, and ethics captured by this sermon have produced bountiful fruits for the blessed American people and for those who continue to follow the light from the hill and risk everything to join the New Jerusalem.







**Bell Ringer:**  
Considering the time and occasion of this sermon, why do you think Winthrop's message became a founding document?

**Context:**  
John Winthrop was the Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony who led a great migration of English Puritans to the New England colonies of North America during the first half of the 1600s. This sermon prepared the Puritans for the struggle and task ahead as they sailed on the *Arbella* en route to the New World.

Selections from...

## “City Upon a Hill” (1630) by John Winthrop

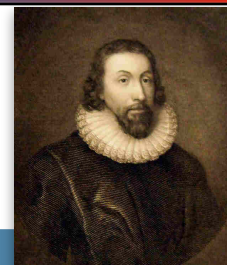
strong chance of failure, calamity, and division in a dangerous New World

future generations

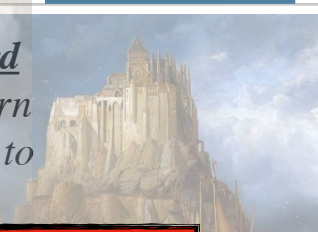
Biblical example

The Puritans were known for their disunity with the Church of England. To succeed in the untamed wilderness of America, they must work and build a community together...based on charity and compassion for each other.

“Now the only way to *avoid this shipwreck*, and to *provide for our posterity*, is to follow the *counsel of Micah*, **to do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with our God**. For this end, we must be knit together, in this work, as one man. We must entertain each other in **brotherly affection**....We must **delight in each other**; make other's conditions our own; **rejoice together, mourn together, labor and suffer together**, *always having before our eyes our commission and community in the work, as members of the same body*. So shall we keep the unity of the spirit in the *bond of peace*.... For we must consider that we shall be as **a city upon a hill**. ***The eyes of all people are upon us***. So that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause him to withdraw his present help from us, *we shall be made a story and a by-word through the world*....Beloved there is now set before us life and good, Death and evil, in that we are commanded this day to **love the Lord our God, and to love one another, to walk in his ways and to keep his Commandments and his Ordinance and his laws**, and the articles of our Covenant with him, that *we may live and be multiplied, and that the Lord our God may bless us in the land whither we go to possess it*. But if our hearts shall turn away...***we shall surely perish out of the good land*** whither we pass over this vast sea to possess it.”



**Pillar of the message:**  
America will be the “New Jerusalem”...a bright shining beacon for the world to follow.



Although this sermon was offered for the Puritans as they prepared to colonize New England, the words have been referenced throughout American history as a timeless statement of our greater purpose and the covenant (agreement) we share with God and with one another. These are the covenants that permeated the land with a distinction that other countries would strive to emulate (city on a hill). For every citizen that truly believes America is the greatest country in the world...this sermon embodies the common ideals and values that instilled greatness in the colonies that would eventually grow to become the United States of America and the leader of the free world.

## Bell Ringer Model Answer:

This sermon was given as a great migration of new English settlers was about to heavily populate the New England colonies and lay the foundation of colonists that would one day become a nation of citizens. This sermon demonstrates that these colonists understood the hope, possibility, and bright future that was in store for this new world if they dedicated themselves to God, each other, and the core values needed to build a great city that other societies would model themselves after and look up to. As America became not only an independent nation but a great and powerful bastion of democratic principles, this sermon was often referenced as a collection of thoughts that represented our purpose and the important place we would hold for the rest of the world. It's an example of American exceptionalism, but a long history of American international leadership, heroics, strength, and the steady flow of immigrants longing to be part of this "city upon a hill" and the ideals that shine across the oceans support this sense of exceptionalism.

## Before Activity: New Hope in the New World

**Directions:** To better understand the “New Jerusalem” and new standard that Winthrop hoped to establish in the New World, we need to contrast the traditional ways of the Old World from the new opportunities that would eventually flourish in America. The blue boxes below consist of EITHER old ways (descriptions of the status quo in the Old World) or new opportunities (descriptions of changes/freedoms that would eventually come to fruition in the New World). Decide whether each description represents the Old World or the New World and organize them accordingly by writing them in the appropriate column at the bottom of the page.

### Old Ways vs. New Opportunities

Monarchy	Civil Liberties of the People Protected by Law	Governing Authorities Elected by the People	Religious Warfare/ Few Religious Freedoms
Representative Government	Meritocracy: People Advance Due to their Abilities/Merits	Constitutional Law to Limit the Powers of Government	Rugged Spirit of Individualism or Self-Reliance
No Separation Between Church and State	Wealth and Privilege Based on Birthright	Population of Subjects with Sworn Allegiance to King	Peasant Serfs Subject to the Nobility and their Manors
Freedom of Religion	Community of Neighbors Working for Common Good	Population of Citizens with Rights and Responsibilities	Political Authorities Serving for Life and Passing Positions to Heirs (Nepotism)

Ways of the Old World
1)
2)
3)
4)
5)
6)
7)

### A City Upon a Hill



New World Opportunities
1)
2)
3)
4)
5)
6)
7)
8)
9)

## During Activity: Building A City Upon a Hill

**Directions:** Winthrop's vision for the New World inspired the creation of a "New Jerusalem" that included some of his ideas while eventually incorporating additional components promoted by other movements such as the Enlightenment. For this activity, DRAW a city upon a hill that includes illustrated representations for each of the components/ideals listed in the box directly below. Record the number for each component within the drawing next to the illustration that depicts it.

