Module 4: Drama in American Literature
Topic 1 Content: Puritan Values and Beliefs

Introduction

Click on each of the tabs to explore key values and beliefs of the New England Puritans.

Separation of Church and Government

According to Puritan belief, the government was not to be involved in the religious lives of the people. The Puritans believed that clergy or government officials should not stand between an individual and God.   Religion was a deeply personal experience and did not need the interpretation or interference of any outsider.

Personal Relationship With God

Puritans believed the Bible was the literal word of God and a guide to living the moral, pious life. In order to become "saved," one needed to establish a personal relationship with God. A Puritan needed to be able to read, understand, and discuss the Bible in order to connect personally with God, as the Bible was God's literal word and guide to pious living.
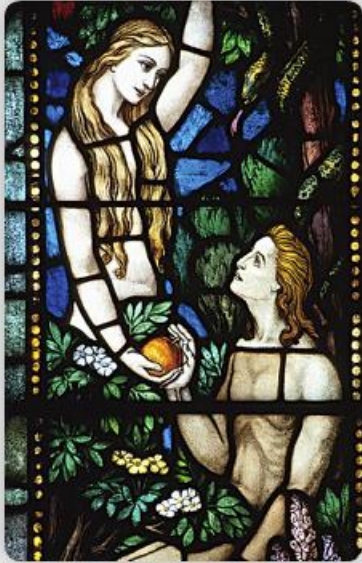
Original Sin

Original sin refers to the sin committed by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden in which they ate from the Tree of Knowledge. Puritans believed that, because of the sin of Adam and Eve, all people were born into sin and therefore would go to hell. However, they believed if they lived a truly pious and moral life and established a personal relationship with God, they would be saved.

Predestination

Predestination is the belief that a person's eternal outcome—going to hell or heaven—was determined from birth. However, the Puritans believed that God had chosen a small group of people to be saved from the fate of hell. The Puritans saw good, moral behavior as a sign of salvation.