

Hidden Heritage

Questions for Teachers to Guide Students through the Text

1. This document is called a memorial. From the context, deduce what a memorial is. Use a dictionary to confirm your definition.(1)
2. Who wrote this letter? (1)
3. Who was James Murphy? What was his position? When did he accept the position of Reverend? (1)
4. Jane Cox is rumored to have been Rev. M. mother. (See Doc. B & C). What do these documents say was her previous status and occupation ?
5. According to this letter, what did Rev Murphy's say about himself and his family history? What did he claim as to his mother's whereabouts? (1,2)
6. What did the memorialists say they discovered about Murphy's true heritage and his mother's death(3)
7. On what evidence did they base their judgment? Specify the evidence that they presented to the synod. (Doc B & C)
8. Why are the memorialists so upset as to Murphy's heritage and his portrayal of himself and his mother? (2 & 3)
9. What action did the memorialists take? What group did they appeal to? What was the response? (3 & 4)
10. What claim was made concerning Rev. Murphy after their charges were made public (top, 4)
11. What was Murphy's public response the following Sunday? (bot. 4)
12. Can you think of any recent scandals involving politicians or religious figures who have had similar embarrassing charges made against them? What was their reaction to their charges and did it help them or hurt them politically?
13. What does Murphy do to try and garner support?(top 5)
14. What was the Classis response to the initial complaint of the memorialists? (5)

15. Judge Westbrook was excommunicated from the Church by Rev. Murphy. speculate what led up to this action. (5 & 6)

16. After being rejected by the Classis, the memorialists went above them to the Synod in Albany. What was the Synod's final response to the complaint of the authors?(7 & 8)

17. Referring to pages 6-8 of the Memorial, why do you think the consistory supported Murphy?

18. Sometime between Dec. 1823 & Jan 1824', the memorialists returned with their complaint against Murphy. The consistory of Rochester refused. How did the consistory portray the memorialists with their response? (8)

19. According to the authors of this document, the Classis had several meetings in different locations at which they discussed this complaint and kept no written record of the proceedings. What do you think the motives for not keeping records of this incident were?

20. The authors state that Murphy's offer to surrender his license to preach and to step down as a minister if they keep the matter quiet is an admission of his guilt. Of what was he guilty?

21. In Affidavit E, we see that Judge Derik Westbrook is excommunicated from the Reformed Church. Why did the consistory say they were doing this to Judge Westbrook and who signed the letter? What eventually happens to Judge Westbrook, according to the two female memorialists?

Concluding Questions

If the authors of this document had been prominent white men, do you think the consistory, classis and synod would have responded in the same manner?

In the end, what are the two women pleading for? What will satisfy them?

This document was written from only one point of view. How might this situation look from Murphy's perspective?