

Who were the Quakers?

Name \_\_\_\_\_

The Religious Society of Friends, otherwise known as the Quakers, was founded in England in the mid-1600s by George Fox, as a branch of Christianity. In the 1640s, Fox embarked on a spiritual mission through Europe where he experienced "openings," or times when he felt God was speaking directly to him. Fox shared his beliefs with those who had lost faith in the Church of England, and such beliefs started to spread, despite the fact that Fox was imprisoned for blasphemy. Fox's followers would be persecuted and bullied and the term "Quakers" was an insult used to refer to them. They were derisively called Quakers because they were said to "tremble" while in the path of God or in prayer.

To those in the Church of England, the Quakers espoused radical beliefs. The main difference between the beliefs of the Quakers and those of the Church of England was that the Quakers believed God could speak directly to individuals through Jesus Christ, rather than through ministers or clergy. The Quakers believed that people could have a direct relationship with God. They also believed that women were spiritually equal to men, and rejected elaborate religious ceremonies, taxes, and mandatory church attendance. Quakers were pacifists and refused to sign legal papers.

By the middle of the 17th century, Quakers had begun emigrating to the New World, where they also faced persecution. In fact, in 1660, Mary Dyer was one of three Quakers executed in Puritan Massachusetts for defying Puritan law. The three, and one other, would become known to the Quakers as the Boston Martyrs. Luckily for the Quakers, however, the teachings of George Fox had influenced at least one individual who was owed a massive debt by the King of England!

William Penn became a Quaker early in his life. He spent many years traveling through Europe on a mission to convert people to the Quaker faith. When his father died, William was bequeathed a large debt payable by King Charles II. The King agreed to grant Penn over 29 million acres of land between New York and Maryland, making him the largest landowner in the world who was not a monarch. This, of course, would become Pennsylvania, and William Penn was ready to start what he called his "holy experiment."

Penn quickly established Pennsylvania as a refuge for Quakers and settlers of other persecuted religious groups including Jews and Mennonites. Tens of thousands of settlers poured into Pennsylvania for opportunity and religious freedom. The Quakers established positive relations with the Native Americans and insisted on treating them fairly in trade and land dealings. Ultimately, however, Quaker influence waned as politics compromised their spiritual beliefs and pacifism. Quakers turned to community improvement and volunteering. The abolishment of slavery became an important Quaker cause and by 1780, Quakers were prohibited from owning slaves. Many would harbor slaves or help slaves escape to freedom on the Underground Railroad.

**1. What question is NOT answered in the passage?**

- A. Why did George Fox lose faith in the Church of England?
- B. What was an “opening?”
- C. How did Fox’s followers become known as “Quakers?”
- D. Did Quakers believe in ministers?

**2. Which of the following sentences could replace the following?**

To those in the Church of England, the Quakers espoused radical beliefs.

- A. To those in the Church of England, the Quakers held common beliefs.
- B. To those in the Church of England, the Quakers spread dangerous beliefs.
- C. To those in the Church of England, the Quakers believed in many things.
- D. To those in the Church of England, the Quakers delivered important messages.

**3. What does the passage imply about Puritans?**

- A. They were against slavery.
- B. They were intolerant of other religions.
- C. They would eventually gain power in Pennsylvania.
- D. They were also a peaceful people.

**4. Which of the following might be considered a “turning point” for the Quaker faith?**

- A. When George Fox went on a spiritual mission through Europe.
- B. When George Fox was first put in prison.
- C. When Fox’s followers were given the name “Quakers.”
- D. When William Penn received his land grant and started his “holy experiment.”

**5. Which is NOT true about William Penn?**

- A. He was born a Quaker.
- B. He made sure people of all religious could settle in Pennsylvania.
- C. He made sure Native Americans would be treated fairly.
- D. He was against the idea of war.

**6. “Because politics compromised spirituality.” could be the answer to what question?**

- A. Why did the Quakers emigrate to the New World?
- B. Why did the abolishment of slavery become an important Quaker cause?
- C. Why did Quaker influence decline in colonial Pennsylvania?
- D. Why were the Quakers considered pacifists?

**7. Which of the following provides the best answer as to why William Penn may have referred to Pennsylvania as “the holy experiment?”**

- A. Because the Quakers wanted to practice their faith without punishment.
- B. Because the Quakers believed that people could have a direct relationship with God.
- C. Because Penn wasn't sure if the King of England would approve of his colony.
- D. Because Penn wasn't sure that a colony based on religious freedom would work.