



Name: _____

Date: _____ Class: _____

ACTIVITY: *Protesting the Oath*

Read the primary source transcription and answer the accompanying reflection questions.

Oath of Fidelity

I, A. B., do solemnly and sincerely declare and affirm, that I will bear true Fidelity to the independent State of North Carolina, and to the Powers and Authorities which are or may be established for the good Government thereof; and I do renounce any Fidelity to the present King of Great Britain, His Heirs and Successors; and that I will disclose and make known to the Governor, some Member of the Council of State, ^Judge of the Superior Court, or Justice of the Peace, all Treasons, Conspiracies, or Attempts, committed or intended against the same, which shall come to my Knowledge.

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.

Note: the “I, A.B.” opening was standard in English oaths of the 1600s and 1700s. The initials were a place holder for the oath taker’s name.

Imagine you lived in 1777. Would you feel comfortable taking this oath? Why or why not?

Predict the effect of the pledge to “disclose...all Treasons, Conspiracies...”

Read the transcribed **Moravian petition** (part 1) and use the Document Analysis worksheet to help understand its meaning and significance. Summarize central and supporting points.

Petition of the Moravians or United
Brethren, presented to the
Gen^l Assembly a Hillsb^o
August 1778

...upon hearing of the great religious Liberty in America...about 30 years ago, the Brethren Church received several Invitations to settle in...North Carolina...

They found it necessary to apply by their Deputies to the king and Parliament of Great Britian, to grant unto the Brethrens Church ...“That their Affirmation might be taken...free from all personal service in war...

...an Act of Parliament passed in the Year 1749, to encourage the United Brethren to encrease their Settlements in America, which granted and secured unto them Both these said Privileges, under certain Restrictions

Encouraged by said Act of Parliament... they have since then in their Settlements, and also as private Settlers, lived very quiet and happy under the English Government; which Blessing your Petitioners, the United Brethren settled in North-Carolina, enjoyed in the same Degree, untill the breaking out of the present unhappy War.

It was then we began to be disturbed in our happy Rest, and we could nor would not act against our Privilege and our peaceable Principles upon which we settled in North Carolina. We wanted no more at the Change of Government, than to continue good Subjects and in our usual way of bearing the public Burthen, and with regard to Militia Affairs, to be considered as in the same lenient manner as by the Act of Parliament is declared to be our Privilege.

But now a late Act of Assembly has enjoined on us the Militia Duty, or else to pay heavy Fines. Another Act has declared us liable to furnish a Quotum of Men, in the present Nine Months Service, or else the commanding Officer is to hire Men in our Stead, and by Warrant to levy the Sum, given for them, on the possessions of any Person belonging to us, and which latter we have undergone accordingly. We humbly conceive from the Constitution formed for this State, & from the above Act of Parliament confirmed to us by the present Legislature, that we are still entitled to the same Benefit of the Privileges which induced us to come into this Land, as we have not forfeited them by Words nor acts against the new Government, and that we have good Grounds to petition both the Honourable Houses for Redress of this Grievance, conformable to our original Act and Privilege, which we also hereby do in the most humble Manner.

Moravian petition regarding the Oath of Allegiance, August 1778, General Assembly Session Records, Joint Select Committees, box 1, folder 7, State Archives of N.C.

Read the transcribed **Moravian petition** (part 2) and use the Document Analysis worksheet to help understand its meaning and significance. Summarize central and supporting points.

It is enjoined upon us by an Act of Assembly to take an Affirmation of Fidelity to this State, and to make a Renunciation of Fidelity to the King of Great Britian his Heirs and Successors, and by the said Act all who shall not take such Affirmation & Renunciation are liable to be sent out of the Country...

For we have the highest Awe and Regard for an Oath or Affirmation, in remembrance of the Word of Christ. Let your communication be Yea, what is Yea, and No, what is No. If our Mouths should say Yea, and the Heart Nay, we should be Hypocrites and give false Witness... the greater part of the United Brethren cannot nor will not take the Affirmation as prescribed, and it is against our Conscience, We humbly petition the Honourable Houses not to deny us our Constitutional Liberty. Let not our Persons and our Properties lie open to the Invasion of Injury, except you find us guilty of treasonable Practices against this or the other States, which, by the Mercy of God, will never be the Case.

We hold ourselves in Conscience bound to seek the Good of the Land where we sojourn, we have done it, & are willing to do it in every honest Way. And none of us will scruple solemnity to promise, "That he will not do anything injurious to this State or to the United States of America, and that he will not give any Intelligence Aid or Assistance to the British Officers or Forces at War with these or the other States."

