The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity Study Guide

The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity by Jill Lepore

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Plot Summary

The most brutal war in American history is one about which most Americans have never heard, but King Philip's War was among the most destructive war in terms of lives lost and blood spilled per person that the United States has ever seen. Sometimes named Metacom's War or Metacom's Rebellion, King Philip's War was a series of battles between Native American tribes that inhabited southern New England (mostly Algonquian) and the English colonists and their Native American allies between 1675 and 1676. "King Philip" is actually the English name of the Indian chief who is said to have started the war, Metacomet or Metacom. He was the second son of Massasoit, the famous Indian chief who welcomed the English to Massachusetts some forty years before. The casualties of the war were significant: 1.5% of English colonists died (800 out of 52000) and 15% of Native Americans in the area (3000 out of 20000) lost their lives as a result of the conflict.

The causes of the conflict are complex, as is the case in most wars. Jill Lepore, the author of The Name of War: King Philip's War and The Origins of American Identity, argues that the root cause was a struggle for cultural identity. The English colonists were committed Christians and were intent on converting as many Indians to Christianity as possible. Indians who converted often moved to "praying towns" where Christian Indians would often conform to English culture as a result of their new religion.

The Indians were caught off guard by such unheard of and aggressive attempts at conversion. The English also gradually encroached on the native lands of the Indians, since they believed the Indians did not truly own the land because they did not develop it. Both forms of encroachments led the Indians to feel that their way of life was under attack. And due to a lack of understanding, the English saw the Indians largely as helpless savages who were on the edge of being sub-human. Finally, English diseases were killing massive amounts of Native Americans. While some Indian tribes were allied with the English, those who fought against the English were in a struggle to preserve their identities.

The English, on the other hand, were desperate not to lose their Englishness. They feared that their identities would be lost due to their separation and that they would become Indianized. They also did not want to be incredibly violent towards the Indians, since this would make them like the Spanish Conquistadors. Ultimately, Lepore argues, the English colonists developed their American identity by triangulating between the English and Indian experiences by using the Indian experience to differentiate themselves from the English but also to contrast themselves with the Indians. They largely fought the war because they were attacked, but King Philip's War led them to become nearly as brutal as the Conquistadors which greatly disturbed them.

The proximate cause of the war was the death of John Sassamon, a Christian Indian convert, translator and minister, who revealed Metacom's plans to attack the colonists to the English. He was then killed. When the English arrested and executed three of Metacom's advisors for the crime, Metacom began his assault in earnest. Lepore covers

all the events and more in the book but largely devotes her time to analyzing the ways in which King Philip's War was the result of simultaneous identity crises on the part of the colonists and the Indians in terms of their language, habits of cruelty, religion, slavery and historical narratives.

Prologue

Prologue Summary and Analysis

In 1676, King Philip's War was almost over. The English had united with several Indian tribes to fight several others who wished to eliminate the English colonies from the present-day area of New England. But the "savagery" of the Indians threatened English identity, since the Puritan settlers considered themselves civilized Englishmen despite having left England due to religious persecution. They were afraid of losing their identity. Many Puritans left New England in the 1630s and 1640s though some stayed on, and it was unclear what they would become, because they were closer in proximity to the Indians than to the English. The Puritans had wanted to build a "city on a hill" but seemed to have degenerated in the 1670s, as church membership and attendance dwindled and people were settling further inland and in more isolated areas. Trade with the Indians was increasing but without conversions.

However, many Algonquians feared the opposite, due to their ties to the English. The English had taken Indian land, disrupted trade systems, corrupted the power of native rulers and sought to undermine native religious leaders. Coastal populations were often destroyed by European diseases and many Indians decided to become Christians and live among the English. "King Philip" or the sachem Metacomet believed that too many Indians were become English and Christian.

King Philip's War began in June 1675. Both sides were vicious and merciless. The Wampanoags, Narragansetts, Nipmuchs, Pocomtucks and Abenakis attacked dozens of English towns. They burned houses and killed everyone they could. The English fought back with occasional help from the Mohegan, Pequot, Mohawk and Christian Indians. They burned wigwams, murdered women and children and sold prisoners into slavery. Both sides tortured the living and mutilated the dead.

The New England Algonquians had fought the English to maintain their Indianness. The New Englanders fought to gain Indian lands and erase Indian influence so that they would not need to doubt their Englishness. However, they could not be too brutal since the Spanish were known for being maximally brutal to the Indians and the colonists would also lose their Englishness if they became like the Spanish. The "city on a hill" of the Puritan colonists sought to advertise its civility to contrast with the Spanish conquistadors and French Jesuits. The problem for the English was that barbarism threatened them from every angle. If they remained at peace with the Indians, they would be savages but if they fought they would act like savages. England was also worried about becoming too violent itself, due to its own internal turmoil. The solution was to wage a quick, violent war, win it, and then write about it to win the war in print.

Yet the English would commit their own atrocities and they were disgusted with what they witnessed. However, this disgust with the Indian tactics allowed them to preserve

their identity. An inconsistent treatment of the atrocities of the English side and King Philip's side quickly appeared in the New England literature of the time.

However, the meaning of the events to the Indians goes unstated. But the author proposes to focus on it. The Indians were not enjoying the suffering of their victims. Instead, their practices were a form of collective catharsis for lost tribe members. For sufferers who endured the pain, it was a rite of passage. Yet the English wrote the history books, such as William Hubbard's Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians in New-England, published in 1677. Hubbard's book was widely read and gave a religious interpretation of the conflict. But the book, as it called the ways the Indians treated one another savage, assumed that at least some Indians had the same moral status as Englishmen, raising the idea of whether the Indians and the English were of the same nature, the question that caused the conflict in the first place.

