



# **Religious Dissent**

## **ESSENTIAL QUESTION:**

*How did the new State of North Carolina tolerate and/or oppress dissent?*

### **Standards**

#### Social Studies

(6-8 & 9-12) I.1.3, I.1.4, I.1.5

8.B.1.2, AH.B.1.3, AH.B.1.4, AH.B.1.5, AH.B.1.6, AH.B.2.2

8.C&G.1.2, 8.C&G.1.3, 8.C&G.1.5, 8.C&G.2.1, AH.C&G.1.1, AH.C&G.1.2, AH.C&G.1.3,  
AH.G&G.1.4, AH.C&G.2.1

8.G.1.1, AH.G.1

8-AH.H.1.1, 8.H.1.2, 8.H.1.3, 8.H.1.4, 8.H.2.2, 8.H.2.3, AH.H.1.3, AH.H.3.2, AH.H.3.3, AH.H.3.4

#### English Language Arts

RI.6-12.1, RI.6-12.2, RI.6-8&11-12.3, RI.6-12.4, RI.6-12.6, RI.11-12.8, RI.8-12.9

SL.6-12.1, SL.6-12.4

L.6-12.1, L.9-12.3, L.6-12.4, L.6-12.6

### **Additional Standards for Extensions**

(6-8) I.1.7

W.6-12.1, W.6-12.2, W.6-12.5

L.6-12.2, L.6-8.3

### **Objectives**

- Understand religious dissent and the role that it played in North Carolina during the Revolutionary War.
- Analyze points of protest by specific religious groups and the government's response.

## Lesson Contents

Several religious groups including, Moravians, Quakers, and German Anabaptists, opposed the state's requirement to take an oath of allegiance to the new government. These groups, or sects, did not believe in war and sought peaceful solutions to conflict. The state had some tolerance for the dissenting groups and did not force their men to fight in the Revolutionary War. However, in return for their exemptions from militia service, the General Assembly imposed higher taxes.

Because the colony allowed some religious freedom, Quakers were some of the first settlers to move to North Carolina, as early as 1672. Early Quaker communities flourished in the Albemarle region, especially Pasquotank and Perquimans Counties. Later, in the mid-1700s, more Quakers migrated from Pennsylvania to the Piedmont. Moravians also settled the Piedmont at that time and formed towns in Bethania, Bethabara, and Salem. Mennonites and Dunkers, very small groups, were German Anabaptists and also settled the Piedmont in the mid-late 1700s. They shared the pacifism of Quakers and Mennonites.

Through petitions and other forms of communication with the new government, dissenting groups pushed for legal changes. The Quaker community in North Carolina dissented further by actively opposing the slave trade in 1770, and members worked to emancipate the people they enslaved. The General Assembly, however, enacted laws to limit emancipation, or manumission. For example, the Quaker communities in Pasquotank and Perquimans Counties fought court battles to prevent the re-sale of enslaved persons they had previously attempted to emancipate. A British Proclamation in 1775 offered freedom to enslaved men who would join the British military. State leaders, many of whom owned plantations and enslaved people, protected the slavery system to maintain order and the cash crop economy. As a result, tension between Quakers and the state continued to grow and tested the limits of the young nation's founding ideals.

### Primary Sources

**Oath of Fidelity**, Bill to amend an Act for declaring what crimes and practices against the State shall be Treason..., General Assembly Session Records, December 1777, box 2, folder 12, State Archives of N.C., [digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/december-1-bill-to-amend-an-act-for-declaring-what-crimes-and-practices-against-the-state-shall-be-treason-etc./846484?item=846499](https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/december-1-bill-to-amend-an-act-for-declaring-what-crimes-and-practices-against-the-state-shall-be-treason-etc./846484?item=846499)

**Moravian petition** regarding the **Oath of Fidelity**, August 1778, General Assembly Session Records, Joint Select Committees, box 1, folder 7, State Archives of N.C., [digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/august-1778-joint-select-committee-reports/793038?item=793213](https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/august-1778-joint-select-committee-reports/793038?item=793213)

**Quaker petition** regarding the **Oath of Fidelity**, January 1779, General Assembly Session Records, Joint Select Committees, box 1, folder 8, State Archives of N.C., [digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/january-february-1779-joint-select-committees/800441?item=800458](https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/january-february-1779-joint-select-committees/800441?item=800458)

**Legislative committee response** to the Quaker and Moravian petitions, January 1779, General Assembly Session Records, Joint Select Committees, box 1, folder 8, State Archives of N.C., [digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/january-february-1779-joint-select-committees/800441?item=800480](https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/january-february-1779-joint-select-committees/800441?item=800480)

**Report of the Committee...related to the Slaves liberated by the Quakers**, General Assembly Session Records, Joint Select Committees, box 1, folder 8, State Archives of N.C., [digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/january-february-1779-joint-select-committees/800441?item=800621](https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/january-february-1779-joint-select-committees/800441?item=800621)

