



HISTORY
OF
PHILIP'S WAR
COMMONLY
THE GREAT INDIAN WAR

The Puritans and “Liberty of Conscience”: Conflicting Views on Religious Freedom in Colonial New England

GUIDING QUESTION:

How did differing views of religious freedom impact life in the New England colonies and the legacy of religious freedom in the United States?

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► OVERVIEW

Many sources cite religious freedom as a primary motivator behind Europeans who settled in the Americas. Yet, colonists had very different interpretations of the meaning of religious freedom. In many cases, they wanted the freedom to practice their religions, but were not interested in letting others do the same. In New England, differing views on religion led to persecutions and banishments as well as the establishment of one of the first colonies to embody the concept of freedom of religion, Rhode Island. In this lesson, students look at this story through the lenses of critical figures—John Winthrop, John Cotton, Roger Williams, and Anne Hutchinson—and discuss how these leaders’ shaped freedom of religion in America.

► OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this activity, students will be able to:

- › Explain the meaning of religious freedom to Puritan leaders, and discuss how their concept impacted life in colonial Massachusetts;
- › Explain how Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson challenged the dominant views of religious freedom, and explore how their views affected life in Rhode Island;
- › Consider how the views of each side in these cases shaped the long-term views of freedom of religion in America; and
- › Create a storyboard to illustrate these multiple perspectives.

► STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

CONNECTIONS TO COMMON CORE

- › CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2 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.
- › CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4 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 science.
- › CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6 Evaluate authors’ differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors’ claims, reasoning, and evidence.

CONNECTIONS TO C3 FRAMEWORK

- › D3.1.9-12. Gather relevant information from multiple sources representing a wide range of views while using the origin, authority, structure, context, and corroborative value of the sources to guide the selection.

► DOCUMENTS USED

PRIMARY SOURCES

Letter, George Washington's Letter to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport, August 18, 1790 (excerpt)
Touro Synagogue National Historic Site
<https://touro synagogue.org/history/george-washington-letter/washington-seixas-letters/>

Letter, "Mr. Cottons [*sic*] letter lately printed, examined and answered [*sic*]," 1644 (excerpt)
Early English Books Online, University of Michigan
<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo2/A96614.0001.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext>

Royal Charter of Rhode Island, 1663 (excerpt)
Rhode Island Department of State, Rhode Island State Archives
<https://www.sos.ri.gov/divisions/civics-and-education/for-educators/themed-collections/rhode-island-charter>

Sermon, John Winthrop, A Modell of Christian Charity, 1630 (excerpt)
Hanover Historical Texts Collection, Hanover College
<https://history.hanover.edu/texts/winthmod.html>

Trial Record, Transcript of the Trial of Anne Hutchinson, 1637 (excerpt)
Thomas Hutchinson, History of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts Bay
http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/WebPub/history/mckayunderstanding1e/0312668872/Primary_Documents/US_History/Transcript%20of%20the%20Trial%20of%20Anne%20Hutchinson.pdf

SECONDARY SOURCES

Richard Mather, *A Platform of church discipline . . .*, 1649
Early English Books Online, University of Michigan
<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A55001.0001.001/1:2?rgn=div1;view=fulltext>

Students interested in this topic might be interested in researching the following for an NHD project:

- › **Roger Williams and the Founding of Rhode Island (c. 1631–1663)**
- › **The Trial of Anne Hutchinson (1637)**
- › **Philadelphia Nativist Riots (1844)**
- › **Scopes Monkey Trial (1925)**
- › ***Engel v. Vitale* (1962)**

► TEACHER-CREATED MATERIALS

- › Religious Belief Source Analysis Guide
- › Storyboard Instructions
- › Religious Freedom Storyboard

► ACTIVITY PREPARATION

- › Organize the class into pairs.
- › Make one copy of the Religious Belief Source Analysis Guide for each student.
- › Make one copy of the Storyboard Instructions for each student or pair (at teacher's discretion).
- › Arrange the classroom for group work.
- › Prepare technology (i.e., projector, computer, etc.), as needed.

► PROCEDURE

ACTIVITY ONE (10 MINUTES)

- › Project the quotation from George Washington's Letter to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport. Ask students:
 - » *What essential freedom is Washington addressing in this letter?*
 - » *Was this a commonly held view in Washington's time?*
 - » *How did the idea for this freedom emerge in America?*
- › Allow students to share their responses with the class.
- › Inform students that they will discuss debates over freedom of religion in the New England colonies.

ACTIVITY TWO (45 MINUTES)

- › Distribute one Religious Belief Source Analysis Guide to each student. Organize students into pairs. Allow students time to read through the excerpts provided and answer the accompanying analysis questions.
- › Bring the class back together as a group.
- › Facilitate a class discussion of the documents by allowing students to share their responses to the analysis questions.
 - » **Teacher Tip:** Allow students to debate their interpretations of the documents and clarify any misunderstandings. Guide the discussion as needed to ensure that students have a clear understanding of each document. Remind students that Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson were exceptions to the rule. The majority of Puritans desired a religious community consistent with their beliefs.

