

## The Flushing Remonstrance, December 27<sup>th</sup>, 1657

- New Netherland
- Religious liberty
- Religious studies

- Gathering & Interpreting Evidence
- Civic Participation
- Close Reading

Middle & High School  
Level

- Conflict between the English population of Dutch owned Flushing, Long Island and Director General Pieter Stuyvesant
- Anglo-Dutch tolerance of religious identities considered Abrahamic
- A Quaker presence in New Netherland as well as the possible presence of other Protestants, Jews, and Muslims from North Africa and the Middle East in New Netherland
- The existence of a charter between Flushing and the States-General in Holland

### Essential Question:

**Why was religious liberty so important to the people of Flushing, and New Netherland as a whole, and how might it impact everyday life in the colony?**

### Historical Context:

**On December 27<sup>th</sup>, 1657, English-born resident and cleric Edward Hart, along with approximately 30 other residents of Flushing, New Netherland, issue a petition against Dutch West India Company Director-General Pieter Stuyvesant arguing against his orders to oust and persecute Quakers practicing in secret in Flushing. In this document, Hart argued against Stuyvesant's claims that the Quakers were there to sow discord and disunity in the colony and emphasized that it was within their town's charter with the States General, or the Dutch Congress, that religious liberty was to be practiced. Hart argues that the community welcomes not only Quakers, but all Christians, Jews, and Muslims from all over the world, as they all follow a religion in the same manner as the Dutch Reformed Church is followed by its members. This strife between church and state followed a near century of warfare between Protestant Holland and Catholic Spain in Europe.**

## Document Analysis:

1. Set the stage by reading the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.
2. Guide students towards the lesson on the Flushing Remonstrance by asking the following guiding questions: What does the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment say about the relationship between church [religion] and state? What were the authors of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights trying to achieve by ensuring the American people this right? What were they trying to prevent?
3. Have students focus on the final question, entertain as many responses as possible and have students explain how they came to the answers they did.
4. After class answers these questions, with responses likely regarding American and British history, inform them that religious liberty came to prominence in North America during the 17<sup>th</sup> Century and that New Netherland was one of the first colonies to practice it, demonstrated by the Flushing Remonstrance.
5. Introduce the Remonstrance with a brief lecture on Flushing [Queens], its Anglo-Dutch population, and the context behind the Remonstrance. Mention the States General issued charter to the town through Director-General Willem Kieft and later ignored by his successor, Director-General Pieter Stuyvesant. Mention the Eighty Years War and the Dutch War for Independence from Spain, highlighting the conflict between Protestantism and Catholicism in Europe and its role in spreading religious intolerance and persecution.
6. Divide class into groups of 4-5 students for a reciprocal teaching exercise. Model the exercise by reading aloud the first section of the Remonstrance to the class and asking for volunteers to formulate their own questions about the section, another to answer those questions, and finally a volunteer to answer the guiding questions.
7. After finishing the first section, assign each group member the role of reader, questioner, clarifier, and summarizer. The roles will rotate clockwise in the group as each group completes a section of the remonstrance. The reader will read the section to their groupmates, the questioner will gather everyone's questions regarding the section, the clarifier will lead the group in answering these questions, and the summarizer will lead the group in completing the guiding questions accompanying the section.
8. Once the reciprocal teaching exercise is complete, reconvene class and review each groups' answers to the guiding questions. Have groups debate answers they differed on and act as a mediator in these discussions.
9. Lastly, ask students to answer the essential question for the day as a class: **Why was religious liberty so important to the people of Flushing, and New Netherland as a whole, and how might it impact everyday life in the colony?**

## Optional Extension Activity:

The following activity could be completed in order to extend students' thinking and encourage them to make connections.

Assign students a creative writing assignment, 1-2 pages long, in which they take on the role of a Quaker, or other religious practitioner, in Flushing. Write to Edward Hart explaining what the Remonstrance from December 27<sup>th</sup>, 1657 means to you or your community. Cite a few lines from the document that resonate the most with you and explain why.