Part One, Language, Chapter 1, Beware of Any Linguist

Part One, Language, Chapter 1, Beware of Any Linguist Summary and Analysis

King Philip's War was prompted by the disappearance and murder of John Sassamon, a Christian Indian minister from Namasket, a Christian Indian town. After visiting Plymouth and the governor, Josiah Winslow, to tell the colonists that Philip planned a war, Sassamon disappeared. His body was found in February. The colonists suspected Philip and had a meeting with him, which ended without conclusion. A witness later came forward and identified three men as the killers: Mattashunannamo, Tobias and his son Wampapaquan, three of Philip's chief counselors. The three men were put on trial and were judged guilty by a jury of English and Indians. They were executed on June 8th. Philip was so angry he swore revenge upon the English. Within three days, June 11th, the Wampanoags were readying for war outside of Plymouth and on June 24th, they attacked Swansea, killing nine colonists.

Different groups had different stories about how Sassamon died and who killed him. It was hard to figure out since all the records were biased and the Indian members of the jury were likely pressured into agreeing with the English. However, there is good evidence that John Sassamon was murdered. His lungs had no water in them, suggesting he didn't drown and he had strangulation marks. The evidence against Tobias, Wampapaquan and Mattashunannamo was vanishingly thin. Neither of the witnesses, Patuckson and Nahauton, was credible.

It is not immediately clear why Sassamon was killed. The English believed it was because Sassamon discovered that Philip was plotting against them. Some thought Sassamon was killed because he was a Christian minister in the Indian "praying town" of Namasket, close to Philip's home. Some think Philip had him killed because he was tired of Sassamon's preaching. Still others say Sassamon cheated Philip financially. But the reports conflict too much to determine motive. But in any event, the problem was that John Sassamon played the role of cultural mediator between English and Indian. Anglicized Indians like Sassamon were the first casualties of the war.

The English, of course, had the advantage of literacy but this did not mean they were exempt from myth-making. Literacy is in many ways a simple tool and is often controlled by the powerful, because it can be used to change minds. Indians could only become literate by making cultural concessions to the English. Thus, it seems that literacy can in one way destroy culture. This power can be seen in Sassamon's life.

The first English settlers arrived in 1630 when Sassamon's parents may have welcomed them. Epidemics plagued the coastal Algonquians twenty years earlier, and few survived. Sassamon's parents remained with the English in Dorchester and became

Christians, perhaps around 1633. Sassamon was an orphaned Indian raised in an English home and could speak and read and write English at a young age. He served as an interpreter and fought with the colonists in a war against the Pequot. In reverse, John Eliot was the first Englishman to learn the Algonquian language, Massachusett. He translated the Bible into their language, along with many other Christian works. He worked to convert Indians and stressed literacy as necessary for conversion. He relied on Sassamon in many cases for help. Eliot would establish the first "praying town" of Indians in 1650 and would organize thirty more. Sassamon continued the process and would later go to Harvard. Eliot would later produce an Indian Library and use the Cambridge Press to produce a Bible for every 2.5 Christian Indians. Sassamon was likely among the Christian Indian elite, since he could spread the new theological information.

But John Sassamon seems to have departed from Eliot in 1662 when Massasoit died and his son, Alexander (Philip's older brother) succeeded him. He began to work as Alexander's scribe and translator. However, Alexander died quickly and Philip became sachem. Sassamon signed as a witness to Philip's pledge of loyalty to the English. Sassamon continued in Philip's service until 1666; he became indispensable to Philip. Eliot wanted to convert Philip but Philip had no interest, not even when approached by Sassamon.

In 1671, Philip's men were found in Swansea displaying their weapons. Plymouth asked Philip to court where he admitted to preparing for war and then signed a treaty agreeing to turn over his arms to Plymouth. But the crisis was not well resolved and became a dress rehearsal for 1675. Sassamon helped bring an end to the conflict, functioning as a messenger and missionary. Philip started to lose trust in Sassamon and likely blamed him for his troubles with the English.

While Sassamon may have been technically killed due to his religion, it was likely no martyrdom as the English saw it. Instead, Philip was likely tired of people trying to convert him, as were his men. And some claimed that Philip's men killed Sassamon because they didn't want to convert. At the same time, Sassamon seems to have started abusing his power as Philip's functionary by changing the text in his documents without him knowing it. It is unclear why he did this since it is unclear where his primary loyalties laid. With Sassamon's death, Eliot's conversion program died. King Philip's War marked the slow ebb of English attempts to convert and educate Indians. Few copies of the Indian Bible survived after the war. The preservation of the written Massachusett language started to die and the spoken language started to die as well. Eliot did, however, print some accounts of King Philip's War. But these accounts often left out the fate of the Christian Indians, which Daniel Gookin found frustrating. He then wrote his own account, of which Eliot approved. But Hubbard's narrative eventually replaced theirs. Nonetheless, all the accounts take the Indian side for granted. Handling both perspectives was potentially explosive, as it had been for Sassamon. Despite his literacy, Sassamon never wrote history.

Part One, Language, Chapter 2, The Story of It Printed

Part One, Language, Chapter 2, The Story of It Printed Summary and Analysis

Between 1675, many narratives of King Philip's War were printed, including Increase Mather's A Brief History of the War. Hubbard's A Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians was published in 1677. Mather was fiercely competitive with Hubbard. He even campaigned to discredit Hubbard's account (he failed though). Those who experienced the worst of the war did not write about it. Literacy in early America was often characterized by religious context and there were a scarce number of books otherwise. Reading and writing were taught separately and most colonists could do only one or the other. An elite monopolized information. The twenty-one accounts of the war represent several types of writing aimed at different audiences. The most standard narratives were published in London. Other accounts were apocalyptic and some accounts were sermons. These were mostly printed in Boston and Cambridge. The war narratives varied significantly in content and all were very concerned with representing the truth.

News of the war spread quickly through the colonies when it began. Little of the news was good and less was reliable. There were many fact-checking correspondences. The colonists considered news distributed by the Indians to be the least reliable. Algonquians who fought against the colonists had their own lines of communication. The colonists begged for news but often expected it to be bad.