**Quaker petition regarding emancipation**, April 26, 1782, General Assembly Session Records, Joint Select Committee Reports and Papers, box 1, folder 8, State Archives of N.C., [digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/apr.-may-1782-jt.-select-comm.-reports-and-papers-petitions-messages-etc.-april.-17-27/804510?item=804710](https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/apr.-may-1782-jt.-select-comm.-reports-and-papers-petitions-messages-etc.-april.-17-27/804510?item=804710)

#### Folder Contents

- **Glossary**
- **Background: Religious Dissent**
- **Activity: Protesting Oaths**
- **Activity: Religious Dissent Mosaic**
- **Exit Tickets**

## **Supplies**

- Projector (optional)
- Construction paper (optional)
- Glue or tape (optional)
- Fastener safe for your classroom/hallway walls (optional)

## Lesson Preparation

There are many options with this lesson. Please review the activities and related materials to choose the options that are best suited for you and your students.

- Print copies of **Glossary** for each student or small group.
- If preferable to slides and discussion, print double-sided copies of **Background: Religious Dissent** for each student or pairs. Note the slide/discussion option may be more appropriate for upper levels.
- Print necessary copies of **Activity: Protesting Oaths**.
  - The first page is designed as a worksheet for individual students or pairs to consider the **Oath of Fidelity**.
  - The rest of the activity is in 4 parts—a 2-part **Moravian petition**, a **Quaker petition**, and the **legislative committee response**. Decide whether every student will work through the full document set or you will assign 4 groups the documents and pull the class together for a discussion of the fuller oath issue. If jigsawing, copies of the “Oath of Fidelity” worksheet can be printed double-sided with the assigned transcription.  
**Option:** students can begin by attempting to transcribe the documents, using images of the original documents found in the **Primary Sources** folder. If electing this option, print the necessary copies.
- Print **Activity: Document Analysis**, found in the **Cross-Lesson Activities** folder, for individual students or small groups to work through each document.
- Print transcriptions of 2 documents relating to the Quakers’ efforts to emancipate enslaved people for individuals or small groups. Both are found in the **Primary Sources** folder. Decide whether to divide the class in half to jigsaw.  
**Option:** students can begin by attempting to transcribe the documents, using images of the original documents found in the Primary Sources folder. Note that if students are trying to transcribe, the legislative report is a page and a half and there is space to cut to separate the image from the transcription.
  - **In Report of the Committee...related to the Slaves Liberated by the Quakers**
  - **Quaker Petition to Restore Natural Right.**
- Make double-sided copies of **Activity: Religious Dissent Mosaic** for each student. (If opting to display the finished products, directions will be cut and/or covered.)
- If using **Exit Tickets**, choose which to use and print single-sided and cut into quarters.

## Connecting to Background Knowledge

(5 minutes)

Ask: *How do opposition and dissent affect rights and equality? When should we take a stand for what we believe? What is the best way to do this?*

## Procedure

- Distribute **Background: Religious Dissent** or project slides to lead a class discussion. If using the worksheet, allow time for students to complete the “Quick Fact Check.”  
(10 minutes)
- Refer to **A Compleat Map of North-Carolina from an actual Survey.** (10 minutes)  
Ask students to find:
  - locations relevant to the Moravians
  - locations relevant to the Quakers
  - Hillsborough, where the General Assembly met to consider these petitions in 1779

### Activity 1: Protesting The Oath

(30 - 40 minutes)

Distribute:

- **Oath of Fidelity** worksheet
- the assigned primary source original image (if students will try transcribing themselves), the assigned primary source transcription
- **Activity: Document Analysis.**

After students have worked with the documents, facilitate a class discussion for students to present the central and supporting points of their document, as well as analytical information.

### Activity 2: Quakers Protest Slavery

(30 - 45 minutes)

- Distribute either images of the 2 original documents—the **legislative report** and the **Quaker petition concerning emancipation**—with transcriptions or transcriptions only.
- Distribute **Activity: Document Analysis.** After students have worked with the documents, facilitate a discussion for students to present the central and supporting points of their document, as well as analytical information.