### Components and Ideals of "A City Upon a Hill"

- |                                   |                    |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1) citizenship                    | 7) faith           |
| 2) "bond of peace"                | 8) unity           |
| 3) representative government      | 9) civil liberties |
| 4) constitutional law             | 10) voting         |
| 5) "laboring together"/hard work  | 11) civic duty     |
| 6) community ("love one another") | 12) meritocracy    |



## After Activity: The City Today

**Directions:** Reflect on the Before and During Activities that you just completed and the current state of our nation. Identify at least 5 bright shining aspects of America and record them in the first table below. Beside each bright spot, provide a real-world example as evidence of this glowing aspect of America. Then, move on to the second table and identify 5 areas for urban renewal (i.e...areas in which America can improve). Beside each area for renewal, offer a solution that may address the problem or update our city in a positive fashion.

America is Shining Bright in...	Real-World Examples
✓	👍
✓	👍
✓	👍
✓	👍
✓	👍

America Needs Urban Renewal in...	Solutions
-	+
-	+
-	+
-	+
-	+



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#### Ways of the Old World

1) Monarchy

2) Religious Warfare/Few Religious Freedoms

3) No Separation Between Church and State

4) Wealth and Privilege Based on Birthright

5) Population of Subjects with Sworn Allegiance to King

6) Peasant Serfs Subject to the Nobility and their Manors

7) Political Authorities Serving for Life and Passing Positions to Heirs (Nepotism)

### A City Upon a Hill



#### New World Opportunities

1) Civil Liberties of the People Protected by Law

2) Governing Authorities Elected by the People

3) Representative Government

4) Meritocracy: People Advance Due to their Merits

5) Constitutional Law to Limit the Powers of Government

6) Rugged Spirit of Individualism or Self-Reliance

7) Freedom of Religion

8) Community of Neighbors Working for Common Good

9) Population of Citizens with Rights and Responsibilities

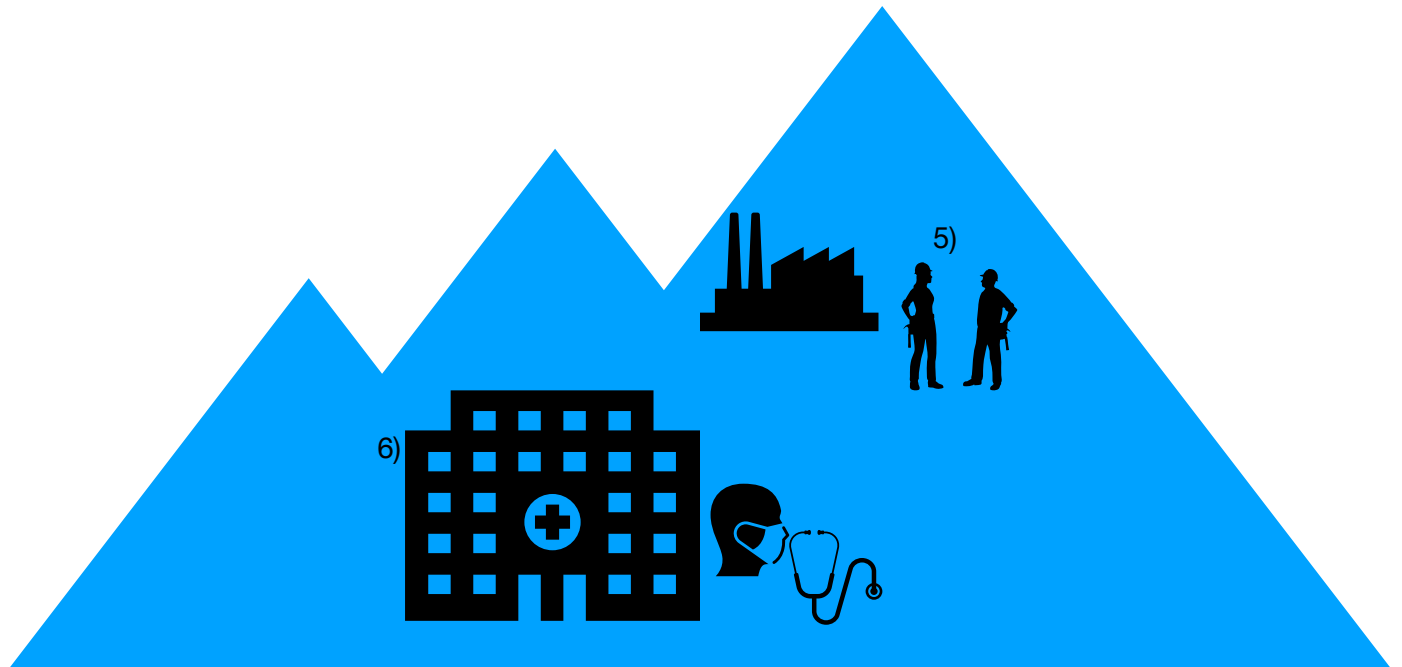
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Examples:

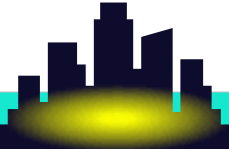







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America is Shining Bright in...	Real-World Examples
 Civil liberties shared by citizens	 Constitutional amendments and court rulings protecting things like speech/due process
 Religious freedom	 Free Exercise and Establishment Clauses
	
	
	

America Needs Urban Renewal in...	Solutions
 Gender discrimination	 Close some of the legal loopholes protecting employers from lawsuits
 Poverty	 Provide more incentives for best educators to teach in poverty-stricken school systems
