

RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN VIRGINIA

Goals

- The purpose of this unit is to have students gain an understanding of the depth of religious persecution, particularly towards Baptists, during Colonial America from the early 17th century to the early 19th century.
- Students will demonstrate knowledge of various types of religious persecution.
- Given a timeline, students will be able to illustrate and explain the events which led to religious liberty at the state and federal levels.

Related SOL Objective

CE.2 b) The students will demonstrate knowledge of the foundations of American constitutional government by explaining the significance of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, the Virginia Declaration of Rights, and our nation's Bill of Rights.

General Objectives

- Students will access the Internet to research their assigned caption on the timeline in order to create an illustrative depiction of the designated event in history.
- Students will be able to draw or find pictures that will demonstrate the historical events, which led to full religious freedom in Colonial America.
- Students will understand that the battle for religious freedom involved many advocates over the course of 200 years in early America.

Prerequisites

- Students must have a basic grasp of how to conduct research on the Internet.
- Students must have background knowledge of how people were persecuted here for practicing religion.
- Students must have background knowledge of the Anglican Church and how they ruled and controlled Colonial America from England.
- Students must have knowledge of vocabulary pertaining to the unit.

Materials

- Internet access, via the computer lab
- Colored pencils
- Glue or glue sticks
- Rulers and meter sticks
- A long sheet of paper for the mural

Materials (cont.)

- Markers
- Pencils and erasers
- Scissors
- Index cards
- Construction paper
- Captions and dates of the events

Lesson Description

Given a date and a caption on a timeline, the students will research and illustrate their assigned event, using as much detail as possible to effectively convey the significance of their assigned event to their audience. Upon completion of the mural, students will verbally present their illustrated historical event to the class.

Lesson Procedures (Two 80-minute blocks)

Introduction (15 minutes): Teacher will introduce Baptist persecution in Virginia by giving each student an index card, which has one of the following actual quotes from court records:

"pelted with apples and stone"
"ducked and nearly drowned by 20 men"
"commanded to take a dram, or be whipped"
"jailed for permitting a man to pray"
"meeting broken up by a mob"
"arrested as a vagabond and schismatic"
"pulled down and hauled about by hair"
"tried to suffocate him with smoke"
"tried to blow him up with gun powder"
"drunken rowdies put in same cell with him"
"horses ridden over his hearers at jail"
"dragged off stage, kicked, and cuffed about"
"shot with a shot-gun"
"ruffians armed with bludgeons beat him"
"severely beaten with a whip"
"whipped severely by the Sheriff"
"hands slashed while preaching"

After a brief class discussion, the teacher will explain that these are the ways in which the Colonial Baptists were persecuted in Virginia when they tried to preach and practice their religion. Teacher will go on to explain that such persecution led to the fight for religious liberty in Virginia, and later in the entire nation.

Main Activity (130 minutes): The teacher will give a brief lecture about Baptist persecution in Colonial America during the early 17th and 18th Centuries. Then the class will be divided into groups and assigned one of the events below to research in the computer lab. Students will then collect and/or create illustrations of their event and place them on the class' mural to depict the events that led to full religious freedom in this country.

1770 – Baptists presented petitions for the removal of restrictions placed on them

1775 – Baptists presented petitions calling for the abolishment of the established church; one petition garnered 10,000 signatures, including Presbyterians and some Anglicans

1776 – VA disestablished Church of England; dissenters exempted from attending church and paying taxes to the Church, and allowed to publicly voice their religious sentiments, but no separation of church and state; Baptists were still not happy, and were yet persecuted

1777 – Jefferson wrote a “Bill for Religious Freedom” declaring that “no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever;” no immediate action was taken (Jefferson departed for Paris, leaving James Madison to champion the bill)

1778-1786 – Baptists continued to insist on full religious liberty and separation of church and state; John Leland, a Massachusetts transplant, was a popular minister who supported Jefferson’s religious freedom bill and led the Baptist agitation for separation of church and state; during this time, a number of denominations were willing to compromise by decreeing a general religious tax; the Baptists refused

1786 – Virginia established religious freedom; Baptists complained that the proposed new federal constitution did not make sufficient provision for religious liberty

1787 – John Leland rallied Baptist support behind James Madison’s candidacy for the Virginia Convention to ratify the U.S. Constitution, in turn for Madison’s promise to pursue a federal religious liberty amendment

1789 – Madison elected to congress, champions constitutional amendments, based on the Virginia Declaration of Rights

1791 – The “Bill of Rights” ratified, with religious liberty clauses

1833 – Massachusetts becomes the final state to grant full religious liberty

Closure (55 minutes): Students will present and explain their section of the timeline and answer any questions posed by the class. Class members will assess each group’s work using a rubric.

Assessment/Evaluation

Students will use the following rubrics to evaluate their peers' presentations.

Content

		High		Average		Low
1	States the purpose.	5	4	3	2	1
2	Organizes the content.	5	4	3	2	1
3	Supports ideas.	5	4	3	2	1
4	Incorporates stories and examples.	5	4	3	2	1
5	Summarizes the main idea(s).	5	4	3	2	1

Delivery

		High		Average		Low
6	Demonstrates awareness of listener's needs.	5	4	3	2	1
7	Speaks clearly with appropriate vocabulary and information.	5	4	3	2	1
8	Uses tone, speed, and volume as tools.	5	4	3	2	1
9	Demonstrates complexity of vocabulary and thought.	5	4	3	2	1
10	Appears comfortable with audience.	5	4	3	2	1