Again, many colonists found it hard to write about the war, such as John Pynchon who felt totally devastated by his experience of the burning of Springfield. Many felt required to write due to the magnitude of their suffering but the suffering made it too hard to write. The war was incredibly devastating and those who tried to write often ended their accounts prematurely before painful events were related. Some tried to mourn through their writings. Pain caused these people to contain the story, censure it or organize it. Most differed from the official record due to their illiteracy.

Part Two, War, Chapter 3, Habitations of Cruelty

Part Two, War, Chapter 3, Habitations of Cruelty Summary and Analysis

Nathaniel Saltonstall wrote a "True but Brief Account of our Losses" which is a standard picture of New England during the war, including landscapes of ash, farms destroyed, and bodies without heads. Many colonists could only watch as their towns were destroyed. The ravages exceeded the colonists' ability to articulate. The bodies, possessions and political identities of the New England colonists were severely wounded. Every attack was analogized to an attack on the human body. Nearly all the damage was understood as attacks on bounded social systems of the English by the Indians.

The descriptions of the war were brutal, including women scalped, children mauled and grandparents buried alive. Descriptions of destroyed homes often served as unintended metaphors of the destruction of families. Houses were seen as unable to protect families, just as families could not protect themselves.

When the Puritans came to America, they found the country raw and unsettled. The Algonquians were thought to be nomads. The English claimed the land on the grounds that the Indians did nothing to make it more valuable. The English created plantations by removing trees, building houses and planting crops. They at first built quickly but later replaced the houses. During the war, the New Englanders felt that their whole way of life was threatened. Not only did towns keep records of losses but families did too. The loss of homes was extremely painful and the surviving colonists gave great thanks to God for keeping their homes intact. Many felt stripped naked by the loss of all they had, which had special significance in highly modest New England. Nakedness also distinguished the Englishmen from the Indians in the minds of the English. Many thought the distinction was a stable one. Further, Englishmen became almost afraid to leave their homes.

Sometimes maps of New England marked English territory with small houses and churches and marked Indian territories with trees. Many portrayed the Indians as naked and homeless. Swamplands were hideous to the colonists and were assigned to the Indians. Indians were thought to live and die in swamps. However, the Algonquians, at least, were not nomadic but lived in villages in the summer and others in the winter. The groups would move often when a year was bad. But they often were found near swamps and it was in these areas where the Indians were treated the worst. The English were particularly brutal when they attacked the Narragansett's' Great Swamp on December 19th, 1675, but chroniclers thought the attack was just and saw nothing unnecessary about the violence used. The Indians made a similar attack on the town of Medfield which was burned. Mutilated casualties and those who lost their self-control

were threatened with losing their English identity. Some of these people wrote their stories down in order to retain their English identity in written form.

The Algonquians deliberately attacked English acquisition of land and the introduction of livestock because these practices significantly undermined the subsistence practices of the Algonquians. English livestock would often wander onto their properties. The Nipmucks rejected the English identification of property and identity. The English did not understand this, equating Algonquian attacks with mindless savagery or divine retribution.

Chapter 4, Where is Your O God?

Chapter 4, Where is Your O God? Summary and Analysis

King Philip's War definitely had the elements of a holy war. Due to their great losses, many New England colonists thought God was punishing them for their failure to convert the Indians to Christianity. The English had always looked for supernatural messages in the natural world, and so they saw many of the events in the war as spiritual messages; the letting of blood, for instance, represented filth and chaos. It also signaled the judgment of God. However, there was no general agreement about what the messages meant.

The Algonquian religious leaders also looked for messages from the spirit world. Both ministers and "powwaws" had a role in determining whether a war would be fought. In the 1660s, powwaw Passaconaway discouraged war, but in the 1670s the powwaws of many tribes encouraged it to preserve the Indian way of life. The colonists thought the powwaws received their orders from the Devil. So they saw war as inevitable. But God could also use the Indians to chastise his people to reform their behavior. To atone, the colonists fasted, prayed and humbled themselves. The Algonquians responded by using their knowledge of Christianity to try and convince the colonists that God had forsaken them. Their attacks on Christianity could be both symbolic and verbal.

Many colonists discouraged war before it began and wanted peace as soon as it could be achieved. They disagreed about the causes of the war. Some blamed the Indians while others thought that the Massachusetts officials had provoked Philip with spurious charges. Sometimes accounts were written about the causes of the war. But eventually all New Englanders were drawn into the war. They operated based on the just war theory of Dutch Calvinist social theorist and jurist Hugo Grotius. Due to a number of factors, the idea of holy war had died among Protestants. But some English Puritan thinkers had tried to revive the idea. Therefore, many of the colonists disagreed about why they were fighting. However, natural law theory as articulated by Grotius and others suggested that anyone who could reason could discern the principles of just war. Many wondered if the Indians were included among those who could discern these principles. When the Indians violated the precepts of just war, the colonists' condemnation became most vehement.

However, the Indians had their own rules of war as well, despite what the New Englanders perceived. The Indians started the war based on certain grievances which were cited by the Wampanoags. While the Indians often refused to speak to the English about their motives, they had their own well-developed ideas. For instance, they often found certain means of waging war unacceptable and sometimes adopted English codes of conduct. But the Indians would often engage in kidnapping to increase a diminished population, what is sometimes called a "mourning war". However, some anthropologists have suggested that the Indians should not be understood as engaging

in a war per se since it was too brutal. Sometimes these brutal actions were meant as forms of communication because the cruelty was ritualistic. But the English colonists generally could not see the pattern. They dismissed all Indian justifications for war.

On March 29th, 1676, the Narragansetts attacked Providence, destroying it. Roger Williams, the leader and founder of Rhode Island, considered himself their friend and felt deeply betrayed. Williams went to talk to them and they cited three reasons: that their behavior was simply strange, that the English forced them to do it, and that God had forsaken them. Williams was furious in response. The dialogue was unusual. Basically, it looked like the Indians fought for three reasons: to defend themselves against New England encroachment, to recover lost goods and people, and to punish the English for injuries upon them.

