

ANNE MARBURY HUTCHINSON

Written by: Christopher Stewart | North Lakes Academy Charter School | Forest Lake, Minnesota

BASIC BIOGRAPHY

Anne Marbury Hutchinson (1591–1643) was a Puritan immigrant to the Massachusetts Bay Colony from England. Her family, including her husband and 11 children, left their home in 1634 in support of their minister, John Cotton, who had assumed a position in the Church of Boston. Upon arriving, Hutchinson quickly gained a reputation as “a woman of haughty and fierce carriage, of a nimble wit and active spirit, and a very voluble tongue, more bold than a man.” In the next three years, Hutchinson challenged two Puritan precepts. First, she was concerned with local ministers’ emphasis on a “covenant of works” opposed to a “covenant of grace” in their sermons. Secondly, she challenged the Puritan mores for women in attracting both men and women to her local religious gatherings in which she was critical of these ministers. By 1637, the Antinomian Controversy, sometimes called the Free Grace Controversy, erupted. Hutchinson was tried in civil and religious courts, banished from Boston, and excommunicated from the Puritan church. She relocated her family to Portsmouth (modern-day Rhode Island). In 1643, her family was massacred in an attack by the Siwanoy natives in New Netherland.

KEY EVENTS

Antinomian Controversy (1636–1638),
Portsmouth Compact (March 7, 1638)

KEY PEOPLE

John Winthrop, Anne Hutchinson, John Cotton,
William Hutchinson, Jr., John Wheelwright

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Established in 1628, the government of the Massachusetts Bay Colony was theocratic and became increasingly so as thousands emigrated from England. Puritanism, rooted in Calvinist beliefs, emphasized the concept of predestination, the belief that one’s eternal salvation is determined by God alone. In the 1630s, a controversy erupted over the Puritan concepts of the “covenant of works” and the “covenant of grace.” Under the “covenant of works,” one’s salvation was not earned by demonstrating moral behaviors, but one’s predestination could be revealed by adhering to religious laws. In contrast, a belief in the “covenant of grace” was to understand that salvation could be granted only as a gift from a higher power. Anne Hutchinson grew concerned that many ministers in the Massachusetts Bay Colony were preaching that salvation was earned by good works alone, with the exception of Thomas Cotton. Moreover, she shared this belief with her followers and claimed that God has spoken to her directly. In Puritan society, women were not permitted to preach to men and it was blasphemous to



c. 1901, Library of Congress (2005696249)
<https://www.loc.gov/item/2005696249/>

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

- Make one copy of the primary source trial transcript excerpt for each student.
- Discuss the inset on the document explaining the “long s” and its usage in the source.
- Ask the students to highlight/underline specific evidence to answer the three questions.

LEARNING ACTIVITY

- Divide students into pairs after their close reading of the primary source to view the image.
- Ask, *What emotions were felt in the room while Hutchinson spoke?*
- Ask pairs to predict the outcome of the trial based on the historical evidence.
- Direct one student to dramatically read Governor Winthrop’s sentence to Anne Hutchinson.

Teacher Tip: If time permits, students could stage a dramatic reading of the full opening statement with the same characters.

challenge the authority of ministers. These acts, her spiritual leadership, and her unwillingness to accede to the accusations by local leaders led to her exile. Many religious groups that challenged Puritan beliefs (Antinomians, Quakers, Anabaptists) spread to other communities along the eastern seaboard.

FUN FACT

The bronze statue of Anne Hutchinson located at the Massachusetts State House in Boston was commissioned in 1920 by women's groups energized by the Nineteenth Amendment. It was not officially dedicated until 2005 on Boston's 375th anniversary. Read the *Boston Globe* article on the dedication here http://archive.boston.com/news/globe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2005/09/07/a_heretics_overdue_honor/.

LOCAL CONNECTION

The bronze statue of Anne Marbury Hutchinson is located outside of the Massachusetts State House and is a key element of the walking tour of the grounds. For more information, visit: <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/trs/trsbok/trstour.htm>. A plaque dedicating the foundation of Portsmouth, Rhode Island via the 1638 Portsmouth Compact is located in that city's town hall. The city was founded during Hutchinson's imprisonment by her followers including her husband, William Hutchinson, Jr. The original document is retained by Rhode Island state archives and digitized here: <http://www.portsmouthhistorycenterarchive.org/items/show/155>.

LEARN MORE

PRIMARY SOURCES

Thomas Hutchinson, *The History of the Province of Massachusetts Bay* [sic], 1828
University of Pittsburgh Library System
<https://archive.org/stream/historyofprovinc02hutc#page/n3/mode/2up>

SECONDARY SOURCES

Anne Hutchinson
Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, Brooklyn Museum
https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/eascfa/dinner_party/place_settings/anne_hutchinson

Anne Hutchinson
National Women's History Museum
<https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/anne-hutchinson>

"A Clash of Cultures: Anne Hutchinson's Brief Life near St. Paul's Church," March 31, 2012
Saint Paul's Church National Historic Site, National Park Service
<https://www.nps.gov/sapa/planyourvisit/a-clash-of-cultures.htm>

David D. Hall, *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636–1638: A Documentary History*, 1990

