



THE TRIAL OF ANNE HUTCHINSON

A re-creation of a New England woman's trial for heresy in 1637,
challenging her unorthodox religious views

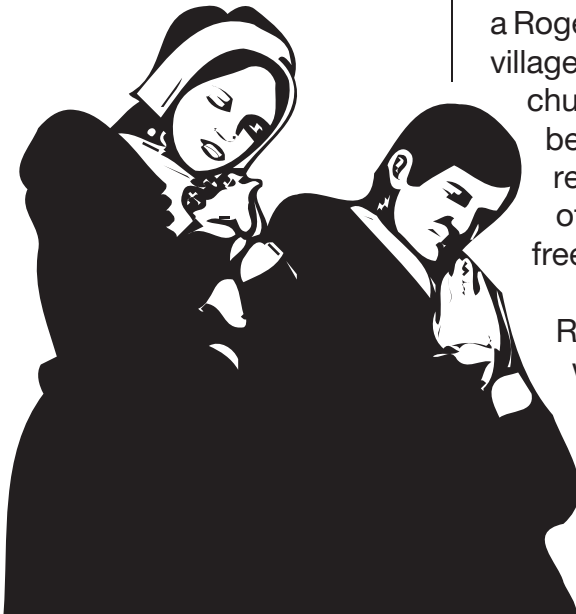
BILL LACEY, author of THE TRIAL OF ANNE HUTCHINSON, has written for Interact since 1974. He has authored/edited more than 25 simulations, re-creations, and similar role-playing works. Among the items he has written, he is most proud of GREEKS, SKINS, and CHRISTENDOM. Bill uses many of his creations in his history classes at Fountain Valley High School in Fountain Valley, California.

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PURPOSE - 1



In the United States today we often take for granted our freedom either to worship God as we please or not to worship God at all. This freedom has not always been part of our heritage.

According to the Constitution, we as a free people have the right to practice our own religious beliefs. Yet the Constitution was assembled by enlightened men in the 1780s, and America was settled nearly 200 years before that. The learned founding fathers based their wise decision of religious freedom on precedents established while we were part of the British colonies.

It would be inaccurate to surmise that had there never been a Roger Williams or Anne Hutchinson living in a small Puritan village of the 1630s, there would not be a separation of church and state today. Eventually freedom would have been established. Nevertheless, these two brave spiritual rebels, bucking the harsh and severe religious beliefs of the Puritans, did indeed lay a foundation of religious freedom upon which later men and women would build.

Roger Williams, the first dissenter, was put on trial and was banished from the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Anne Hutchinson was similarly tried for her “heretical” beliefs. The results shook the foundations of the Puritan commonwealth.

Your students will re-create the Anne Hutchinson trial in class. During the preparation time, the trial itself, and the follow-up, they will learn the issues raised at the time and meet the personalities involved. Some students will take major roles such as Anne Hutchinson, Reverend John Cotton, and John Winthrop. Others will become community members for or against Mrs. Hutchinson.

This re-creation’s purpose goes beyond understanding the 1637 trial. Your students also need to understand Mrs. Hutchinson’s impact on later generations and the issues that surface whenever individuals oppose the prevailing “system.”

PURPOSE - 2



"... having clearer understanding of the words *justice*, *religious freedom*, and *fair trial* ..."

Specifically your students should experience the following:

Knowledge

1. Understanding some of the major issues of Puritan America in the 1630s
2. Knowing how one person can fight against injustice and have impact upon history
3. Realizing how a religious trial of the 17th century was conducted
4. Having clearer understanding of the words *justice*, *religious freedom*, and *fair trial* as they apply to Anne Hutchinson in the 1630s

Skills

1. Outlining major issues discussed in the trial into generalizations and supporting details
2. Writing extra questions and additional summation statements to use during the trial
3. Utilizing oral skills to sway opinion toward one side or the other
4. Using notes from arguments presented in the Hutchinson trial to make a personal decision about guilt or innocence

Feelings

1. Appreciating the fact that American history contains heroines as well as heroes
2. Trying to do one's best while playing a role which prosecutes or defends Anne Hutchinson
3. Taking a stand for or against Anne Hutchinson in her battle against the Puritan hierarchy and prevailing religious thought
4. Sensing what it was like to live in the 1630s and deal with a dangerous issue such as religious heresy when the outcome could mean freedom, banishment, or death

OVERVIEW

This re-creation is an excellent way to begin your teaching year if you believe in participatory learning, for your students will sense at the beginning of your course that this class is one in which issues are discussed. They will feel involved, and they will begin caring—early.



The trial of Anne Hutchinson is given but a few paragraphs in most secondary school history books. She and the battle she fought for freedom of religious conscience deserve more attention. For Anne Hutchinson—and Roger Williams before her—cemented a cornerstone into the foundation of American liberty.

The Puritan society in which Anne briefly lived was by any standard intolerant and strict, often dealing out harsh and cruel sentences to those who dissented. Mrs. Hutchinson represents not only the individuals who bucked the Puritan hierarchy but also those who have heard the beat of a “different drummer” throughout American history. For she risked her own life as well as the lives of her family and her followers to insure the right to think, a right constantly challenged throughout our history whenever intolerant and self-righteous groups strive to dictate what is “proper” and “just.”

