"This year we’re learning about the Mayflower,” my teacher, Mrs. Bitenalo, says.

“Boring,” I mutter under my breath and roll my eyes. I doodle a picture of Cat, my pet mouse, in my notebook.

“Ivy, what did I just say?” Mrs. Bitenalo asks.

“You said we’re learning about the Mayflower,” I reply.

“What else did I say?” she asks.

“I forgot,” I whisper nervously.

“Ivy More, I’ve told you a thousand times that you need to listen in class,” she says in a very annoyed voice. “Will someone please repeat what I said for Ivy?”

Rose Canovey raises her hand and smirks at me.

“Rose,” Mrs. Bitenalo says.

“You said that we’re going to make models of the Mayflower and write a story about someone who rode on it,” Rose answers.

“Thank you, Rose,” Mrs. Bitenalo says.

Rose smirks at me again. She’s super-annoying and show-offish.
“Please start researching for the project,” Mrs. Bitenalo tells the class.

Later that afternoon, after school, I eat a snack of lemon nut cookies I made over the weekend, read about ways to decorate cakes, watch cooking shows on television, play with my little sister Mary, and avoid my homework.

After dinner, my dad asks me to take a box of old clothes to put away in the attic. I try to argue, but in the end, I’m carrying my summer clothing up to the attic. When I get there I switch on the lights, put down the box, and start to look around. A small area in the corner catches my eye. I walk over to it. There are dusty old books everywhere. I look at a few of my parents’ old yearbooks then see a very old, stained journal with yellowed torn pages underneath some travel books from my parents’ honeymoon. I take the journal out from underneath the books, blow off some dust and open it. I start to read. It says:

October 29, 1620

I am Ellen More. I am an eight-year-old girl. My three little siblings are Jasper, who is seven, Richard, who is six, and Mary, who is four.

I have bright blue eyes, long wavy brown hair, and a dark green dress with a dark red and pink floral pattern. I really like the dress because my mother made it for me. Lots of people compliment me on it. Today I met a woman named Mary Brewster while walking on the ship and she complimented me on my dress. It made me feel proud of my mother.

My siblings and I are on the Mayflower because our stepfather, Samuel More, sent us on the ship. He sent us on it because we are not really his children so he doesn’t want us. We are really Jacob Blakeway’s children. He secretly got married to our mother and they had my siblings and me. Our mother divorced Samuel More because she did not love him and moved away to be with our real father. Samuel More was so angry that he would not let our mother see us again. Now she doesn’t know where we are. I miss her. She wouldn’t have wanted us to go on the Mayflower.

The Mayflower is very crowded and grimy. It doesn’t really have enough room for everyone. I sleep in a tiny room with my siblings on the floor. I share a blanket with Mary. Yesterday, a mouse ran over my leg while I was falling asleep. There are mice everywhere, even though a few people brought their cats to catch the mice.

I don’t know very many people on the Mayflower. All of my friends stayed in England. I became friends with Love Brewster, Bartholomew Allerton, and Elizabeth Tilley. I’m jealous of them because they’re here with their parents. Other people say I shouldn’t play with Love Brewster and Bartholomew Allerton because they’re boys but I ignore that advice. Love Brewster, Bartholomew Allerton, and I like to watch the dogs and cats, to race each other, and to hide from each other. Elizabeth Tilley and I like to look at the waves, and to look for land.

I’m excited about seeing my relatives in the New World even though I’m also scared of drowning. I miss my friends and my cozy, spacious, and warm house that has no chance of sinking or getting lost.

I can’t wait until the Mayflower gets to the New World and until I can walk on steady ground again.

I instantly think of how much this old torn journal might be worth but then realize that keeping it would be better because I could get ideas from it for my homework.

I run downstairs to find my parents and to show them the journal entry. They read it and smile.

“Ellen More is your great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great aunt. She was

“So I have the same last name as real pilgrims?” I ask.

“You’re related to pilgrims who came over on the Mayflower,” my dad answers. “Did you put away the box of clothing?” he asks me.

“I brought it to the attic, but can I put it away a different time? I have homework,” I reply.

“What homework?” my parents ask suspiciously.

I can’t blame them for asking me the question that way. It’s extremely rare for me to do homework without them having to nag me over and over about it.

“Mayflower homework,” I answer with a smile.

“Okay, but if we come up later and you’re not doing homework, you’ll be in big trouble,” my dad warns me.

“No problem!” I say.

Three weeks later, I race to school feeling really excited about sharing my Mayflower projects. When I get there, I sit down and wait anxiously. The morning lessons seem to take forever, but after lunch, Mrs. Bitenalo says that we’ll start sharing our Mayflower work. When I am called on, I show everyone my model of the Mayflower and read my story about Ellen More. Mrs. Bitenalo says good job and tells me to sit down, but I answer that I have one more thing. Mrs. Bitenalo looks surprised but she lets me keep going.

“This project was one of the best things I’ve ever done,” I say, “because I learned about my family. Some of my ancestors were pilgrims on the Mayflower. That’s why this project was so special to me.”

Then I pull out Ellen More’s journal and show it to my class. Mrs. Bitenalo is really excited, and Rose Canovey looks a little green because of how jealous she is of me.

When I sit down, Mrs. Bitenalo claps and says how much it means to her that I liked the project and found such an amazing piece of my family history. I smile and feel very grateful for Ellen More and her siblings’ hard journey across the ocean.