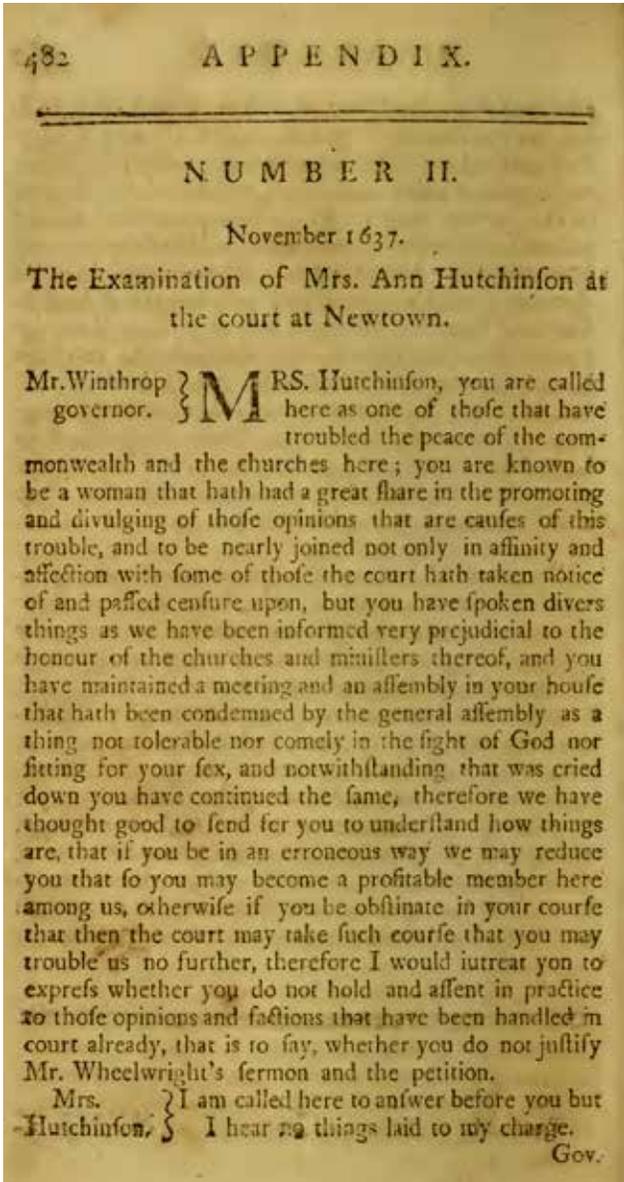


Nishan Bichajian, Statue of Anne Hutchinson with Descriptive Plaque, East Wing of Massachusetts State House, c. 1954–1959, Rotch Visual Collections, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (KL_001094) <http://dome.mit.edu/handle/1721.3/34676>



U.S. Bill of Rights. Library of Congress. 1791.

WHY DOES THE "S" LOOK THE WAY IT DOES?
The "Long s" or "ſ" symbol was common in documents in the 1600s and 1700s to replace the soft "s" sound in many words, especially when it started a word or came before two s's in a row.



JOHN WINTHROP: lawyer, governor, and one of the co-founders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.
JOHN WHEELWRIGHT: Puritan minister and ally of Anne Hutchinson who was banished just days prior to this case.

- What is Governor Winthrop accusing Hutchinson of doing?
- To what degree are her "crimes" related to her being a woman?
- What role is religion playing in this court and its charges?

"The Examination of Mrs. Anne Hutchinson..." November 1637, p. 482



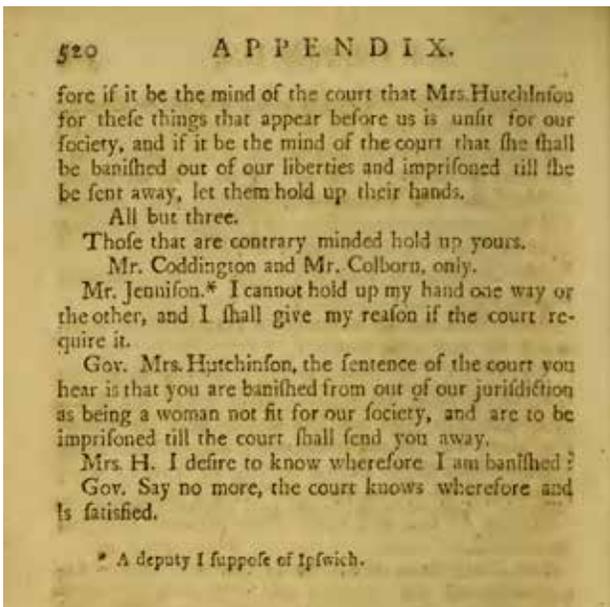
Anne Hutchinson Preaching in Her House in Boston, *Library of Congress*.

What emotions are being felt in the room while Hutchinson speaks? Choose at least three figures, circle them, and explain what they are thinking and why you believe that is their reaction to her role.

1.

2.

3.



"The Examination of Mrs. Anne Hutchinson..." November 1637, p. 520.

- After the dramatic reading by your classmate, what exactly happened to Anne Hutchinson?
- What would you say is the primary reason why she was treated the way she was in the Massachusetts Bay Colony? Justify your answer.