The Hutchinson trial lasted less than two full days, November 7–8, 1637. The final sentencing took place in March 1638, by which time her accusers hoped she would recant her heretical beliefs. In any case, although she was given the opportunity to stand and answer her accusers’ questions, the trial most definitely was not a fair one.

As a teacher you may want to add your own creative ideas to enhance this re-creation. The more you strive to make the trial seem realistic, the more your students will respond and play their roles with dramatic flair.

HISTORICAL ACCURACY

How accurate is this re-creation?

The author of this re-creation has taken some liberties in order to facilitate the trial:

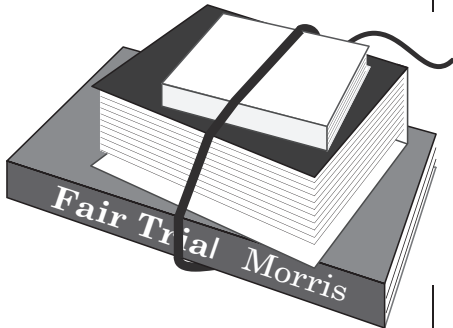
1. To strengthen Anne's case, some additional witnesses have been added. Mrs. Hutchinson basically carried her own defense by answering religious questions with caustic responses. Adding a few defense witnesses will allow more students a chance to participate and will also give Anne an occasional rest.
2. Some of the persons in this trial are composites. That is, one judge or witness will speak the ideas that a few or several really spoke during the 1637 trial.
3. Much of the dialogue in the re-creation—while certainly not verbatim—is based on the issues and opinions of people who were real participants. What actually will be used as dialog, as speeches, or as testimony depends on the preparation of your students.
4. The course of the trial, while not as dramatic as the Salem witch trials of 1692, nevertheless was intense. Included in this Teacher Guide are suggestions under Optional Creative Ideas and in some of the role handouts. These suggestions will heighten the drama of a “heretic” on trial in 1637.
5. Many of the questions asked of the witnesses are perhaps phrased differently than the ones used at the real trial. Questions suggested at the end of each role's handout were written to elicit the best responses from witnesses. Some of them are close in meaning to the actual questions used at the 1637 trial.
6. The author found several factual conflicts among the works he consulted while writing this re-creation. Sources were weighed, and the choices reflect his respect for various authors.

OPTIONAL CREATIVE IDEAS

1. Build enthusiasm days before the trial by teasing your students with chalkboard quotes. Examples: *"Hutchinson the Heretic," "Banish the Blasphemer," "The Devil Resides in Anne Hutchinson," "The woman is guilty. Who needs a trial?"*
2. Use risers in your trial. Most schools have them for assemblies. The author has found 16" to 24" risers are just about the right height. Use 24" risers for the three judges in order to make them more dignified and important. Use 16" risers for the witnesses.
3. If your class is mature enough to handle it, have your Anne Hutchinson use a pillow pinned under her dress to make her look pregnant. Have Anne stand the entire time until someone confronts the judges and suggests that she be allowed to sit down occasionally. In the real trial she didn't sit until the second day after some kind soul realized she was in the middle months of pregnancy. She should dress in black befitting the mourning of the death of her son months earlier.
4. Make about 90 percent of the participants and courtroom observers prejudiced against Anne. Since only a few spoke in her behalf, this environment of hostility will insure that students realize what an uphill battle she fought.
5. Have the ministers/elders/judges occasionally put their heads together and murmur loudly, especially after a rebuttal from Anne.
6. The author's interpretation of the trial is that besides Anne standing before her three judges, nearly everyone else who spoke merely stood up from where he/she was sitting. This situation will move the drama at times out among the students. Attention will therefore be intensified.
7. Have the Reverend John Wilson yell out "Heretic!" or "Satan's instrument!" or "Witch!" at Anne whenever any evidence is presented with his name attached to it.



SOURCES



Books and periodicals

Crawford, Deborah, *Four Women in a Violent Time*, New York, Crown Publishers, Inc., 1970.

Battis, Emery, *Saints and Sectaries*, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, University of North Carolina, 1962.

* Morris, Richard B., *Fair Trial*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1952.

* Newcomb, Wellington, "Anne Hutchinson Versus Massachusetts," *American Heritage*, Vol. XXV, No. 4, June 1974.