Part Three, Bondage, Chapter 5, Come Go Along with Us

Part Three, Bondage, Chapter 5, Come Go Along with Us Summary and Analysis

Mary Rowlandson was the wife of a prominent Puritan minister who was kidnapped by the Nipmuck Indians on February 10th, 1676. She lived with them for three months before a ransom was paid for her. She then wrote about the time she spent with the Indians. Her book, The Sovereignty and Goodness of God, is one of the first great works of American literature. In the story, she described meeting James Printer, a Nipmuck Indian converted to Christianity by John Eliot who was also taken captive.

Rowlandson wrote from a fully Christian perspective and believed that being held captive was a special brand of affliction that served to increase piety. Captivity, in her view, helped to redeem her from her sins, especially what she felt was her sin of not trying harder to escape. Her message suggested she did the best she could, despite the fact that many colonists pledged to die rather than be taken captive by Indians. She stressed maintaining her English identity by describing how revolting she found all things Indians. However, she claimed she was never sexually abused.

Joshua Tift was also held captive by Indians, this time the Narragansetts, though he was hanged and quartered for treason. Tift only told his story to save his life, however, admitting that he only let himself be taken captive to not die. He never mentioned torture though it made his story less believable. It was said that he had deserted the army, abandoned Christianity or married an Indian woman, all of which he was accused of doing. However, he had stood idly by and watched his captors kill English soldiers. Tift, as a man, was also held more responsible. Tift also oddly described himself as a slave despite the fact that the English believed they could not be truly enslaved by other humans but only held captive.

As for James Printer, the Nipmucks forced him and other Christian Indians to join with them or die, at least according to his account. Some think the Christian Indians of Printer's town of Hassanemesit willingly joined the Nipmucks. Printer was also afraid of running since he might be shot by vigilante English. What's worse, though, was that Christian Indians whom the colonists thought had betrayed them to the enemy Indians were seen as in many ways worse than the enemy Indians. Many Indians were killed when the colonists decided to kill the Christian Indians on Deer Island for suspected treachery by barring them from leaving, which led half of them to starve.

Because Printer described himself as a captive, he made his redemption possible, because many Christian Indians, after having been held "captive", when they returned to the English, were simply forgiven and thanked for bringing intelligence.

When Rowlandson returned to Boston, she ended up encountering some Christian Indians who brought her a letter from Printer. Two months later, Printer was offered amnesty and returned to Boston. To prove his loyalty to the English, Printer decided to strive to kill as many enemy Indians as he could. He also resumed his place as a printer at Cambridge Press.

Part Three, Bondage, Chapter 6, A Dangerous Merchandise

Part Three, Bondage, Chapter 6, A Dangerous Merchandise Summary and Analysis

On August 2nd, 1676, Philip's Wife Wootonekanuske and her nine year old son were captured. Ten days later, the colonists caught up with Philip and killed him on the spot. Wootonekanuske and her son were sent to Plymouth and it was debated as to whether the boy should be killed for his father's crimes. The Puritan divines saw Scripture that forbid killing a son for his father's crimes but they thought he in some way participated in the crime and declared that he would be executed. However, it never came to pass since the idea of hanging a nine year old was thought of as too grisly. Despite records of theological debates about what to do with the boy, historians know little of what happened except that Philip's son was sold into slavery and probably shipped to the West Indies. Hundreds of other Algonquians were sold as well.

Selling Indians systematically into foreign slavery started in earnest after the war when large numbers of Indians were captured or surrendered. The Indian trade was lucrative and sometimes illegal, but prosecution for crimes seems to have been rare. Indians who surrendered with an offer an amnesty were supposed to have been treated better, but the colonists had a hard time distinguishing them from the others. Surrendering and captured Indians were also confused with Christian Indians. The colonists had no idea which Indians were 'good' and which were 'bad'.

John Eliot strongly opposed selling Indians into slavery. One reason many agreed was because they thought it would make the war worse. Eliot argued also that slavery was worse than death. Eliot also sought to avoid the cruelties that the Spanish conquistadors had inflicted on the Indians they encountered. Some Catholic thinkers like Bartholomew de Las Casas argued that the Indians were fully human with equal moral status to Europeans; Eliot agreed. Las Casas and Eliot thought that if Indians souls could be redeemed, then they had worth and that therefore they should not be enslaved. But civil magistrates in New England justified enslavement as the just outcome of a just war that the Indians had lost and that started because of their own treachery.

However, the rationales required both treating Philip and his people as sovereign treaty-makers and as subjects of the King of England simultaneously. The author sees this move by the New Englanders as a step towards the racial ideologies that rested on putative differences between Indians and Europeans. The colonists moved towards treating the Indians as sub-humans but they never totally embraced the idea. However, Indian slavery became unpopular across the world as Indians gained a reputation for being subtle, bloody and dangerous.

Part Four, Memory, Chapter 7, That Blasphemous Leviathan

Part Four, Memory, Chapter 7, That Blasphemous Leviathan Summary and Analysis

Philip was killed on August 12th, 1676. His body was dragged through the mud and Captain Church had the executioner behead and quarter the body and hang the quarters from four trees, save a hand which he gave to Alderman, the Indian who shot him. Philip's head made an appearance at the Thanksgiving festival of that year in Plymouth. This gruesomeness represents the colonists' fears about becoming Indian due to their savage behavior during the war.

