



Day 12 Colonization Unit  
50 Minutes

Dissenters

## Lesson Title

**Puritan Dissenters: Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson**

**Grade Range:** 4–8

**Time:** 60–70 minutes

**Primary Focus:** Religious dissent, authority, freedom of belief

**Materials:**

- PowerPoint: *Puritan Dissenters – Roger Williams & Anne Hutchinson* (10 slides)
- Article: *Anne Hutchinson* (from your site)
- Article: *Roger Williams* (from your site)
- Reading Comprehension: *Roger Williams*
- Reading Comprehension: *Do They Have It in Common?*
- Writing Prompt: *Ahead of Their Time*
- Student notebooks or organizers

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## Lesson Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify why Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams challenged Puritan leaders
- Explain how dissent threatened Puritan authority
- Compare and contrast the beliefs of Hutchinson and Williams
- Evaluate how their ideas influenced later American freedoms

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## Lesson Structure Overview

- **Slides & Guided Discussion:** 20 minutes
- **Articles & Reading Comprehension:** 25–30 minutes
- **Writing Prompt / Reflection:** 15–20 minutes

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## Part 1: Slide Show With Teacher Script (20 Minutes)

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/plans/dissenters.pptx>

### Slide 1 – Puritan Dissenters in New England

**Teacher Script:**

“Last lesson, we learned how strict Puritan society was. Today, we’re focusing on what happened when people disagreed with those rules. Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams were both Puritans—but they believed the leaders had gone too far. Their ideas challenged authority and changed American history.”

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### Slide 2 – Anne Hutchinson: Early Life

**Teacher Script:**

“Anne Hutchinson grew up in a deeply religious home in England. She learned to read the Bible—something not all women were encouraged to do at the time. When she moved to Massachusetts Bay, she expected religious freedom, but she soon discovered that freedom had limits.”

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### Slide 3 – Anne Hutchinson’s Religious Beliefs

**Teacher Script:**

“Hutchinson believed people could have a direct relationship with God without ministers acting as intermediaries. She hosted meetings in her home where she discussed sermons. These gatherings were popular—but dangerous in a society where religious leaders expected obedience.”

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### Slide 4 – The Antinomian Controversy

**Teacher Script:**

“This disagreement became known as the Antinomian Controversy. Hutchinson argued that faith—not good behavior—earned God’s grace. Puritan leaders feared that if people followed her ideas, they would stop obeying church rules and laws.”

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**Slide 5 – Trial and Banishment of Anne Hutchinson****Teacher Script:**

“In 1637, Hutchinson was put on trial. She defended herself confidently, which shocked Puritan leaders even more. She was found guilty of heresy and banished. Her punishment shows how dangerous dissent was in Puritan New England.”

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**Slide 6 – Roger Williams: Speaking Out****Teacher Script:**

“Roger Williams also arrived in Massachusetts as a Puritan, but he believed the colony had not gone far enough in separating from the Church of England. He refused to serve as a minister and openly criticized forced church attendance.”

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**Slide 7 – Roger Williams’ Radical Ideas****Teacher Script:**

“Williams believed that land taken by colonists actually belonged to Native Americans unless it was purchased fairly. He also opposed taxes that supported churches. These beliefs angered Puritan leaders because they threatened both religious and political authority.”

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**Slide 8 – Separation of Church and State****Teacher Script:**

“One of Williams’ most important ideas was that government should not control religion. He argued that faith must be voluntary. This idea—separation of church and state—later became a cornerstone of American democracy.”

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**Slide 9 – Founding of Providence****Teacher Script:**

“When Williams was banished, he fled into the wilderness during winter. He eventually founded Providence, where people of all religions could vote and worship freely. This was a radical idea in colonial America.”

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## Slide 10 – Legacy of the Puritan Dissenters

### Teacher Script:

“Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams were punished for speaking out, but today they are remembered as champions of free thought, free speech, and religious freedom. Many of their ideas appear later in the Constitution and Bill of Rights.”

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## Part 2: Articles & Reading Comprehension (25–30 Minutes)

### Differentiated Reading Options

- **Option A (Grades 4–5):**
  - Read [\*Roger Williams\*](#) article
  - Complete [\*Do They Have It in Common?\*](#) comprehension activity - (Lexile 800)
- **Option B (Grades 6–8):**
  - Read both [\*Anne Hutchinson\*](#) and [\*Roger Williams\*](#) articles
  - Complete Roger Williams Reading Comprehension activity (Lexile 1200) [Online](#) | [Printable](#)

### Teacher Guidance

- “Underline reasons each person challenged Puritan leaders.”
- “Circle punishments or consequences.”
- “Highlight ideas that sound modern or familiar today.”

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# Part 3: Writing Activity – “Ahead of Their Time” (15–20 Minutes)

## Writing Prompt Overview

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/admin/pages/american-history/13-colonies/13-colonies-writing-activities/:preview>

In Puritan New England, most people were expected to think, believe, and behave the same way. However, some individuals—like **Anne Hutchinson** and **Roger Williams**—challenged accepted beliefs and rules. Because they spoke up for new ideas, religious freedom, and individual conscience, they were punished, banished, or forced to leave their communities. Even though they were treated as troublemakers at the time, many people today see them as being **ahead of their time**.

Choose a **character from a book, movie, video game, or real life** who challenged unfair rules or introduced new ideas before others were ready to accept them. If you can't think of one, write about **someone you see today who is ahead of their time** and explain why. Write a paragraph explaining what made this person ahead of their time, how others reacted to them, and how their experience is similar to what Anne Hutchinson or Roger Williams faced in Puritan New England.

Allow students to share their work when completed.