### Activity 3: Mosaic

(30 - 45 minutes)

- Consider introducing this activity with a 6 ½-minute video on the history of Moravian pottery by Historic Bethabara, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cug2FWaxz-U&list=PLnesd2bbbgsvlMSs60J9qzOm8NggELG4v&index=9>.
- Distribute **Activity: Making a Mosaic**. Discuss the directions with the students. Be sure that they understand what should be included in each triangle and that all work must be within the border of the hexagon. Encourage color and creativity.
- Students should cut out the hexagon shape, making sure that their name is on the front. Have students cut around the mosaic tile, leaving an even border of colored paper around the edge. If putting the tiles on a bulletin board or wall, it would be best if you choose a clear amount of edging for the students to leave, i.e. a ½", to standardize the mosaics.  
**Option:** students can secure their mosaic tile to construction paper with the fastener of your choosing.
- If putting the tiles on a bulletin board or wall, it works best to leave clear edging, such as ½", to standardize the mosaics.
- Facilitate discussion with concluding thoughts about the two **Religious Dissent** document sets with guiding questions that may include:  
*What does religious dissent look like in today's society?*  
*How can people who have believe fundamentally different things coexist peacefully?*  
*Can you think of social reforms that particular religious groups are known for?*

**Exit Tickets** Four options are provided as choices or to use if lesson extends multiple days.

(5 minutes)

- *How can we show respect for those who believe differently than we do?*
- *When should we take a stand for what we believe, and what is the best way to do it?*
- *What examples of religious dissent can you think of today?*
- *Have you ever felt uncomfortable making a promise or oath? What did you do?*

### Modifications

- Documents could be distributed to individual students needing to take notes, or allow them to view online and zoom in, for those with vision limitations, or those who have issues focusing.
- Students could be paired with a higher-achieving or differently behaving student for extra support.

- Students could be given extension activities if they finish early or need more challenging or independent work. These can be done independently or collaboratively.

## Extension Options

- How did early women Moravians come to North Carolina, and what was unique about their journey? How have their beliefs about education and rights persisted? Find out more and then create a journal entry that may have been written by one of those original travelers. Watch the first 15 minutes of this video to gather information:  
[video.pbsnc.org/video/journey-to-salem-nduuhi/](https://video.pbsnc.org/video/journey-to-salem-nduuhi/).
- How do our modern religious rights compare to the 1700s in North Carolina? Examine the First Amendment and a 2017 document written by the U.S. Attorney General, then write a brief essay responding to the question. [justice.gov/crt/page/file/1006786/dl](https://justice.gov/crt/page/file/1006786/dl).
- Wearing special clothing was a way that Quakers and Moravians distinguished themselves from neighboring communities in the late 1700s. Research their distinctive clothing and write a brief essay. This Historic Bethabara podcast, [historicbethabara.org/episode-5-a-living-historian-on-moravian-clothing/](https://historicbethabara.org/episode-5-a-living-historian-on-moravian-clothing/), and book by Amelia Mott Grumere, *The Quaker: A Study in Costume* (Philadelphia: Ferris & Leach, 1901), [dn790000.ca.archive.org/0/items/quakerstudyincos00gumm/quakerstudyincos00gumm.pdf](https://dn790000.ca.archive.org/0/items/quakerstudyincos00gumm/quakerstudyincos00gumm.pdf), are good places to start.
- Who was Thomas Person? Read about this North Carolina Revolutionary at the following link, and then write a brief essay about his significance for the state and nation, [ncpedia.org/biography/person-thomas](https://ncpedia.org/biography/person-thomas).
- How did Moravian beliefs about slavery evolve, and how did that translate into reality? Watch the following video to learn more about some of the African Americans connected with Bethabara, then create a timeline that combines the changing Moravian beliefs with their connections to slavery in their community. Find the video here:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MmimaAojf\\_8&t=363s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MmimaAojf_8&t=363s).

## Field Trip Connections

**Alamance Battleground State Historic Site:** A 1780 house, originally belonging to the family of John and Rachel Allen in Snow Camp, Alamance County, is furnished with pieces appropriate to a period Quaker homestead. [historicsites.nc.gov/all-sites/alamance-battleground/plan-your-visit](https://historicsites.nc.gov/all-sites/alamance-battleground/plan-your-visit).

**Old Salem Museum and Gardens** in Winston-Salem,  
<https://www.oldsalem.org/studentfieldtrip/>.

**Historic Bethabara:** While the site only advertises elementary-aged field trips, it offers group tours that include colonial trade demonstrations that could be a great fit for high school students, [historicbethabara.org/tours/](https://historicbethabara.org/tours/).

## Recommended Resources

“Manumission Societies,” *NCPedia*, [ncpedia.org/manumission-societies](https://ncpedia.org/manumission-societies).

“Moravians,” *NCPedia*, [ncpedia.org/moravians](https://ncpedia.org/moravians).

Historic Bethabara Park, “The Stories of Bethabara’s Enslaved,” [historicbethabara.org/the-stories-of-bethabaras-enslaved/](https://historicbethabara.org/the-stories-of-bethabaras-enslaved/)

“Religion in Early America,” *NCPedia*, [ncpedia.org/anchor/religion-early-america](https://ncpedia.org/anchor/religion-early-america).

“Quakers,” *NCPedia*, [ncpedia.org/anchor/quakers](https://ncpedia.org/anchor/quakers).