

Teacher's Lesson Plan

Dutch New York

What religious restrictions were placed on immigrants in New Netherland?

This lesson is appropriate for units on: Colonial America and immigration

Key Questions:

Who are considered desirable and undesirable immigrants and what are the criteria?

Who has the power to decide who can enter as immigrants?

What rights are given and denied to immigrants?

What type of reception do immigrants receive?

Students will be able to:

- describe the religious restrictions on immigration to New Netherland
- identify the arguments opposing and supporting the admission of Jews and Quakers to New Netherland
- Relate these questions and issues to contemporary issues and policies.

Vocabulary

Dutch West India Company, expel, advocate, petition, diversity

Activities

I. Opening Activity

Have students discuss “Who should be allowed to immigrate to the U.S. today? Why? What criteria should be used?”

II. Discuss the opening activity

List student responses. Ask students in class to rank the criteria in order of importance and explain their justification.

III. Reading in class together

“Peter Stuyvesant, New Netherland and the Fight for Religious Freedom” in class.

Note: All students should read the first 4 paragraphs when students are broken into **groups for Activity IV** “Stuyvesant and the Jews” can serve as an introduction for students whose groups focus on restrictions on Jews. “Stuyvesant, the Quakers and the Flushing Remonstrance” should be given to students whose groups focus on the Quakers.

IV. Group Activity: Document Analysis

A. Divide the class into small groups and assign half the materials related to Brazilian Jews and the other half the materials related to the Quakers. Each group should have a reporter, recorder, and materials handler.

B. Each group reads the introduction on the religious group that is its focus.

C. Each group reads the document (or excerpt) that is provided to it for its assigned religious group and completes the activity sheet.

V. Share learning

Each group's reporter shares the group's findings from the activity sheet.

Write the responses on a large paper or board that is visible to the entire class.

	Jews	Quakers
Stated reasons for opposition to admitting them		
Started reasons for admitting them		
Restrictions placed upon them		

VI. Discuss Group Findings

What patterns appear in the treatment of Jewish and Quaker immigrants to New Netherland?

What similarities and differences exist between the treatment of Jews and Quakers and the treatment of immigrant groups today?

What do you think Stuyvesant would think about the diversity of New York City today? What about the Dutch West India Company? Why?

VII. Assessment Options

A. Write a speech or letter from the perspective of either a Jew or a Quaker in the mid 1600s petitioning for the acceptance of your religious group to New Netherland. Be sure to address the reasons for opposition to your admission.

B. Create a political cartoon depicting Peter Stuyvesant's opposition to either Jews or Quakers being allowed into New Netherland.

C. Write a journal entry as either Stuyvesant or a trustee of the Dutch West India Company who travels through time to New York City today. How does the city today either confirm or negate the beliefs about religious diversity that held in the 1600s?

D. Following Dutch tradition, Stuyvesant allowed other religious denominations to worship privately, but not in public and, like most Europeans at that time, he believed that too much diversity was bad for a society. Why do you think he believed diversity was bad? If you were in Stuyvesant's position, how much religious freedom and diversity would you have tolerated in New Netherland?

Materials to be used:

- A. For everyone: “Peter Stuyvesant, New Netherland and the Fight for Religious Freedom”
- B. For groups focusing on Jews in New Netherland:
 - 1. The last two paragraphs of the first page of the Stuyvesant biography.
 - 2. “Petition to Expel the Jews from New Amsterdam” (for one group), vocabulary: usury, repugnant, indigence, blasphemers
 - 3. “Reply to Stuyvesant’s Petition” (for another group), vocabulary: effectuate, apostille
 - 4. “Rights of the Jews of New Amsterdam” (for another group), vocabulary: synagogue
- C. For groups focusing on Quakers in New Netherland:
 - 1. The two paragraphs on the second page of the Stuyvesant biography. For all groups focusing on Quakers.
 - 2. The last paragraph of the “Flushing Remonstrance” (for one group)
 - 3. Page three of the Stuyvesant biography (for another group)

Student Activity Sheet
Religious Restrictions in New Netherland

Fill in all portions of the chart that apply to your materials.

Which religious group is the focus of your material?	
Who is the author or speaker? (In the Flushing Remonstrance, there are two different “speakers”.)	
What reasons are given to oppose admitting the group into New Netherland?	
What reasons are given to admit the group to New Netherland?	
What restrictions are being placed upon the group once in New Netherland? Why?	

Peter Stuyvesant, New Netherland and the Fight for Religious Freedom

Peter Stuyvesant was the director-general of the Dutch colony of New Netherland, (which became New York after the British captured it in 1664). Born to a Dutch Reform Protestant minister in the Netherlands in 1610, Stuyvesant began studying at a university at the age of twenty. He then began work for the Dutch West India Company, a private company which owned and administered the Dutch colonies in the Americas. He rose quickly and at the age of thirty was acting governor of Curacao, Aruba, and Bonaire in the Caribbean off the coast of Venezuela. While governor, he led the unsuccessful attack on the Spanish island of St. Martin, when he lost part of his leg to an enemy cannonball and had to be fitted with a peg leg with silver nails driven into it. As a result, he reportedly gained the nicknames of “Peg Leg Pete” and “Old Silver Nails.”

