

Sample Paper 6

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### **Puritans and their Incessant Hate for the Jesuits and their Indian Allies**

As I was reading John Williams' captivity narrative *The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion* I couldn't help but notice his incessant hatred towards the Catholic religion. He seemed to feel that this was a religious following that would only lead to a person being damned and forever dancing at the foot of the devil. When he wrote of these people he spoke down about them, telling of their forceful attempts to convert him. He told how a tribe of Catholic Mohawk Indians enslaved his children, and of the savages' (as Williams referred to them) efforts to make them repeat prayers of Latin, kiss Rosary Beads, and engage in other various Catholic religious practices. However I suppose if I had been Williams I would have developed some animosity towards the Jesuits and the converted Catholic Indians. These people kept Williams and his family in captivity for two and a half years. Even when he was released his family wasn't whole anymore. Two of his children were killed in the Indians' raid on Deerfield and his wife perished on the march to Canada. Also, his daughter Eunice became so integrated with Native American society that she refused to leave their social order. His oldest child Samuel was also briefly converted to Catholicism. So I guess, I can see why Williams takes the stance he does on the Catholic religion. Overall, his whole narrative spoke of Jesuit indecencies and the brutality of the converted Catholic Mohawk Natives. So this made me wonder, was this the main cause for Williams' bad blood towards this religion

or was there some prior dispute, and for that matter, how did this battle get started between the Puritans and the Catholics of North America.

After posing this question to myself I went back to the beginning of our text *The Heath Anthology of American Literature* to see if I could find any background information I may have missed in my previous reading. After all, it had been about three and a half weeks since I read Williams' text, so I figured it was worth a shot. I learned that this religious battle actually began in Europe with the War of the Spanish Succession. This European skirmish actually sparked active attacks between English and French colonists in North America. I'm not sure how this came about, but I intend to get to the root of the cause. So it seems a war that was strictly European actually started the animosity between the colonists in the Americas. Because the War of the Spanish Succession seemed to start this whole thing, I decided to find out how this confrontation began.

After studying some various websites and articles I finally came to a conclusion on how the war was started. It seemed that King Charles II of Spain was unable to produce a child, so a replacement to the throne upon his death had to be found. The Spanish throne was actually claimed by both the French Bourbons and the Austrian Habsburgs. Many citizens of that era and current scholars seem to agree that the most legitimate successor to the throne should have been Louis, le Grand Dauphin, the son of King Louis XIV of France and the Spanish princess Maria Theresa. However, the younger Louis was also the successor to the French throne, so in essence, he would have control of both the Spanish and French thrones at nearly the same time. This would have threatened the European balance of power. I guess this is a legitimate argument for Louis

not to ascend the throne, so other candidates who had ties to the Spanish dynasty were proposed; they included Leopold I of the Austrian Habsburg's, his son the Archduke Charles, and Leopold's grandson Joseph Ferdinand. However, a consensus could not be reached, so the debate for the throne continued. Eventually Joseph Ferdinand was named the successor, but he died of smallpox shortly after. After more debate the Spanish throne was finally given Archduke Charles, and because Spain had land holdings throughout Europe a decision was made to divide the territories up. The Italian territories were given to France and Charles maintained the reign over Spain. However, this left the Austrian line out of the equation, which caused an uprising in the country and would ultimately lead to the war. Also a debate on whether the throne should go to the Habsburg or the Bourbon line began to develop. Eventually the French and Spanish sided together, which again left Austria on the other side. I will not continue to bore you with the history of the war and the conundrum on who should take the crown, but I feel like the previous information is necessary to understand how this battle began, and its eventual effect of North America. Anyway after some time all of this led to a large disagreement between the families, which eventually involved England through a cut off in trade between England and Spain. This sparked the War of Spanish Succession, which eventually led to the fight in North America called Queen Anne's War. This was the war that concerned John Williams and led to his and his family's captivity. Through all of that research, I learned that a European skirmish that involved some major powers of the day, eventually led to a battle in North America. I'm now beginning to grasp why the French (aka Catholics) and the English (aka Puritans) were at odds with one another.

However, I still need to learn more about the war in America to come to a consensus on why Williams wrote about the Catholics in the manner he did.