* Emphasized for historical accuracy

SETUP DIRECTIONS - 1

Before the trial

1. You will need to duplicate the number in parentheses, using the masters in this Teacher Guide:

Prosecution

- PROSECUTION TEAM STRATEGY (three: one for each judge/magistrate—four pages, back to back).
- PROSECUTION WITNESS: Henry Bartholomew (two: one for witness, one for Anne—two pages, back to back)
- PROSECUTION WITNESS: Rev. Thomas Leverett (two: one for witness, one for Anne—two pages, back to back)
- PROSECUTION WITNESS: John Cotton (two: one for witness, one for Anne—two pages, back to back)
- PARTICIPANT: Reverend John Wilson (two: one for volunteer “witness,” one for Anne—one page)

Defense

- DEFENSE TEAM STRATEGY (three: two for defense speakers, plus one for Anne—four pages, back to back)
- DEFENDANT: Anne Hutchinson (three: one for Anne, two for defense speakers—two pages, back to back)
- DEFENSE WITNESS: Mary Dyer (two: one for witness, one for Anne—two pages, back to back)
- DEFENSE WITNESS: William Coddington (two: one for witness, one for Anne—two pages, back to back)

Optional

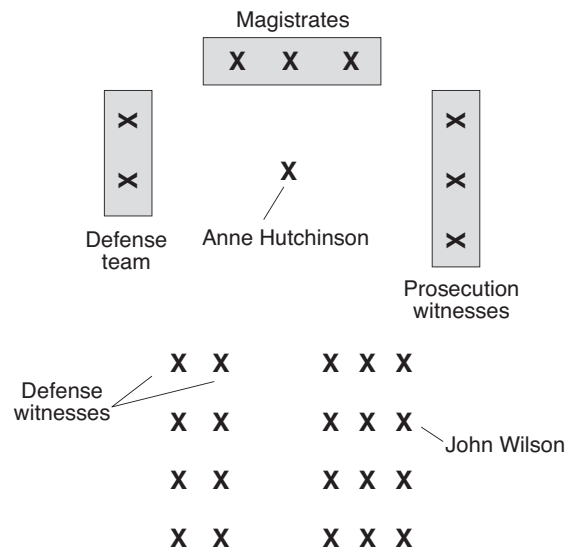
- * HISTORICAL AFTERMATH (class set—two pages, back to back)
2. About four days before the trial is scheduled, hand out roles for participants. Do this by dictation or allow students to volunteer. Perhaps you may wish to combine the above two options. In such a case, dictate the major roles and allow students to volunteer for minor roles.
 3. At least four days before the trial, hand out the Student Guides to students with speaking roles so they will be able to study the Trial Sequence. Distribute the role-playing handouts. Be sure the judges/magistrates and defense teams study the questions they will ask. Having these materials in advance helps key roles prepare and builds interest and confidence among the major participants.



Present some background information on the Puritans ...

SETUP DIRECTIONS - 2

4. Three days before the trial, start leaving little quotes on the chalkboard. (See OPTIONAL CREATIVE IDEAS on page 5.)
5. At least one day before the trial, make sure that the legal teams have an opportunity to prime their witnesses and are ready for the first day.
6. Prepare lessons prior to the trial which deal with the Puritans (e.g., a film, a filmstrip, or a lecture).
7. The afternoon before the trial begins, set up your classroom as a meetinghouse in 1637 might have been. Here is a suggestion:



John Wilson

8. Fold sheets of paper and make individual name sheets to place on the tables or desks that will accommodate the magistrates, the prosecution witnesses, and the defense team.
9. Consider the OPTIONAL CREATIVE IDEAS on page 5 for the trial.
10. Ask if any role involved in the trial has any questions or problems.

Day 1

1. Introduce the whole class to the Puritans with a lecture, filmstrip, film, or some reading selection.
2. Pass out the Student Guide and have everyone read the Background Essay. After everyone has read it, go over its contents *carefully* so that those students who will serve as courtroom observers (and have not been preparing like the major participants have) will be mentally ready.

SETUP DIRECTIONS - 3

Research shows that students who write about what they are studying retain the information and the experience much longer.

3. Consider discussing courtroom procedure, emphasizing the legal freedoms or guarantees citizens have today that Anne Hutchinson didn't have in 1637.
4. If possible, allow 15–25 minutes for the legal teams to meet to finalize strategy.
5. Encourage at least the magistrates and Anne Hutchinson to dress up for their parts. Some left-over-from-last-year graduation robes make ideal garb for the judges. Choir robes also are appropriate.
6. If you plan to use them, have risers delivered to your room. Use the suggested diagram on page 8 for set up.

Day 2

1. Make sure all participants are present and sitting in their correct places. If someone is absent, replace the student immediately and give the proper role sheet to him/her.
2. Just before the magistrate begins the trial, ask if anyone has any questions about the information you handed out and discussed.
3. Remind the “community” members observing the trial of their responsibility to outline the major issues of the trial. They are to list below each generalization whatever evidence is presented that proves the general statement.
4. Get the class quiet and send Anne and the three magistrates outside. At this point turn the re-creation over to the bailiff, who goes to the door, opens it, and steps aside. Then the three magistrates enter and the community citizens rise.
5. Chief Magistrate John Winthrop begins by pounding his kevel (see number 2 of the Trial Sequence in the Student Guide). The trial proceeds as far as time permits during the remainder of Day 2.

Day 3

1. Continue with the trial after making certain that observers are outlining the case, that witnesses and legal teams are ready, and that everyone is present and in place.
2. The dramatic part of the trial takes place on this day when Anne confesses and is banished. Try to time everything right so learning is maximum and tension is high.
3. After the trial ends, have students polish their written trial responsibilities. (See the Role Responsibilities on page 5 of the Student Guide.) Tell students when you wish these written responsibilities turned in.