Rhode Island’s Charter

Colonists who came to America were still English citizens, and had to obey the rules of their leaders. When creating new colonies, the English government usually granted CHARTERS to govern the land. These official documents told the colonists what they were and were not allowed to do.

But Rhode Island’s charter was different than that of any other colony. When Roger Williams settled Rhode Island in 1636, he wanted to find a place that would have RELIGIOUS FREEDOM. That was a new idea at the time.

Rhode Islander settlers got documents from England to establish their colony, but they waited until 1663 to get an official charter from the king. That charter said that they could have a “full liberty in religious concerns,” which means that they could practice whatever religion they would like.
Rhode Island’s charter looked like the other charters. Look closely.

| What are 3 things you notice? | What are 3 things you have questions about? | What are 3 ways to find answers to your questions? |
A lot of the images used on the document were **SYMBOLS**. They told an important story.

Did you notice any **CROWNS**? Royalty wore crowns to show their status. What about **LIONS**? Lions were a popular symbol with royalty in Europe.

Royal symbols were used to show that the charter came from the king.

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Draw a symbol from a part of your life and write what it means:

(Example: a logo, a sign)
The Rhode Island charter has a lot of symbols to show that it comes from the king.

Asking for religious freedom meant asking for a new type of government. In order to make a new type of government in Rhode Island, Roger Williams and the settlers had to work within the existing power structure and **ASK** the king.

Rhode Island settlers had to show the king why their idea would work.

If you wanted to change a rule, how would you do it?

Write two sentences. The first sentence should say what rule you would like to change. The second should say why your idea would work.