As I delved further into the history, it became apparent that I needed to find out what was happening in America during Queen Anne's War. After a brief amount of research I stumbled upon a summary of the war, and some of the parties involved. It seems the war began when Spanish settlers attacked Charleston, South Carolina. This caused a rebuttal by the English who burned down the Spanish town of St. Augustine, Florida. Many more attacks followed and the numbers of people involved increased. Both sides also sought the help of Native Americans. John Williams' narrative takes place in 1704; about two years after the war began. It appears that Williams' town of Deerfield was just another settlement raided along the way for the French allied Indians. The Natives didn't have anything personal against Williams, but they did seem to have a vendetta against the English settlers. How the Spanish got the Natives on their side is not really known, but through speculation I believe it was probably through an exchange of goods or some other materialistic payment. So it appears that this American skirmish was the result of a dispute between European powers, and should not have included the continent. However, the settlers in this land still held a loyalty to their home countries, so a disagreement was bound to ensue.

After doing all of this exploration I began to formulate an idea in my head as to why Williams wrote about Indians in the manner he did. It seems that Williams was just like most of his Puritan counterparts in his hate for the Catholic religion and all of the peoples affiliated with the faith, however I wondered if his hate for Native Americans was shared by most Europeans. It seems like Williams wasn't the only person who

thought this way. So I wondered if someone else wrote this same type of narrative, would it have turned out the same as Williams'. I began to research just plain captivity narratives with no ties to religion or European society. I figured that if I found another example of a person taken captive by natives who had no animosity towards the French, but wrote about the Indians as savages as Williams did, I might be able to get an idea on what most Europeans thought about Native Americans in that time period. After some searching on the KU Libraries literary database I found I link to some New York Times articles. When I was sifting through some of the hits I got when I typed in my query I found an article from November 12, 1961 by John C. Ewers titled "Frontier Savagery," it was a relatively short editorial so I decided it might be worth a read. Following the reading I began to realize that most American settlers saw the Indians as savages, no matter whose side they were on. It appears that the Native Americans were never given the opportunity show just how intelligent and helpful they really were. In about the middle of the newspaper article Ewers recounts a story of James Smith, a captive among the Mohawk Indians for three years. Ewers tells that Smith became an expert on Indian warfare after his long incarceration by the natives. Smith further reinforces the idea that Native Americans were not stupid by any means he says, "When we reflect on the Indian Wars, we may readily conclude that they are not an ignorant or stupid sort of people, or they would not have been such fatal enemies." While Smith's statement is from the standpoint of an Indian attack due to the Europeans encroachment on their land, I believe this statement holds true for the captives of Queen Anne's War. Williams did not believe the natives were a smart people. He constantly referred to them as savages, however he did comment on their compassion saying "God made the heathen so to pity our children

that, though they had several wounded persons of their own to carry upon their shoulders...they carried our children incapable of traveling, upon their shoulders and in their arms" (*The Heath Anthology of American Literature* pg. 537). Williams did make an effort to show the kindness of his captors, although he still does refer to them as heathens. Also what's to say that the Native Americans that captured Williams and his family weren't doing it out of spite for the taking of their land. I mean the Puritans did not own that land when they came here, so it had to be taken from the Indians. So maybe these Indians weren't siding with the Catholics because of their conversion to their religion. Maybe it was because they wanted an ally to aid them in punishing those who took their land. However, I am digressing from my original topic on why Williams seemed to dislike the natives. Whatever the reason, Williams appears to speak down about the Indians both because of their religious affiliation, and because they are (as he refers to them) savages.

Overall, it seems that the way Williams wrote about the Jesuits and their Indian allies in his narrative *The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion* is the result of a feeling of loyalty to both his religion and the homeland from which his previous ancestors came. Williams' apparent hate for the Catholics stems from a war that should not have even involved North America, but as is the case with most battles, people get involved who shouldn't, and this only causes more animosity. I feel that Williams spoke about the Catholics and the Indians as he did because of a war that shouldn't have involved him, and because of the way many Europeans of the day thought about Native Americans. As a whole, Williams' writings on the Catholics were justified from his standpoint as a Puritan.

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