Hostilities died in southeastern New England but the victory was not an unambiguous success. Most Indians were killed by disease and starvation, not English soldiers. And the Mohawks had driven many Algonquians from their territories. Philip's forces also had to fight the allied Indian tribes, the Pequot, Mohegan and Christian Indians, so he had to fight three armies at once. No peace treaty was signed after August 12th; instead, the fighting just diminished, though Philip's death marked the end of destruction in southeastern New England. The war would be impossible to forget; the colonists would take more than three decades to rebuild what had been destroyed. The colonists commemorated the end of the war and relived its brutalities. Many English soldiers enjoyed watching their enemies die. Both the English and Algonquians would dismember each other's bodies and erect the parts as monuments. The English were horrified at the practice when the Algonquians did it.

However, over time, records of the war decayed and the colonists were less interested in remembering it.

In 1681, five years after King Philip's War ended, many of the colonists had resolved to be less violent and rash towards the Indians. Random, unprovoked attacks against Indians occurred in the years after the war but authorities cracked down on them. Many Indians started to live among the English and others in small enclaves. It is unclear how the Indians remembered the war. Many of the remaining Algonquians found themselves slaves or servants. As time went on, they started to live more like the English and spoke only English. By the middle of the 18th century, their native languages were dead despite the survival of their crafts. The New England Indians did not disappear, however, but became integrated.

A hundred years later, the memory of King Philip's War was resurrected as a propaganda tool against the British. The British were portrayed as more savage than the Indians of King Philip's War. The War suddenly became popular again and old war narratives were reprinted. However, for the American Indians, the American Revolution meant a loss not a gain of liberty as the British treated them better. Americans only

continued to take their lands and American popular culture basically denied the existence of the Indians. The Indians kept their storytelling alive. We know that in the 19th century they believed that King Philip's Head had been captured by his warriors and hidden until it was safe to bury it.

Part Four, Memory, Chapter 8, The Curse of Metamora

Part Four, Memory, Chapter 8, The Curse of Metamora Summary and Analysis

In the late 1820s, a play called Metamora, debuted. It was a reinterpretation of King Philip's War where Philip was seen as a victim of Sassamon's betrayal and New England confusion. The play was very popular and words from it became part of the vernacular. A week before its debut, Andrew Jackson gave his speech pronouncing his infamous "Indian removal". The play, in the author's opinion, served as a representation of the tension at the time between American and Indian identity, as indicated by the "removal". King Philip's War again came to represent the struggle for white American identity against the supposed Indian past.

Edwin Forrest played Metamora first. He became very famous and made a lot of money as a result; he gradually became America's most prominent actor. Philip paraphernalia spread throughout the country. He also had studied what was known about Philip's life. Washington Irving decided to write about Philip after seeing several histories of the war; he pushed back against the original English view of Philip and motivated trying to see Philip in a more positive light. Irving's book "Philip of Pokanoket" influenced both Forrest and Metamora's playwright John Augustus Stone. Forrest's library also included epic poems about the war.

Forrest's portrayal of Metamora was not popular in England, however, because the English found him brash and crude. His English counterpart Charles Macready, was similarly disliked in the United States, since he was more reserved and effete. Forrest represented the hardy common man and Macready the delicate aristocrat. A conflict arose between them that culminated in the Astor Place Riot, which the author took to represent a broader concern with national identity. Without its Indian heritage, American was nothing more than a vulgar England, or so it seemed to many.

Forrest was a symbol of the character of the American masses and did his best to learn all about the Indians that he could, partly through his good friend, a Choctaw Indian named Push-ma-ta-ha, with whom he seemed to have had a romantic and even erotic connection.

Metamora also drew critics when reviewers often objected to the "whitewashing" of Philip. Some audiences found Forrest's performance too authentic, though. Some saw the play as an indictment of Indian removal, especially in Georgia, where most Indians were removed. Georgians wanted to drive the Cherokee from Georgia with Jackson's support. However, the Cherokee had a well-organized society and their own governmental institutions. They had cultural solidary and the Supreme Court had defended their land rights. They even had a democratic government and a high degree

of literacy. Many New Englanders supported their rights. Many heroized Philip as a result. But only a handful realized that in so doing they brought into question the way nearly the entire nation had been acquired from the Indians. However, Andrew Jackson saw his actions as totally consistent with the way Americans had always treated the Indians. He said that the protesters were hypocrites, which raised obvious questions. Oddly, Forrest supported Jackson, though perhaps due to his strange belief in the noble but vanishing Indian that so many Americans shared.

Indians often attended Metamora and loved it, though they often restrained their reactions. Many white Americans wanted to see the Indians engage in a spontaneous emotional reaction.

Around that time, Indian land claims in Massachusetts were more successful however, and the author discusses a few cases, such as the suit brought by Pequot Indian and Methodist minister William Apess, who found Indians dispossessed of their meetinghouse in Mashpee, Massachusetts. Due to his work, they were given an independent district to live within. Apess himself was evidence that the Indians were not dead but very much still around. He often made speeches and referred to Indians as "we", though his creation of this collective identity was somewhat disingenuous.

Two decades after Metamora debuted, the play became a parody of itself in the form of Metamora; or, the Last of the Pollywogs, mocking Indian speech and culture. From there on the play became increasingly less popular because Indians became less interesting as they were forced further West. But in the 1830s and 1840s, Metamora was an important method through which whites came to believe that Indian removal was inevitable and Philip became a symbol of the search for an American identity and past. The American identity required the image of the heroic vanishing Indian. Their role in American history was fetishized as they were reconceived of as existing only in the past. Nonetheless, using Indian culture helped to distance Americans from being English. Adopting Indian language and words was another way of achieving this aim.

Epilogue, The Rock

Epilogue, The Rock Summary and Analysis

In 1919, a rock on the shore of Mount Hope Bay in Bristol, Rhode Island was discovered with Cherokee writing on it which, when read as transcribed spoken Algonquian in the Wampanoag dialect, reads in English: "Metacomet, Great Sachem". It was etched after the creation of Cherokee syllabary in 1821 but before 1835 when the rock was first noticed. However, the inscription has since faded and can no longer be examined. It has remained unclear who wrote it, though it may have been one of a group of Penobscot Indians from Maine who visited New England to work out land claims and made a pilgrimage to Mount Hope, where Philip had lived. The inscription may have resulted from seeing Metamora. Mashpee Wampanoags may have inscribed it as well. There were other options as well. Whatever it was, however, it seems to have represented an attempt to reestablish Indian cultural identity.

