

The Body of Liberties

1641 | Grade 4 · Explain with evidence

Words to know

law — a rule made through government

freedom — the ability to live and act without unjust control

protection — action that helps keep someone or something safe

Look closely



Modern topic illustration created for Massachusetts History Explorers. It is not a historical artifact.

Read the story

Massachusetts Bay made a set of laws. Some laws offered protections. The code also allowed slavery in certain cases. Enslaved people were forced to work and denied freedom. A law can be deeply unfair.

The code's slavery provision demonstrates slavery's legal place in colonial New England. A document titled liberties did not guarantee liberty to everyone. Read protections together with their exceptions.

Think, talk, and show evidence

1. State the main idea. Support it with two details from the reading.
2. Explain a change or challenge described in the text. Which words support your answer?
3. Use one vocabulary word in a new sentence about this event.
4. What can the image and caption help explain? What can they not tell you?

Follow-up reading: Mary Dyer and religious freedom

1660

Mary Dyer was a Quaker. Colony leaders banned Quakers. She returned to Boston to stand by her beliefs. The government put her to death in 1660. Her story shows the harm of religious intolerance.

Dyer had supported Anne Hutchinson before becoming a Quaker. Her repeated return challenged colonial restrictions. A later memorial records how people remember her; it is different from evidence created during her life.

Compare the two readings. Explain one similarity or difference using a detail from each. Their order does not prove that one caused the other.

Teacher guide & source trail

Original classroom adaptation. Suggested reading levels are instructional choices, not standardized readability certifications. Use professional judgment and learner feedback.

ELA practice: RI.4.1: refer to details; RI.4.2: main idea and summary; RI.4.3: explain events; RI.4.7: interpret visual information; W.4.2 and SL.4.1: explain and discuss.

These tasks support selected skills in the [Massachusetts 2017 ELA framework](#); they do not establish mastery of an entire standard.

Answer guidance

Factual anchor: Massachusetts Bay made a set of laws. Some laws offered protections. The code also allowed slavery in certain cases. Enslaved people were forced to work and denied freedom. A law can be deeply unfair. The code's slavery provision demonstrates slavery's legal place in colonial New England. A document titled liberties did not guarantee liberty to everyone. Read protections together with their exceptions.

Accept accurate main ideas and explanations supported by the text. Vocabulary meanings are in the opening word bank. For picture questions, use the caption and credit below; distinguish what is visible from what is inferred. For comparison, accept a specific connection supported by both readings. Do not require personal accounts of trauma.

Continue the inquiry

[Research source for this event ↗](#)

[Research source for follow-up ↗](#)

[Event page, accessible HTML reading, and vocabulary game ↗](#)

Image: Original site illustration.

[Image source and rights record ↗](#)

The PDF contains selectable English text and embedded fonts. For adjustable text and browser reading tools, use the event's [HTML page](#). External sources may need adult guidance.