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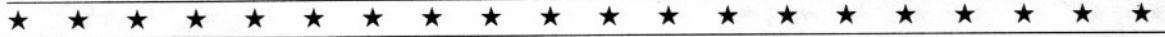
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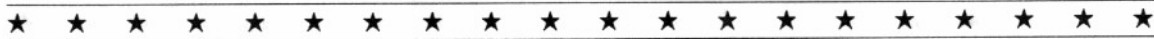
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Chapter Two, Story Two

Roger Williams and the Founding¹² of Rhode Island

The Puritans who come to the New World to find freedom of religion want it for themselves. They don't want to give it to anybody else. Catholics, Jews, even Protestants who think a little differently, are not welcome in the New England settlements.

Roger Williams, a young Puritan minister, sails from England to Boston, Massachusetts, in 1631. He has very independent¹³ ideas and strongly questions the right of any government to establish a religion, or to control religious thinking. He believes that church and state must be separate. He believes that the only purpose of government is to keep the peace and to take care of the best interests of the people.

Williams' ideas anger Boston authorities, churchmen and judges. They force him to leave Massachusetts.

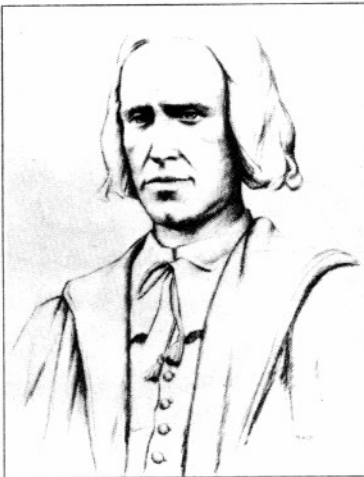
The Indian Chief Massasoit takes Williams in. The two men become friends. Williams lives with other Indians, too. He travels among them, learns to speak with them, and uses his influence to try to keep peaceful relations with them.

Years later, he writes a study of Indian languages. He understands Indian problems. Williams believes that the king has no legal¹⁴ right to give to the settlers land that belongs to the Indians. When he expresses this belief, which he does freely, he becomes unpopular with settlers who own land.

In 1636, Roger Williams builds the settlement of Providence on land that he buys from the Indians. This is the beginning of a new colony: Rhode Island. To Rhode Island come those people who are not content¹⁵ in other settlements because of religious or political differences. All are welcome.

In its first days, Rhode Island is an example of popular government¹⁶ unknown in this period anywhere in the world. The form of government is simple: a town meeting of heads of families gets together every two weeks to discuss "the common peace and planting." The constitution of Rhode Island contains the words, "All men may walk as their consciences¹⁷ persuade them, every one in the name of God." For this period¹⁸ in history, these are unbelievably modern words.

Library of Congress



Roger Williams



Because of Roger Williams, Rhode Island is close to being a democracy. It is as close as colonial America is going to be for a long, long time.

¹² **found** — to begin to build

¹³ **independent** — not influenced by other people

¹⁴ **legal** — permitted by law

¹⁵ **content (or contented)** — satisfied

¹⁶ **popular government** — democracy — government by the people generally

¹⁷ **conscience(s)** — knowledge or sense of what is right and wrong

¹⁸ **period** — a definite time



Chapter Two, Story Two
Roger Williams and the Founding of Rhode Island

Exercises

A. **Reading Comprehension — Discussion and Writing.** Choose two of these questions to discuss with a partner. Write the rest of the answers. You may look back and copy them from the story, or write them in your own words.

1. What does Roger Williams believe to be the purpose of government?

2. Why do the Boston authorities force Roger Williams to leave Massachusetts?

3. Who does Roger Williams believe owns the land?

4. Which people are welcome in the new colony of Rhode Island?



5. What kind of government does Rhode Island have?

B. Vocabulary. Find a word from the story to complete these sentences.

1. The ^a_____ want freedom of religion for themselves, but they do not give it to others.
2. Roger Williams believes that ^b_____ and ^c_____ must be separate.
3. Roger Williams believes that the king of England cannot give away land to settlers in the New World because it ^d_____ to the ^e_____.
4. Democracy is ^f_____ government.

Answer Key

Chapter 2, Story 2
ROGER WILLIAMS

B. VOCABULARY

1. a. Puritans
2. b. church, c. state
3. d. belongs, e. Indians
4. f. popular