If any one singly, or several jointly, act or do anything against this Declaration, let them be tried and punished, as others, who have taken the Test and transgressd against it.

But our humble Request is, "That you may protect our Persons and Property against all Violence & Oppression and to grant us the Benefit of the Law."

Let us continue quiet and peaceable in the Places where Divine Providence has placed us, which are dedicated to God for the advancement of Religion, Piety, and Virtue, and which have been such approved Testimonies of the Brethrens being industrious useful Members of Society. Permit us to serve the Public in our usual Callings unmolested.

We have no Arms, and will bear none against this State or the other States. We desire no Posts of Profit or Honour. We never refused to pay Taxes, nor had any Distress made for Taxes.

We the subscribers beg Leave to recommend this Petition and humble Representation into a kind and serious Consideration, and to grant to Us and our Fellow Brethren such Relief as the General Assembly finds meet and consistent with Justice and Mercy.

And your Petitioners with ever pray

Read the transcribed **Quaker petition** and use the Document Analysis worksheet to help understand its meaning and significance. Summarize central and supporting points.

To the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina now Sitting. ~

The Address, and Petition of the People called Quakers from their Yearly Meeting Committee in Perquimans County, the 9th of the 1st M^o 1779~

Humbly Sheweth,

That, notwithstanding we are in Duty bound Gratefully to acknowledge your Lenity, in suspending the Execution of the Act of Assembly requiring the Test of Fedelity and Abjuration and Altering the word Allegiance to Fedelity, to soften the former Act and make it easier to us, yet, we think it remains the same in Substance and being enjoined by our Peacable Principles to live as much as in us Lies a Quiet, Honest, and inoffensive Life, and, to Keep clear from Joining with any Party Engaged in disputes that are to be Determined by Military force. As our Reasons therefore doth not arise from the Least Intention or design of taking or Pursuing any steps against the State; If our Conscientious and [tender] Scruples in them respects should have a Tendency to bring great Sufferings upon us, and Terminate in the Ruin of many Honest Families, we Submit: But, ardently desire that you will not consider us as Enemies to our Country because we Scruple taking the aforesaid Test. And do Humbly request, that you would be pleased to Grant us the privileges that we have Hitherto enjoyed, untill proof be made that our behaviour Manifests us to be unworthy thereof. And we hope our conduct will always Demonstrate our Gratitude ~

Signed by order, and on behalf of the Community aforesaid ~

By Josiah White [?]

P.S. Thomas Knox, Thomas Newby, Caleb White, & John Lawrence are appointed to attend the Assembly with the above Address ~

Quaker petition regarding the Oath of Allegiance, January 1779, General Assembly Session Records, Joint Select Committees, box 1, folder 8, State Archives of N.C.

Read the transcribed **Legislative Committee Response** to the Moravian and Quaker petitions and use the Document Analysis worksheet to help understand its meaning and significance. Summarize central and supporting points.

Your committee appointed to consider of the petition of the people called Moravians and Quakers, having taken the same under their consideration are of the opinion,

That, as the end of all government is to make every member of the community equally happy, and as in a state settled by people of different religions, this equality of political happiness is inseparable from an indulgence to those whose religious opinions make them object to the usual form of promising fidelity to the State, That the people called Moravians and Quakers should be permitted to take the following affirmation, to wit,

I.A.B. do solemnly and sincerely declare and affirm in the presence of the Almighty God, that I will truly and faithfully demean myself as a peaceable subject of the Independent State of North Carolina, and will be subject to the powers and authorities, that are or may be established for the good government thereof, by yielding either an active or passive obedience thereto, and that I will not abet or Join the subjects or Forces of the Kings of G. Britain or others the enemies of this state in any conspiracy [subscript: by any means] whatsoever against their said State or the United States of America, and that I will make known to the Governor or some member of the Council of State, Judge of the Superior Court or Justice of the Peace all Treasons, conspiracies or attempts committed or intended against the same which shall come to my knowledge.

And your committee are further of the Opinion That, an act of the General Assembly of this State ought to be made for the above purpose. All which your committee humbly submits to the House.

Thomas Person [CW?]

In the House of Commons 23 Janu^y 1779

Concurred with Tho^s Benbury S:C [Speaker, House of Commons]

By Order John Hunt CHC [Clerk, House of Commons]