ACTIVITY THREE (30 MINUTES)

- › Distribute a copy of the Storyboard Instructions to each student. Review the instructions and expectations.

ASSESSMENT OPTIONS

- › Allow students to complete the storyboard independently or with a partner.
- › Allow students to choose to complete their storyboard by hand or computer.

To access a PDF containing all of the sources and materials to complete this lesson plan, go to: nhd.org/RevIdeals.

George Washington's Letter

“The citizens of the United States of America have a right to applaud themselves for having given to mankind examples of an enlarged and liberal policy—a policy worthy of imitation. All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship . . . May the children of the stock of Abraham* who dwell in this land continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other inhabitants—while every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree and there shall be none to make him afraid . . .”

“. . . For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support.”

*the Jewish people

Letter, George Washington's Letter to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport, August 18, 1790 (excerpt)
Touro Synagogue National Historic Site
<https://toursynagogue.org/history/george-washington-letter/washington-seixas-letters/>

Religious Belief Source Analysis Guide

► THE PURITAN PERSPECTIVE

The Puritans were a religious group who took issue with some of the practices of the Church of England. They were often persecuted in England, leading many to leave for the colonies. There they hoped to set up a society centered around the church where Puritans could worship according to their own beliefs. Read each excerpt below and answer the accompanying analysis questions to help clarify how the Puritans viewed the idea of freedom of religion.

“... we see no rule of God for this, we see not that any should have authority to set up any other exercises besides what authority hath already set up and so what hurt comes of this you will be guilty of and we for suffering you.”

Massachusetts Governor John Winthrop at the Trial of Anne Hutchinson (1637)

Based on the context clues provided, what role did John Winthrop play in colonial New England? What does this suggest about his influence over people living there?

Winthrop speaks of church “exercises” and points to an “authority” that establishes them. What do you think he means by exercises, and who or what is the authority he references? How does this correspond with the idea of religious freedom?

How does this statement indicate how Puritans in New England viewed the concept of religious freedom?

Religious Belief Source Analysis Guide (Con't)

“Those who have found the presence and power of the spirit of Christ . . . will be slow to change such a ministry of faith, and holiness, for the liberty of church order.”

Reverend John Cotton (c. 1649), quoted in *A Platform of church discipline* . . .

Based on the context clues provided, what role did John Cotton play in colonial New England?
What does his position suggest about his influence over people living there?

What does Cotton believe about change in the church? How does this correspond with the idea of religious freedom?

How does this statement indicate how Puritans in New England viewed the concept of religious freedom?

Religious Belief Source Analysis Guide (Con't)

“Now the onely way to avoyde this shipwracke, and to provide for our posterity, is to followe the counsell of Micah, to doe justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with our God. For this end, wee must be knitt together, in this worke, as one man. Wee must entertaine each other in brotherly affection. Wee must be willing to abridge ourselves of our superfluities, for the supply of other’s necessities. Wee must uphold a familiar commerce together in all meekeness, gentlenes, patience and liberality. Wee must delight in eache other; make other’s conditions our oune; rejoyce together, mourne together, labour and suffer together, allwayes haueving [having] before our eyes our commission and community in the worke, as members of the same body. Soe shall wee keepe the unitie of the spirit in the bond of peace. The Lord will be our God, and delight to dwell among us, as his oune [own] people, and will command a blessing upon us in all our wayes . . . But if our heartes shall turne away, soe that wee will not obey, but shall be seduced, and worshipp and serve other Gods, our pleasure and proffitts, and serve them; it is propounded unto us this day, wee shall surely perishe out of the good land whither wee passe over this vast sea to possesse it; Therefore let us choose life that wee, and our seede may live, by obeyeing His voyce and cleaveing to Him, for Hee is our life and our prosperity.”

Excerpts from John Winthrop’s sermon, *A Modell of Christian Charity*, commonly known as his “City Upon a Hill” sermon, 1630

How does Winthrop link the religious beliefs of Puritans, the Puritan church, and the success of the New England colonies? Was there religious freedom in Massachusetts?

How does this statement indicate how Puritans in New England viewed the concept of religious freedom?

Religious Belief Source Analysis Guide (Con't)

► OTHER PERSPECTIVES

Within Puritan-dominated New England, dissenters occasionally emerged who challenged different aspects of Puritan beliefs and practices. Those who spoke out about their beliefs often found themselves in conflict with Puritan church leaders, government officials, and others. This sometimes resulted in persecution, including public trials that could result in banishment (being forced out of the colony) or worse. Such was the case for two Massachusetts residents—Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson—who became key figures in the establishment of a new colony known as Rhode Island. Read each excerpt below and answer the accompanying analysis questions to help clarify how these individuals viewed the idea of freedom of religion.

