

0. ROGER WILLIAMS IS BANISHED - Story Preface

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When Williams became openly critical of the Puritan leaders in 1636, the General Court ordered him to leave. The words of banishment are telling:

Whereas, Mr. Roger Williams, one of the Elders of the church of Salem, hath broached and divulged new and dangerous opinions against the authority of magistrates...it is, therefore, ordered that the said Mr. Williams shall depart out of this jurisdiction within six weeks now next ensuing...

Although he eventually received permission to remain until spring, Williams continued to speak out against the leaders of the Colony. Finally, the magistrates had enough. They resolved to send him back to England, but Williams fled before the officers could carry out the order. He had to leave in the midst of a terrible winter.

Many years later, Roger Williams wrote about his ordeal.

I was sorely tossed for one fourteen weeks in a bitter winter season, not knowing what bed or bread did mean.

Fortunately for Williams, he was warmly received by Canonicus and Miantonomi. These Narragansett Indian chiefs deeded Williams the land he needed for his new Colony. Roger Williams recognized the help of the Indians when he wrote:

...were it not for Canonicus...Rhode Island would not be.

He published a book to help others understand how to speak with the Narragansett in their own language.

He called his settlement Providence because of the "Providences of the Most Holy and Only Wise God" in whom Williams trusted. His settlement was based on total democracy and became a haven for others who were banished from the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Others like Anne Hutchinson, a midwife turned preacher, who was unafraid of the Colony's stern, male leaders. In 1638, Hutchinson was charged with heresy. Even though she was married to one of Boston's leading citizens, her charisma and learning was a threat to the Puritan leaders. So were her teachings, which can be summarized in her own words:

"As I do understand it, laws, commands, rules and edicts are for those who have not the light which makes plain the pathway. He who has God's grace in his heart cannot go astray."

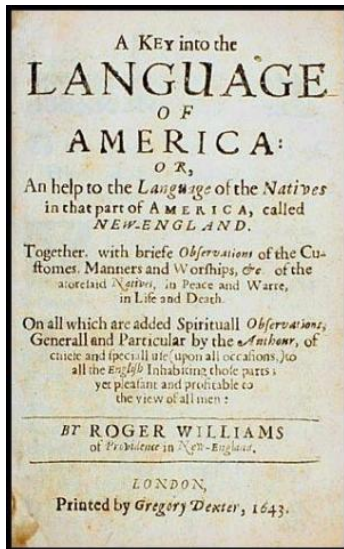
With such teachings, Hutchinson questioned the authority of the Puritan leaders. Worse, she had become so popular that she was attracting men, not just women, to the meetings she held in her Boston home. As an outspoken woman in a narrow-minded, male-dominated society, it was inevitable that Hutchinson would be charged with a crime.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/ROGER-WILLIAMS-IS-BANISHED-Execution-at-Boston-Common>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/ROGER-WILLIAMS-IS-BANISHED-Execution-at-Boston-Common>



Narragansett Language Help - Book by Roger Williams

Image online, courtesy Library of Congress.

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Providence - Remembering Roger Williams

Image of Roger Williams Statute as it appears on a vintage postcard. Image online, courtesy Library of Congress.

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Anne Hutchinson - Early Feminist

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