The West India Company rewarded Stuyvesant for his bravery, appointing him director-general of New Netherland. Stuyvesant ruled an amazingly diverse colony. The capital, New Amsterdam (which the British would rename New York), was composed of a narrow Dutch majority and a mixture that included French, English, Irish, Swedish and German inhabitants. Africans, who were brought as slaves, also resided there. Some of them were later given a limited amount of freedom. Stuyvesant’s predecessor estimated that at least 18 languages were spoken in New Amsterdam.

Governor Stuyvesant improved the governance and economy of New Netherland. To accomplish this, he also tried to restrict public amusements in the colony, forcing all “brewers, tapsters and innkeepers” to close at 9:00 p.m., banning the sale of liquor to Indians, and creating harsh punishments for lawbreakers. His goal was to combat “the sins, scandals, debaucheries and crimes” of the colony.

The governor took great offense at the religious diversity of the colony. The Dutch Reformed Church was the established religion of the Netherlands, but custom allowed other religious groups to worship in private. Stuyvesant’s loyalty to the Reformed Church led him to interpret Dutch law more strictly than his predecessor and to suppress all other religions in the colony. His zeal would come into conflict with the diversity of the colony and its need for growth.

Stuyvesant and the Jews

After unsuccessfully banning Lutherans, mostly German and Swedish immigrants, from organizing their own church he turned his eye to New Amsterdam’s newest group, Portuguese Jews. Portugal had expelled its Jews or forced them to convert in 1497. Many converts secretly retained their Jewish religion (crypto-Jews). This was a serious crime in Portugal, which could lead to a trial by the Inquisition of the Catholic Church and an *auto da fe* (trial by fire). Some of these crypto-Jews went to the Portuguese colony Pernambuco, Brazil, and became openly Jewish when the Dutch took over the colony in 1630. They were joined by Dutch Jews, whose ancestors had also fled Spain and Portugal rather than face forced conversion. (Jews from Spain and Portugal are known as Sephardic Jews. Sephardic derives from the Hebrew word for Spain.)

In 1654, the Portuguese retook Pernambuco and the Jews fled, fearing the Inquisition. Twenty three of these Jews arrived as refugees to the Dutch colonial settlement of New Amsterdam.

Stuyvesant, the Quakers and the Flushing Remonstrance

In 1657, a boatload of English Quakers arrived in New Amsterdam. Quakers (also known as the Society of Friends) were a Christian group who believed that there is something of God in every person and each person could encounter God directly. George Fox, the founder of the Society of Friends, said God did not want churches and rejected their authority. Quakers refused to take their hats off or kneel before kings, bishops, judges and other officials. They rejected luxury and displays of wealth, including elegant clothing or jewelry. Quaker worship also embodied the ideals of equality. In Quaker meetings, ministers did not lead prayers. Instead, members prayed in silence as a group. When moved, any member of the congregation could speak. They are also historically pacifist and have refused to fight in wars. Their belief in equality led the Quakers to be the first religious group in Europe and the Americas to oppose slavery. Unlike Jews and Lutherans, Quakers actively converted people threatening the stability of the colony and the authority of the Dutch Reformed Church.

Not surprisingly, given his intolerance for Lutherans and Jews, Stuyvesant was not pleased when four Quakers arrived in New Amsterdam. To stop the influx of Quakers and the possible conversion of the colony's population, Stuyvesant issued a proclamation ordering the confiscation of any ship bringing a Quaker into New Netherland and large fines against any individual harboring them. In response to Stuyvesant's repression of Quakers, 31 residents of Flushing, Queens, signed a protest on December 27, 1657, calling for religious tolerance. Known as the Flushing Remonstrance, it is one of the earliest calls for religious freedom in North America.

Stuyvesant, the Quakers and the Flushing Remonstrance

Stuyvesant responded to the Remonstrance by ordering the arrest of the Flushing officials, but his persecution of the Quakers only made them more popular. In 1662, he discovered that Quaker meetings were taking place in the home of John Bowne in Flushing.¹ Stuyvesant had Bowne arrested, taken to New Amsterdam, and then banished to the Netherlands. Bowne defended his actions before the West India Company,

For which of you, being taken by force from your wife and family without just cause would be bound from returning to them, unless upon terms to act contrary to your conscience and deny your faith and religion, yet this (in effect) do you require of me and not less.

¹ The Bowne House still exists today. The oldest house in the borough of Queens, it is the home of the Bowne House Historical Society, which preserves the house as a museum.
<http://www.bownehouse.org/index.htm>

The Company ruled in Bowne's favor in 1663, allowing him to return, informing Stuyvesant that

Although it is our anxious desire that similar and other sectarians may not be found among you, yet we doubt extremely the policy of adopting rigorous measures against them. In the youth of your existence, you ought to rather encourage than check the population of the colony. The consciences of men ought to be free and unshackled so long as they continue moderate, peaceable, inoffensive, and not hostile to the government. Such have been the maxims of prudence and toleration by which the magistrates of this city (Amsterdam) have been governed; and the consequences have been that the oppressed and persecuted from every country have found among us an asylum from distress. Follow in the same steps, and you will be blessed.

