Session 1

Extract from *The Boy Who Fell Off The Mayflower* by P.J. Lynch

Story told by John Howland

**The Speedwell**

We made good time skirting round the coast to Southampton, and there we waited till our smaller ship, the *Speedwell*, arrived from Holland with the rest of our company. The two vessels were drawn up side by side and tied together, and there was a joyful welcome as we met our old friends again.

William Bradford, Captain Standish, and the other important folks gathered around my master. I went to chat with the other servants. The lads were excited about the adventure ahead of us.

“I heard that the trees there are five times bigger than in England,” said Bill Butten, the doctor’s servant, “and the rivers are full to the brim with fat fish begging to be caught.”

“There’s a parcel of land and a fine suit of clothes awaiting me next spring,” said Roger Wilder. He had only six months left of his indenture.

“I’ll have my pick of all the free English girls in Virginia to wed. Poor old Howland here will have to wait another three years.”

“You may laugh, Roger, but when my time is through, I’ll be jumping on the first ship headed back for England. London is where I’ll make my fortune. Perhaps I’ll open a shop selling soap and candles to foolish folk who want to go live in the New World!”

“Now there’s a fine young lady. Might made a good wife for me in a year,” said Bill, and he nodded toward a girl who was playing nearby with the little ‘uns.

“Master Tilley will have your hide if you go near his Lizzy,” said Roger. “When she comes of age to marry, he’ll be wanting her to marry the doctor, not the doctor’s skivvy.”

We all laughed and the girl glanced over. Then the children dragged her off to see the baby goats and piglets being brought on board.

It took weeks before our two ships set out from Southampton, but we had hardly gone ten leagues when our troubles began.

*Speedwell!* Never was a ship less well named. Every time that little ship was put under a swell of the sea, she became as open and leaky as a sieve. We had to limp along the south coast of England, stopping to patch her up several times. Finally, we put in to Plymouth harbour, and it was decided that we must leave *Speedwell* there and proceed with only the *Mayflower.*

Bill told me his master wasn’t keen to go on. He said that our supplies were near half eaten up before we had even left England.

“Half gone already, John! We’re sailing into winter. What will we eat when we get to Virginia?”

“Don’t forget those fat fish just begging to be caught,” I joked. But a good many of our company decided to stay behind.

Session 2

**Glossary**

Find the meanings of the following words. Add any additional words and their meanings of those you are unsure of.

|  |  |
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| **Word** | **Definition** |
| skirt/skirting (verb)  |  |
| vessel |  |
| indenture |  |
| foolish |  |
| folk |  |
| league | An old unit of length equivalent to three *nautical* miles  |
| nautical |  |
| skivvy |  |
| swell |  |
| limp |  |
| proceed |  |
| keen |  |

Session 3

1. Write two synonyms of the word ‘joyful’

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1. What did Bill Butten think was waiting for them in the New World?

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1. *Speedwell! Never was a ship less well named.*

What did John mean by this statement?

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1. Find and copy a metaphor from the text

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1. Why was Bill’s master not wanting to continue on the voyage?

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1. *“Don’t forget those fat fish just begging to be caught,” I joked.*

What does this tell you about how John Howland is feeling?

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1. *Bill told me his master wasn’t keen to go on.*

Which word is closest in meaning to the word keen as used in this sentence?

calm

eager

greedy

restless