



Religious Tolerance in Colonial Maryland

Objective: Students will gain an understanding of religious toleration in the Maryland colony.

Grade Levels: 4, 5, and 6

Archdiocese of Baltimore Curriculum Standards:

Grade 4:

SS.4.2.4: Demonstrate an understanding of the significance of religion in early U.S. settlements.

SS.4.5.1: Demonstrate an understanding of the role that religion played in the founding of Maryland.

SS.4.5.2: Demonstrate an understanding of the impact of the Act of Toleration.

Grade 5:

SS.5.5.2: Demonstrate an understanding of the influence of Catholics on early settlements.

Grade 6:

SS.6.5.6: Examine the causes and effects of the persecution of religious groups.

Estimated Time:

Two 45-minute sessions

Advance Preparation:

- Obtain an overhead projector
- Obtain a map of the colonies
- Make overheads of the following documents:
 - [George Calvert](#)
 - [Cecil Calvert](#)
- Photocopy the following documents:
 - [Maryland Toleration Act of 1649](#)
 - Excerpt from [Instructions to the Colonists by Lord Baltimore](#)
 - [The Founding of Maryland: Student Background](#)

Vocabulary:

- **Church of England:** established church headed by the King
- **Primary Source:** a first-hand account of something that happened in the past
- **Tolerance:** respecting others' beliefs

Background:

Please read *The Founding of Maryland: Student Background*.

Motivation:

- Tell students that today they will learn about the founding of Maryland as a colony that promoted religious tolerance. In England, the King's religion was called the Church of England, and Catholics like Lord Baltimore were denied rights for failing to follow the King's religion. Lord Baltimore wanted Maryland settlers to be able to make a living with as much freedom as possible. Catholics were in the minority in Maryland, and Lord Baltimore wanted to make sure that their rights were protected. As a result, he established a colony where people of all Christian religions could practice their faith and grow wealthy, vote, and hold public office.

Procedure:**Part I: Historical Background**

- Distribute the handout, *The Founding of Maryland: Student Background*, and instruct students to read the handout. As they are reading, ask them to answer the following focus questions:
 - What was George Calvert's vision for the new Maryland colony?
 - Why were Lord Baltimore's instructions to his brother and the colonists important?
- When students have finished reading, discuss the information in the handout, as well as their responses to the focus questions. As you are discussing the history of the Maryland colony, put up the pictures of Cecil Calvert and George Calvert on the overhead projector.

Part II: Lord Baltimore's Instructions to the Colonists

- Show students a map of the colonies. Explain that the location of the colonies was very different in 1634, but the Massachusetts Bay colony was located to the north of Maryland (point out its approximate location) and the Virginia colony was located to the south of Maryland (point out its approximate location). Both of these colonies were Protestant colonies that followed the rules of the Church of England, which stated that Catholics were not allowed to hold public office. Point out that Maryland was settled by both Catholics and Protestants, and it was established as a colony that believed in religious toleration. Explain that Maryland colonists had to be very careful not to offend neighboring colonies because Calvert did not want the King to take back his charter.
- Distribute *Instructions to the Colonists by Lord Baltimore*. Ask students to read the document, looking at the original version, but focusing on the modern version. As students are reading, ask them to think about the five instructions Cecil Calvert gave to his brother and have the students list them on the worksheet.
 - Answer: 1) Be careful to preserve peace between passengers aboard the ship, 2) Do not offend the Protestants by practicing Catholicism, 3) Religion should be practiced privately, 4) Treat the Protestants with justice, 5) Observe these rules on land as well as at sea.
- Ask students what they think about Calvert's ideas. Do they think they will work? Why do you think he outlined these rules? Why were they important to the Maryland colony? Have students support their opinions.

Part III: The Maryland Act of Toleration

- Explain to students that once the colonists had arrived and settled in Maryland, they formed a General Assembly that would make laws for the colony. One of the laws they made was called *The Maryland Toleration Act of 1649* which was based on the *Instructions* Cecil Calvert gave to the colonists in 1633. *The Maryland Toleration Act of 1649* was a very important law that allowed all Christians to practice the religion that they wanted without affecting their jobs. The law had very strict rules about what was allowed, and *very* harsh penalties for breaking the law.
- Divide students into three groups. Distribute a different version of the handout, *The Maryland Toleration Act of 1649* to each group. Jigsaw: Instruct each group to read a different sheet. The students should look at the original version, but read the modern version. As a group, they should discuss the meaning of their excerpt together and answer the questions (that pertain to their paragraph) from the *Guided Reading*. When the student have finished, have them come together to form new groups that contain at least one student “expert” from each original group. Each “expert” should explain to the other students what his/her document means, as well as address the answers to the questions.
- As a class, discuss the meaning of these excerpts. Ask the following questions: Why was the *Maryland Act of Toleration* important? What rules did it establish? How did these rules promote religious tolerance?

Closure / Assessment:

- Lead students in a discussion about the founding of Maryland as a colony that promoted religious tolerance. Include the following questions:
 - Why did Lord Baltimore want to start a colony in Maryland?
 - Who were some of the key figures you learned about in this lesson, and what important things did they do?
 - What important idea did the Calverts have about religion?

Extension:

- Explain to students that Lord Baltimore established rules for the Maryland colony in order to maintain religious tolerance and keep order in the colony. Just like there were different types of people with different kinds of beliefs and personalities who were living in the Maryland colony, there are different types of people who are in your classroom with you today.
 - Divide the students into groups of four. Explain that they should pretend they are creating a new school. Just as Cecil Calvert wrote a letter to his brother with instructions on how to keep peace in the colony, ask students to write a similar letter to a principal giving instructions on how to keep peace in the school. For example, students are not to call each other names that will hurt other students’ feelings, otherwise they will be sent to the principal’s office. Go over the students’ rules as a class. What kinds of rules do you have in your school today that help keep order? What kinds of rules do we have in our country today that

help keep order? What might happen if these rules did not exist? Why are these rules so important?

- Why were Lord Baltimore's rules so important? Why was *The Maryland Act of Toleration* so important? How do you think these rules helped in the growth of the Maryland colony?