The following year, the Duke of York, brother of England's King Charles II and later crowned King James II, would send a fleet of ships and 2000 soldiers to conquer New Netherland. Stuyvesant was prepared to fight the English, but had only 250 men to defend New Amsterdam and an insufficient supply of food to withstand a siege. Ninety three of New Amsterdam's leading men, including Stuyvesant's son, sent the director-general a petition to surrender on the generous terms offered by the English. On September 8, 1664, the West India Company's flag was lowered and New Amsterdam and New Netherland were renamed New York, in honor of the Duke of York.

Peter Stuyvesant
Petition to Expel the Jews from New Amsterdam
September 22, 1654
(Written to the Dutch West India Company)

The Jews who have arrived would nearly all like to remain here, but learning that they (with their customary usury and deceitful trading with the Christians) were very repugnant with the inferior magistrates, as also to the people having the most affection for you; the Deaconry also fearing that owing to their present indigence they might become a charge in the coming winter, we have, for the benefit of this weak and newly developing place and the land in general, deemed it useful to require them in a friendly way to depart; praying also most seriously in this connection, for ourselves as also for the general community of your worships, that the deceitful race – such hateful enemies and blasphemers of the detraction of your worships and the dissatisfaction of your worships' most affectionate subjects.

Dutch West India Company
Reply to Stuyvesant's Petition
(April 26, 1655)

We would have liked to effectuate and fulfill your wishes and request that the new territories should no more be allowed to be infected by people of the Jewish nation, for we foresee there from the same difficulties which you fear, but after having further weighed and considered the matter, we observe that this would be somewhat unreasonable and unfair, especially because of the considerable loss sustained by this nation, with others, in taking of Brazil, as also because of the large sums of money for which they are still indebted to the Company. Therefore after many deliberations we have finally decided and resolved to apostil upon a certain petition presented by said Portuguese Jews that these people may travel and trade to and in New Netherland and live and remain there, provided the poor among them shall not become a burden to the company or to the community, but be supported by their own nation. You will now govern yourself accordingly.

Dutch West India Company
Rights of the Jews of New Amsterdam
(March 13, 1656)

The consent given to the Jews to go to New Netherland and there to enjoy the same liberty granted them in this country was extended with respect to civil and political liberties, without the said Jews becoming thereby entitled to license to exercise and carry on their religion in synagogues or gathering. So long, as no request is presented to you [Stuyvesant] to allow such a free exercise of religion, any consideration relative thereto is too premature, and when later something shall be presented about it you will be doing well to refer the matter to us in order to await thereon the necessary orders.

Excerpt from the Flushing Remonstrance
The law of love, peace and liberty in the states extending to Jews, Turks, and Egyptians, as they are considered the sonnes of Adam, which is the glory of the outward state of Holland, soe love, peace and liberty, extending to all in Christ Jesus, condemns hatred, war and bondage. And because our Saviour saith it is impossible but that offenses will come, but woe unto him by whom they cometh, our desire is not to offend one of his little ones, in whatsoever form, name or title he appears in, whether Presbyterian, Independent, Baptist or Quaker, but shall be glad to see anything of God in any of them, desiring to doe unto all men as we desire all men should doe unto us, which is the true law both of Church and State; for our Savior saith this is the law and the prophets. Therefore, if any of these said persons come in love unto us, wee cannot in conscience lay violent hands upon them, but give them free egress and regress unto our Town, and houses, as God shall persuade our consciences. And in this we are true subjects both of Church and State, for we are bounde by the law of God and man to doe good unto all men and evil to noe man. And this is according to the patent and charter of our Towne, given unto us in the name of the States General, which we are not willing to infringe, and violate, but shall houlde to our patent and shall remaine, your humble subjects, the inhabitants of Vlishing. [Flushing]

Written this 27th day of December, in the year 1657, by mee

Edward Heart, Clericus

Additional Signers: Tobias Feake, The marke of William Noble, William Thorne, Seignor, The marke of William Thorne, Edward Tarne, John Store, Nathaniel Hefferd, Benjamin Hubbard, The marke of William Pidgion, The marke of George Clere, Elias Doughtie, Antonie Field, Richard Stocton, Edward Griffine, John Townesend, Nathaniell Tue, Nickolas Blackford, The marke of Micah Tue, The marke of Philip Ud, Robert Field, senior, Robert Field, junior, Nich Colas Parsell, Michael Milner, Henry Townsend, George Wright, John Foard, Henry Semtell, Edward Hart, John Mastine, Edward Farrington.

For the full text of the Flushing Remonstrance, go to:
http://www.bownehouse.org/flushing_remonstrance.htm
New Netherland

