



Religious Dissent

ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

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

Standards

Social Studies

I.1.1, I.1.3, I.1.4, I.1.5, I.1.6, I.1.7, I.1.8, I.1.9, I.1.10
3&5.B.1.1, 3-5.B.1.2
3.C&G.1.1, 3-4.C&G.1.2, 5.C&G.2.1
3&5.G.1.1, 3-5.G.1.2, 3.G.1-.3
3-5.H.1.1, 3-5.H.1.2, 3-5.H.1.3, 4-5.H.1.4, 3-5.H.1.5, 3-5.H.1.6

English Language Arts

RI.3-5.1, RI.3-5.2, RI.3-5.3, RI.3-5.4, RI.3-5.5, RI.3-5.10
RF.3-5.2, RF.3-5.4, RF.3-5.5
W.3-5.1, W.3-5.2
SL.3-5.1, SL.3-5.2
L.3-5.1, L.3-5.2, L.3-5.3, L.3-5.4, L.3-5.6

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Assignment Options

(files on thumb drive)

- **Glossary**
- **Activity: Oath of Fidelity**
- **Activity: Quaker Body Biography** (man and woman options)
- **Exit Tickets**

Supplies

- Projector (optional)
- Colored pencils or markers (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 to use as reference for understanding the documents. There are specific glossary pages to match each document.
- Print necessary copies of **Activity: Oath of Fidelity**.
 - 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 3 parts—a 2-part **Moravian petition** and a **Quaker petition**. Decide whether every student will work through the 3-part document set or you will

assign 3 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. Note that spelling has been corrected for legibility.

- Print **Activity: Document Explorer**, found in the **Cross-Lesson Activities** folder, for individual students or small groups to work through their assigned document.
- Print transcriptions of 2 documents relating to the Quakers’ efforts to emancipate enslaved people for individuals or small groups.

- **In Report of the Committee...related to the Slaves Liberated by the Quakers**
- **Quaker Petition to Restore Natural Right.**

Both are found in the Primary Sources folder. Decide whether to divide the class in half to jigsaw or have all students work through both documents with Activity: Document Explorer.

- Make double-sided copies of **Activity: Quaker Body Biography** for each student. There are two options—man and woman—with outlines resembling traditional Quaker clothing. Print enough of each so that students can choose which to use.
- Preview these short (under 5-minute) videos to introduce background information about Quakers and Moravians: “10 Interesting Facts about Quakers,” youtube.com/watch?v=w6wNI7oMaGI, and “WATCH NOW: Uniquely North Carolina – the Moravian Settlement,” youtube.com/watch?v=AjHtlu_eEAk.
- If using **Exit Tickets**, choose which to use and print single-sided and cut into quarters.

Connecting to Background Knowledge

(5 minutes)

Ask: *What is a value, a belief, a culture? How do beliefs affect government and culture? When should we take a stand for what we believe? What is the best way to do this?*

Procedure

Introduction

- Introduce background information about Quakers and Moravians in N.C. with slides and discussion and/or the two brief videos, “10 Interesting Facts about Quakers,” youtube.com/watch?v=w6wNI7oMaGI, and “WATCH NOW: Uniquely North Carolina – the Moravian Settlement,” youtube.com/watch?v=AjHtlu_eEAk. (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 Explorer**

If students find the vocabulary difficult, it may help to define difficult words together and/or to ask them to write the meaning above difficult words before moving on. After students have worked with the documents, lead a class discussion for students to present the central points of their document and piece together why these groups protested the Oath of Fidelity.

Activity 2: Quakers Protest Slavery

(30 minutes)

- Distribute transcriptions of the 2 documents—the **legislative report** and the **Quaker petition concerning emancipation**.
- Distribute **Activity: Document Explorer**. After students have worked with the documents, lead a discussion for students to present the central points of their document, as well as additional information and any questions they have.

Activity 3: Body Biography

(30 minutes)

- Distribute **Activity: Quaker Body Biography**. Discuss the directions with the students. Be sure that they understand what should be included. Encourage color and creativity.
- Consider displaying the student's work. **Option:** they can also use the worksheets to create a body biography of themselves.

Conclusion:

(10 minutes)

Facilitate discussion with concluding thoughts about the two **Religious Dissent** document sets with guiding questions that may include:

What does religious dissent look like today?

How can people who believe differently coexist peacefully?

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

- *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

- To learn more about Moravian beliefs about slavery and how they changed over time, watch the following video to learn more about some of the African Americans connected with Bethabara: www.youtube.com/watch?v=MmimaAojf_8&t=363s. Write a paragraph about what you learned.
- Read one of the NCpedia articles listed below in the “Recommended Resources” section and write a paragraph about what you learned.

Field Trip Connection

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.

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

Historic Bethabara: historicbethabara.org/tours/.

Recommended Resources

NCpedia

- “Manumission Societies,” ncpedia.org/manumission-societies.
- “Moravians,” ncpedia.org/moravians.
- “Quakers,” ncpedia.org/anchor/quakers.
- “Religion in Early America,” ncpedia.org/anchor/religion-early-america.

Historic Bethabara Park, “The Stories of Bethabara’s Enslaved,” historicbethabara.org/the-stories-of-bethabaras-enslaved/.