And indeed many Indians engaged in cultural revivals afterwards, such as the Narragansett cultural revival in the 1930s, started by a woman named Princess Red Wing. There was also a new spirit of pan-Indianism which was aided by funding from white historians and antiquarians. There is some disagreement about King Philip's War today, but only about how it is commemorated in public.

In sum, the author concludes, the story of King Philip's War is the story of how the English became Americans through many means, some brutal some not. They became Americans by triangulating their identity with the indigenous people. It also is the story of changing conceptions of Indian identity, from tribal rivalry, to struggles for the survival of culture and pan-Indianism.

Characters

Metacom

Metacom lived from 1639 to 1676, when he was shot by an Indian named Alderman, an ally of the English colonists. He was the second son of Massasoit, the Indian chief or sachem who welcomed the English colonists to the United States and became leader of the Algonquians after his older brother Wamsutta died. Initially, Philip followed the lead of his father and brother and lived at peace with the colonists starting when he became sachem in 1662. He made trade agreements with the colonists, for instance. However, the English continually expanded west and the Iroquois Confederation expanded from the East. He was forced to make major concessions in 1671 to the Plymouth colonists and lost much of his tribe's weaponry. They had to subject themselves to English law. When English encroachment proceeded too far and Metacom's Indian enemies were breathing down his neck, Philip declared war on all of them, dragging his people and their allies into a war for their survival.

By English accounts, Metacom was wise and an effective fighter but cruel and violent. He led his men to make brutal assaults on dozens of English settlers, burning whole towns to the ground and scalping and mutilating the bodies of hundreds. The colonists were similarly brutal to his people. It is unclear how to understand Philip/Metacom since everything we know about the period comes to us through the eyes of the English. In later centuries, some have sought to rehabilitate Metacom's reputation. Lepore discusses the way in which Metacom has become a symbol of the plight of the Indians at various periods of American history.

John Sassamon

John Sassamon or Wassasausmon was born in the early 17th century near modern-day Canton, MA into a Praying Indian town. Sassamon's parents had converted to Christianity early in Philip's life. He was not raised by them, however, since his entire family died in a smallpox epidemic in 1633. He was likely adopted into an English family, learned English and converted to Christianity. He was mentored by the Christian missionary John Eliot and often functioned as an interpreter and translator between the Indians and the English. His ability to speak English allowed him to attend Harvard but after he graduated, he drifted back into Indian life and started to serve as the secretary for several Indian chiefs, and in particular King Philip, who was absolutely reliant upon him for his skills.

Sassamon, in many ways, represented what both Indians and the English feared they would become, an image of the other. He lived between both worlds and apparently his identity conflict was significant. It arguably led to his death. It is said that when Sassamon learned of Philip's plot to declare war on the colonists he informed the English of the coming assault, betraying Philip in Philip's eyes. Only a few days later in

January or February 1675, he was found murdered, which outraged the English. Everyone believed Philip was responsible, or his men. Soon thereafter, three of Philip's top advisers were arrested, tried and executed by the English, which so enraged Philip that King Philip's War began in earnest.

Increase Mather

A Puritan minister of great importance in the history of the Massachusetts Bay colony, Increase Mather was a major figure during King Philip's War.

The Algonquian

The Indian inhabitants of New England and Southeastern Canada were the Algonquian. King Philip led many of them though others assimilated into English society.

The English Colonists

The mostly Puritan and Pilgrim English immigrants who settled New England starting around 1630 were referred to as the English colonists..

Christian Missionaries

Many of the colonists came to the United States for religious freedom; as such, they were quite religious on the whole and had many Christian missionaries among them who immediately fanned out to convert the Indian populations.

Christian Indians

Indians converted by the English colonists lived together as Christian Indians in "praying towns".

John Eliot

John Eliot was a major Christian missionary who is thought to have mentored John Sassamon.

Mary Rowlandson

The wife of a prominent Puritan leader, Mary Rowlandson was captured by Indians for three months and later wrote a book about her experiences which became one of the great bestsellers in New England.

William Hubbard

One of the historians of King Philip's War, William Hubbard wrote arguably the most influential account of the conflict from the perspective of a historian.

Edwin Forrest

A 19th century actor, Edwin Forrest became one of the most famous actors in the United States due to his portrayal of Metacom in the play Metamora.

The Narragansett

An Indian tribe, the Narragansett sometimes allied with the colonists.

Objects/Places

Southern New England

Southern New England was main site of conflict during King Philip's War.

Mount Hope Bay in Bristol, Rhode Island

Mount Hope Bay in Bristol, Rhode Island is an area near King Philip's home where a tablet with an inscription concerning him was found in the early 20th century. The inscription occurred sometime between 1825 and 1833.

Boston, Massachusetts

Boston, Massachusetts was the capital city of the Massachusetts Bay colony.

Plymouth

The capital of the Pilgrim colony was Plymouth.

Literacy

Literacy allowed the English to write the history of King Philip's War. A lack of literacy prevented the Indians from doing the same.

Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians in New-England

William Hubbard's popular history of King Philip's War that was often treated as definitive was titled Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians in New-England.

King Philip's Head

When Metacom was killed, his body was quartered and hung from four trees. His hand was removed and given to his killer and his head was removed and taken to the Plymouth Thanksgiving festival in 1676. It was hung from a pike and likely remained there for decades. His desiccated skull, in Lepore's mind, came to represent the shadow Metacom's memory cast over the colonists while they rebuilt over the next thirty years.

Praying Towns

Towns of Christian Indians were called Praying Towns.

