



Name _____ **ANSWER KEY**

Date _____ Class _____



BACKGROUND: The State Seal Two Centuries of Symbolism

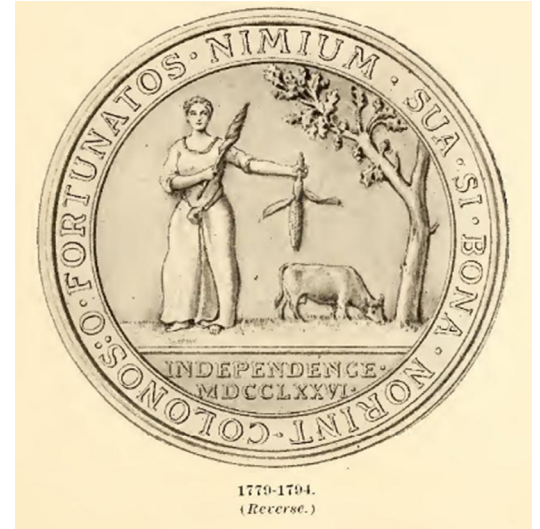
As leaders formed North Carolina's government, they not only established rules, but also physical spaces to assemble for decision-making and symbols to create a state identity. 250 years ago, seals were created by pressing hot wax into a metal mold. Seals showed that official papers were authentic and came from a specific government office. Today, seals are made by pressing a metal stamp on foil paper or printed onto documents. The current North Carolina seal was revised in 1971 to accompany a new version of the North Carolina Constitution. Between the 1779 seal and today's state seal, there have been several variations. All versions feature two female figures, each representing a different aspect of North Carolina.



Wax seal front and back, circa 1779-1794, 5812.18 box 2, State Archives of North Carolina

ACTIVITY: Identifying Symbols

Directions: Below are versions of the state seal, from 1779 to 1907. On notebook paper, describe what you see. **What** words are used? **What** do they mean? **Why** might leaders have selected those phrases? **What** images do you see? **What** activities are the female figures doing? **What** values do these activities represent?



State Seal images, J. Byran Grimes, *Great Seal of the State of North Carolina: 1666-1909*, Raleigh: N.C. Historical Commission, 1909.



Rather than representing actual people, the women on the seals are allegorical female figures. One represents law and the other, land. “In Legibus Salus” means in law is salvation. Representing law and enforcement, the allegorical figure on “obverse,” or front, wears a Roman warrior headdress and holds a spear. Discuss why Roman symbolism would have been important for early statehood. “O Fortunatos Nimun Sua Si Bona Norint Colonos” means how fortunate are the colonists who know their own good. Representing the land—agriculture or plenty—the figure on the reverse/ back of the seal holds a distaff or spindle (used to create yarn with flax/ linen, cotton, or wool) in one hand and an ear of corn in the other. A cow grazes in the pasture behind. 1776 in Roman numerals notes the year of independence, when North Carolina became a state.

Later legislation referred to the figures as “Liberty” and “Plenty.” Note that the Roman headdress and spear on the law figure has changed to a “liberty cap” on a pole. This red hat was another Roman symbol, used in ancient Roman ceremonies to emancipate enslaved laborers. The land figure now holds a cornucopia and one breast is exposed to represent nourishment. By the mid-1800s, the cornucopia has shifted to the other side and the Land figure now holds three stalks of wheat, instead of corn, and her breast is covered. The mountains to the sea landscape was also added. By the 1890s, “Esse Quam Videri,” to be rather than to seem, had become the state’s official motto. The seal also added the (contested) date of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence. For more information on the 1893 additions, see, ncpedia.org/esse-quam-videri and ncpedia.org/mecklenburg-declaration

Directions: Below are the seals created in 1836 and 1971. Identify 6 differences between the two seals by circling them on the images. Then, list the changes with details on the lines below. Why might these changes have occurred?



State Seal images, J. Byran Grimes, *Great Seal of the State of North Carolina: 1666-1909*, Raleigh: N.C. Historical Commission, 1909.

Possible answers: Color added; “The” added to “Great Seal;” dates of Halifax Resolves and Mecklenburg Declaration added; stars and “Esse Quam Videri” added; breasts became more abstract after (de-emphasized; Clothing less drape-y; Cap on left figure deleted; flair above right figure deleted; ship more prominent and detailed; rope border detail added