

PAL: Perspectives in American Literature - A Research and Reference Guide - An Ongoing Project

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Chapter 1: Roger Williams (1603?-1683)

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Source: [Roger Williams and the Sachems](#)

Did Roger Williams get the land for free or did he purchase it?

"The two Narragansett Indian Sachems that deeded the land for Roger Williams' colony were Canonicus and Miantonomi. No money (or equivalent) for the Providence land was exchanged - the land deed for the Providence colony was essentially a grant from the two Sachems to Roger Williams." (from [Roger Williams and the Sachems](#))

"Relations between the early settlers and the Indians were friendly, due mostly to the friendship and respect between Williams and Miantonomi, the chief sachem of the Narragansetts. Land was purchased from the Indians with fair negotiations and mutual agreement." (from [Indians and Colonists](#))

"Roger purchased land from the Narragansett Chiefs, Canonicus and Miantonomi and named his settlement Providence in thanks to God. The original deed remains in the Archives of the City of Providence." (from [Roger Williams Biography](#))

"Williams had purchased the land from the aged Canonicus and the younger Miantonomoh, who had learned to love him." (from [Rhode Island Colonial History](#))

Primary Works

A Key into the Language of America, 1643; *Mr. Cotton's Letter Lately Printed, Examined, and Answered*, 1644; *Queries of the Highest Consideration*, 1644; *The Bloody Tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience, Discussed in a Conference betweene Truth and Peace*, 1644; *Christenings Make Not Christians*, 1645; *Experiments of Spiritual Lzfe and Health*, 1652; *The Fourth Paper Presented hy Malor Butler*, 1652; *The Bloody Tenent Yet More Bloudy hy Mr. Cotton's Endeavor to Wash it White in the Blood of the Lamhe*, 1652; *The Hireling Ministry None of Christs*, 1652; and *George Fox Digg'd Out of His Burrowes*, 1676; *The Complete Writings of Roger Williams*, 6 vols., ed. J. Hammond Trumball, 1866&endash;1874, rpt. with additional vol. by Perry Miller, 1963.

A key into the language of America. Edited with a critical introd., notes, and commentary by John J. Teunissen and Evelyn J. Hinz. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1973. E99 N16 W67

The correspondence of Roger Williams. Glenn W. LaFantasie, editor. Providence, R.I.: Brown UP, 1988. F82 .W64

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Bremer, Francis J. ed. *Puritanism: transatlantic perspectives on a seventeenth century Anglo-American faith*. Boston: Northeastern UP, 1993. BX9322 .P87

Gaustad, Edwin S. *Liberty of conscience: Roger Williams in America*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1991. BX6495 .W55 G38

Gordis, Lisa M. *Opening Scripture: Bible Reading and Interpretive Authority in Puritan New England*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003.

Hardman, Keith. *Issues in American Christianity: primary sources with introductions*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1993. BR514 .H37

Kaufmann, Michael W. *Institutional Individualism: Conversion, Exile, and Nostalgia in Puritan New England*. Hanover: Wesleyan UP, 1998.

Skaggs, Donald. *Roger Williams' Dream for America*. NY: Peter Lang, 1993.

Spurgin, Hugh. *Roger Williams and Puritan radicalism in the English separatist tradition*. Lewiston NY: E. Mellon P, 1989. F82 .W7 S68

Study Questions

(a) What can we infer about Williams's intentions from the fact that he chose to compose *A Key into the Language of America* as an "implicit dialogue" rather than as a dictionary?

(b) Characterize the persona of the first-person narrator in *A Key*. What kind of person does Williams present himself as?

(c) How is Williams's book like a key?

(d) How do the various sections of each chapter in *A Key* relate to one another and to the whole work?

(e) What lessons can a Christian learn from the Indians?

(f) Why might Williams once have objected to Europe and the rest of the West being referred to as "Christendom"?

(g) In what ways was a colony in the New World like a ship at sea?

(h) What did Williams gain from his treaty with the Indians besides legal ownership of some land?

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