## The Flushing Remonstrance, December 27<sup>th</sup>, 1657

Charles T. Gehring & Janny Venema, *Council Minutes: 1656-1658 Vol. VIII*. Syracuse University Press.

Right Honorable

You have been pleased to send up unto us a certain Prohibition or Command that wee shoulde not receive or entertaine any of those people called Quakers because they are supposed to bee, by some, seducers of the people. For our part we cannot condemn them in this case, neither can wee stretch out our hands against them to punnish, banish, or persecute them for out of Christ God is a Consumeing fire, and it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God...

**What is the controversy surrounding the Quakers? Who might this document be directed towards?**

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Wee desire therefore in this case not to judge least wee be judged, neither to Condemn least we be condemned, but rather let every man stand or fall to his own Maister. Wee are bounde by the Law to doe good unto all men, especially to those of the Household of Faith. And though for the present wee seeme to bee unsensible for the law and the Lawgiver: yet when death and the Law assault us, if wee haue our advocate to seeke, who shall plead for us in this case of conscience betwixt god and our own souls; the powers of this world can neither attack us, neither excuse us, for if god justifie who can Condemn and if god Condemn there is none can justifie...

**What does “let every man stand or fall to his own Maister” mean? Is this a common belief of the time?**

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And for those Jealowsies and suspitions which some have of them, that they are destructive unto Magistracy and Ministry, that cannot bee: for the Magistrate hath the Sword in his hand and the Minister hath the sword in his hand as witnesse those tow great examples, which all Ma[g]istrates and Ministers are to follow M[oses] and Christ, whom God raised up Maintained and defended against all Enemies both of flesh and spirit; and therefore that of god will stand, and that which is of man will [come] to noething. And as the Lord hath taught Moses, or the Civill power to give an outward libertie in the State by the law written in his heart designed [for] the good of all, and can truly judge who is good and who is evil, who is true and who is false, and can pass definitiue sentence of life or [death] against that man which arises up against the fundamental law of the States Generall; soe [he] [hath made] his Ministers a savor of life unto [life] [and a sav]or of death unto death...

**Who does the cleric draw inspiration from in supporting his stance? Is there more than one inspiration?**

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The law of love, peace and libertie in the states extending to Jewes, Turkes and Egiptians, as they are Considered sonnes of Adam, which is the glory of the outward State of Holland, soe love, peace and libertie, extending to all in Christ Jesus, Condemns hatred, warre and bondage. And because our Saviour saith it is Impossible but that offences will come, but woe bee unto him by whom they Cometh, our desire is not to offend one of his little ones, in what[soever] forme, name or title hee 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 Saviour saith this is the Law and the Prophets...

**Who does the cleric welcome into New Netherland? List all of the groups named in the document. What reason does the author give in welcoming them into the community?**

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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 Egresse and Regresse unto our Towne, and howses, as God shall perswade our Consciences and in t[his] wee are true subiects 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 Pattent and Charter of our Towne, given unto us in the name of the States Generall, which wee are not willing to infringe and violate, but shall houlde to our patent and shall remaine, your Humble Subjects, the inhabitants of Vlissing.

Written this 27th of December in the year 1657, by mee Edward Hart, clericus.

[Includes 30 additional signatures of residents residing in Flushing, modern day Queens, N.Y.]

**What does this document tell you about New Netherland's religious community? What are the two main reasons Edward Hart cites for his argument? Cite specific quotations, sentences, or clauses in the document with paragraph and line number included.**

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**Vocabulary:**

**Quakers:** Religious minority devoted to strict adherence to pacifism

**Betwixt:** Another word for between      **Magistracy:** The work of a magistrate or judge

**Ministry:** The work of a minister or religious leader      **States General:** Dutch Congress

**Presbyterian:** A sect of Protestant Christianity typically practiced in Scotland

**Baptist:** A sect of Protestant Christianity first popularized by the Dutch and English

**Egress:** The act of leaving      **Regress:** The act of returning

**Patent:** Government license ensuring certain rights or liberties      **Charter:** Founding legal document