“First hee publickly taught, and teacheth . . . that body-killing, soule-killing, and State-killing doctrine of not permitting, but persecuting all other consciences and wayes of worship but his own in the civill State, and so consequently in the whole world, if the power or Empire thereof were in his hand.”

Reverend Roger Williams, writing to John Cotton, in “Mr. Cottons letter lately printed, examined and ansvvered,” 1644

Based on the information provided, who was Roger Williams? What role did he play in colonial New England?

Why does Williams take issue with the ideas promoted by Reverend John Cotton? What does this suggest about Williams’s views on religious freedom?

How do these ideas differ from the other Puritans in New England?

Religious Belief Source Analysis Guide (Con't)

“ . . . I bless the Lord, he hath let me see which was the clear ministry and which the wrong. Since that time I confess I have been more choice and he hath left me to distinguish between the voice of my beloved and the voice of Moses, the voice of John the Baptist and the voice of antichrist, for all those voices are spoken of in scripture. Now if you do condemn me for speaking what in my conscience I know to be truth I must commit myself unto the Lord.”

Anne Hutchinson, defending herself to the Massachusetts magistrates at her trial for heresy for speaking to groups of colonists about matters of religion, 1637

Based on the information provided, who was Anne Hutchinson? What role did she play in colonial New England?

What does Hutchinson believe about the importance of religion? How does she approach the idea of religious freedom?

How do these ideas differ from the other Puritans in New England?

Religious Belief Source Analysis Guide (Con't)

“Now, know ye, that we, being willing to encourage the hopeful undertaking of our said loyal and loving subjects, and to secure them in the free exercise and enjoyment of all their civil and religious rights, appertaining to them, as our loving subjects and to preserve unto them that liberty, in the true Christian faith and worship of God, which they have sought with so much travail, and with peaceable minds, and loyal subjection to our royal progenitors and ourselves, to enjoy; and because some of the people and inhabitants of the same colony cannot, in their private opinions, conform to the public exercise of religion, according to the liturgy, forms and ceremonies of the Church of England, or take or subscribe the oaths and articles made and established in that behalf; and for that the same, by reason of the remote distances of those places, will (as we hope) be no breach of the unity and uniformity established in this nation: Have therefore thought fit, and do hereby publish, grant, ordain and declare, that our royal will and pleasure is, that no person within the said colony, at any time hereafter shall be any wise molested, punished, disquieted, or called in question, for any differences in opinion in matters of religion, and do not actually disturb the civil peace of our said colony; but that all and every person and persons may, from time to time, and at all times hereafter, freely and fully have and enjoy his and their own judgments and consciences, in matters of religious concernments, throughout [Rhode Island]. . .”

Excerpt from Royal Charter of Rhode Island, 1663

Note: Royal charters were granted by the monarchy and permitted a colony's existence.

How does the Royal Charter of Rhode Island address religious freedom? Why would this be significant to colonists seeking freedom of religion?

How do these ideas differ from the sentiments expressed by those in Massachusetts?

Religious Belief Source Analysis Guide (Con't)

► SYNTHESIS QUESTION

How did views on religious freedom differ between the Puritan leaders in New England and those of dissenters like Williams and Hutchinson? How did this cause life in Puritan-dominated colonies to differ from life in Rhode Island?

[illegible]

Storyboard Instructions

For each storyboard panel, create a graphic that summarizes and represents your understanding of the documents and quotes you read and analyzed.

<p>Panel One: Based on the quotes you read from John Cotton and John Winthrop, create a graphic representation of your understanding of their basic views on the role of religion in society. Think about how you could show Puritans' ideas about religious freedom.</p>	<p>Panel Two: Based on your reading of John Winthrop's "City on a Hill" sermon, create a graphic representation of Winthrop's main purpose in helping establish the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Choose a key quotation that you think best represents Winthrop's idea and rewrite it in your own words to include as part of your graphic.</p>	<p>Panel Three: Create a graphic representing a modern interpretation or example of the Puritan viewpoint. Look for modern issues in religion that appear to be influenced by or similar to the ideas of the Puritans.</p>
<p>Panel Four: Based on the quotes from Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson, create a graphic representation of your understanding of how their views differed from Puritans like John Winthrop and John Cotton.</p>	<p>Panel Five: Based on the excerpt from the Royal Charter of Rhode Island, create a graphic representation explaining why Roger Williams and other leaders created this colony. Select a key quotation that you think best represents their ideas and rewrite it in your own words to include in your graphic.</p>	<p>Panel Six: Create a graphic representing a modern interpretation or example of Williams's or Hutchinson's ideas of religious freedom. Look for modern issues in religion that appear to be influenced by or similar to the ideas of Williams or Hutchinson.</p>

Religious Freedom Storyboard

1	2	3
4	5	6