Metamora

Metamora was a 19th century play portraying a rehabilitated Philip which was widely misunderstood.

Body Mutilation

Both the Indians and colonists mutilated the dead bodies of the other when they were killed.

Slavery

Many captured Indians were sold into slavery.

Conversion

Indian conversions to Christianity were a major contributor to the hostilities between Metacom and the English colonists.

Themes

Cultural Identity

Jill Lepore, the author of The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity, approaches the history of King Philip's War with a particular interpretative lens. She is not looking to give a general history of the war; in fact, few details of the history of the battles of the war are actually discussed. Instead, Lepore approaches the war as a kind of mystery. Why did King Philip's War happen? Why was it so gruesome? What motivated the two sides to fight as hard and as viciously as they did? Lepore's answer is that the conflict goes to the roots of the human psyche. King Philip's War derived from the struggle of two different groups to maintain their cultural, ethnic and community identities. Each side saw the other as threatening their very cultural existence.

Arguably, the Indian case for this claim was stronger. The Indians had initially welcomed the English, by and large, and had negotiated trade agreements with them and even backed off of their land. They kept their religion to themselves and focused on living peaceably with the English while they tended to their own inter- and intratribal conflicts. But in their view, the English were encroaching upon their land constantly, always expanding and the English also constantly tried to convert Indians to Christianity and then lead them to "praying towns" where Indians would gradually assume an English cultural identity. King Philip's War was, for the Indians, a struggle to preserve their very way of life.

The colonists' story is more complex. The English colonists, despite feeling persecuted by the English government, desperately wanted to maintain their English identity. The problem was that they were thousands of miles from the English and only a few miles from the Indians, who they considered nearly sub-human, uncivilized savages (with a few exceptions). They were concerned about becoming like the Indians and even like the Spanish Conquistadors. Their fight was in part to distinguish themselves from the Indians and to preserve their sense of their Englishness.

The Role of Christianity in the Conflict

Lepore's focus on religious influences in King Philip's War is worth noting, though she does not make it a major, explicit theme of the book. It nonetheless weaves its way into every chapter. There is a very clear reason for this, however. The English colonists were, at that time, largely religious groups who left England due to religious persecution, including the Pilgrims and the Puritans. Everyone who wrote about the war understood it in heavily religious terms and the English were constantly worried during the war that the destruction they saw was due to the fact that God had forsaken them as a result of their sinfulness. The Indians even used this against them. Mary Rowlandson's account

of her time in captivity with the Indians is full of details of how she saw it fitting into her spiritual life, to give one example.

Lepore also discusses conversion at length when she covers John Sassamon's life, since he was a Christian minister and arguably a disciple of Puritan Minister John Eliot, who translated the Bible into Indian languages and saw it as one of his life's callings to convert the Indians to Christianity. Understandably, the Indians felt that an assault was being waged against their way of life and Philip often forbade missionaries from entering his territory as a result. The Indians who converted often formed "praying towns" and allied themselves with the English. They were seen as traitors by non-Christian Indians and when Christian Indians would defect back to the "enemy" Indians, the English would become enraged. Lepore focuses specifically on how the Christian Indians were a kind of link between the two communities and were terribly mistreated by both.

Discrimination and Oppression of the Indians

It is standard fare in contemporary accounts of English interaction with Indians to discuss how terribly the Indians were treated by the English. Modern historians emphasize this for many reasons, but arguably a central reason is because it is true. Lepore documents in great detail the violence perpetrated against the Indians by the English. The English simultaneously maintained that their civilization was superior to that of the Indians all the while taking their land and treating the Indians as savagely as they thought the Indians treated them. In fact, they even sold Indians into slavery. Christian Indians were somehow seen as both human and savage at the same time.

Lepore also points out how the English understanding of Christianity created a conflict for them in approaching the Indians because, on the one hand, they were human and could be converted by God, which meant, in turn, that they too were God's children. On the other hand, they were illiterate, violent and had strange customs. One of the greatest services of Lepore's book is her explanations of the symbolism of Indian practices and how they were misinterpreted by the English.

Lepore also argues that the Indians were historically misrepresented by English accounts of the war. Unfortunately, this is often hard to prove since the English were literate and so could write down records of the conflict. Many such accounts were published and were widely circulated in New England and Britain. But since the English wrote the history books, the Indians were yet again discriminated against because their voices could not be heard.

Style

Perspective

Jill Lepore, the author of The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity, is a professor of American history and chair of the History and Literature program at Harvard University and writers for The New Yorker. The Name of War won the Bancroft Prize. Thus, Lepore is a high-ranking professional historian, with the standard perspective that one might expect. Lepore is quite hard on the colonists, though not due to their religiosity. Instead, she criticizes their hypocrisy with respect to the Indians. First, the colonists thought the Indians were human enough to try and convert but not human enough to treat as equals; she sees this as a deep inconsistency. Further, the colonists liked to contrast how civilized they were compared to the barbarism of the Spanish Conquistadors; but during King Philip's War they seemed to be at least almost as brutal and grisly as the Conquistadors were, not to mention their Indian enemies.

While Lepore does not defend Philip's actions, she is more interested in understanding how he functioned as a symbol of cultural identity than in the details of his personality. The Indians are not whitewashed but, as is standard among professional historians, early Americans are substantially criticized for their treatment of Indians. This does not imply that she is wrong, but it is a bias of which readers should be aware. She also gives a detailed psychological analysis of the deep motives of both sides of the conflict in King Philip's War, which some readers may find excessively speculative.

Tone

The tone of The Name of War is critical, tragic and analytical, depending on the sections of the book. Lepore does not play the role of wholly impartial historian. Instead, the book is full of implicit and even occasionally explicit criticism, particularly of the English colonists. For instance, in her discussion of the colonists' hypocrisy with respect to how they reacted to Indian violence and English violence, the tone has even a hint of nastiness and disgust. It is clear that Lepore disapproves of the English colonists, despite recognizing that much of what the English colonists did was based on honest confusion and a need to define themselves.

Much of King Philip's War was incredibly gruesome. Heads were removed from dead bodies, corpses were burned, women were raped, and on and on. There were no clear rules of war and both sides quickly lost any compunction when it came to warring with the other side. Consequently, Lepore's descriptions of these sections turn dark and tragic. Reading accounts of King Philip's War gives the tone of the book a somewhat tragic element.

Finally, the structure of the book is highly analytical. It is not a single narrative, but instead brings out different features of how King Philip's War and related elements were used to define American identity. Thus, the tone of the book turns analytical when Lepore engages in, for example, the psychological analysis of the English colonists.

Structure

The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity is structured around Lepore's aim of explaining how King Philip's War played a central role in the development of an early American identity prior to the formation of the United States. She first begins with a brief introduction where she explains the significance of the fact that the English called Metacom King Philip. She then produces a brief chronology of the war. The Prologue follows, which explains the major elements of the conflict.

From there, the book is divided into four parts with two chapters each after which comes an epilogue. Part One, Language, covers the linguistic element involved in King Philip's War, such as who wrote the histories of the war. Chapter 1, Beware of Any Linguist and Chapter 2, The Story of It Printed discuss related aspects of this element. Part Two, War, focuses on how the idea of cruelty towards other groups and the Indians specifically helped the English colonists to both define themselves and question that identity. Chapter 3, Habitations of Cruelty, focuses on cruelty directly, whereas Chapter 4, Where is Your O God, focuses on the religious aspects of cruelty.

Part Three, Bondage, analyzes the practices of kidnapping and enslavement during King Philip's War and the years surrounding it. Chapter 5, Come Go Along with Us and Chapter 6, A Dangerous Merchandise discuss Indian captivity and the English slave trade respectively. Part Four, Memory, explains how King Philip's War came to represent Indian identity in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. Chapter 7, That Blasphemous Leviathan and Chapter 8, The Curse of Metamora, discuss a number of related issues, such as the popular 19th century play, Metamora, that tried to rehabilitate the memory of King Philip. The Epilogue focuses on how the Indians understood King Philip in different centuries.

Quotes

"Here, then, was the solution to the colonists' dilemma between peacefully degenerating into barbarians or fighting like savages: wage the war, and win it, by whatever means necessary, and then write about it, to win it again." (Prologue, 11)

"We can't help but be drawn into his narrative, but we can try to measure the genuineness of our compassion, the troubling fascination underlying our revulsion, and the curiosity behind our condemnation." (Prologue, 18)

"It was three weeks since John Sassamon's body had spoken from beyond the grave. King Philip's War had begun." (Chapter 1, 23)

"Although the shape and size of the possible motives vary, they cast an identical shadow: behind each of them lies the specter of John Sassamon's position as a cultural mediator, as a man who was neither English nor Indian but who negotiated with both peoples." (Chapter 1, 25)

"War is a contest of words as much as it is a contest of wounds." (Chapter 1, 47)

"If little of the news was good, even less was reliable." (Chapter 2, 60)

"To tell you what we have and how we are likely to suffer my heart will not hold to write and sheets would not contain." (Chapter 2, 64)

"Oh, that I may sensibly say with holy Job: naked came I and naked shall I return and blessed be the name of the Lord." (Chapter 3, 79)

"Almost without exception, the English interpreted Algonquian assaults, and the taunts that accompanied them, as expressions of mindless savagery or as divine retribution rather than as calculated assaults on the English way of life." (Chapter 3, 96)

"Taunts, prayers, prophecies. All raise an intriguing question: Was King Philip's War a holy war? And if so, whose?" (Chapter 4,99)

"Our Enemies proudly exault over us and Blaspheme the name of our Blessed God; Saying, Where is your O God?" (Chapter 4, 105)

"The Sovereignty and Goodness of God, the last and most enduring of the King Philip's War narratives, was printed four times in 1682. It proved so popular that it was literally read to pieces; of the first edition, only four tattered leaves survive." (Chapter 5, 149)

"For the colonists there seemed to have been literally no way to know which Indian was a friend and which a foe, except by the mark of the medal." (Chapter 6, 158)

"In every measurable way King Philip's War was a harsher conflict than any Indian-English conflict that preceded it." (Chapter 6, 166)

"Philip's father, Massasoit, is best remembered today for having attended the Pilgrims' 'first thanksgiving,' in 1621. But in 1676, Massasoit's son Philip—or, rather, his son's head—made an appearance at a true thanksgiving." (Chapter 7, 174)

"Philip was more than dead, but his war still raged." (Chapter 7, 175)

"... what remains is a struggle for American and Indian identity." (Chapter 8, 193)

"Unless we maintain that it was from the origin unjust and wrong to introduce the civilized race into America ... I am not sure, that any different result could have taken place." (Chapter 8, 209)

"An American identity founded on a romanticized Indian required that Indians themselves be 'long vanished hence,' and Metacom was, in this regard, an ideal candidate for canonization." (Chapter 9, 224)

"The story of King Philip's War ... is the story of how English colonists became Americans ... Behind that story, however, is yet another tale. King Philip's War ... also traces shifting conceptions of Indian identity—from tribal allegiances to campaigns for political sovereignty to pan-Indianism, and, today, to struggles for cultural survival and political recognition." (Epilogue, 240)

Topics for Discussion

What were the proximate causes of King Philip's War? Explain in detail.

What does Lepore think were the deeper, underlying causes of King Philip's War? Explain in detail.

Explain the worries that the English had about brutality towards the Indians.

To what extent was Christianity at the heart of the conflict between the Indians and the colonists?

In your view, given how Philip was treated in the book, is he a villain or a more complicated figure? Explain your answer in detail.

How does Lepore use the 19th century play, Metamora to strengthen her thesis?

Do you think Lepore is too critical of the colonists or not critical enough?