

PETER STUYVESANT



BIOGRAPHY

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Peter Stuyvesant was born at the turn of the sixteenth century in the Netherlands. He joined the Dutch West India Company around 1632, and went on to become a director for the company in the Caribbean. Around this time, he injured his leg so badly that it had to be amputated, which meant he had a wooden leg for the rest of his life.

Shortly after that, Stuyvesant became Director General of the company, and so was in charge of the Dutch colonies in North America and the Caribbean. In 1647, Stuyvesant arrived in New Amsterdam (modern New York) and found the colony was completely without order or government. But once he had set out to get the colony in order, it became quite profitable.

But not everyone in the colony was happy. The people who lived there thought Stuyvesant was only interested in profit and not their welfare. They demanded more control over their own government. Stuyvesant responded by setting up a government in New Amsterdam that was more like the governments in Dutch cities.

Although it seemed that Stuyvesant had given the people what they wanted, he had not really given up control. While he was in charge, the company lost territory on the border between New Netherland and Connecticut. But they did gain territory from Swedish settlers along the Delaware River, and had good relations with the Native Americans in the area.

But in 1664, the English launched a surprise attack on New Amsterdam. Totally unprepared, Stuyvesant could not rally any men to defend the colony, and he was forced to surrender it. It was the English who renamed the colony New York.

Understanding words

Before we can understand a story we have to know what all of the words mean. Let's try one...

a Write the sentence in which you found the word 'amputated'.

b From that sentence, suggest what 'amputated' means.

c Write a new sentence using the word 'amputated'.

d Use a dictionary to find words with a similar meaning (synonyms) to 'amputated'.

e Draw a small picture showing what you think 'amputated' means.

Try this for other words, too. 2

Finding key words

Next, we need to find the key words that tell us what the story is about...

Read the story and underline the key words. Write the most important of these key words in a list like the one below. Write next to it a word that means a similar thing (a synonym). You don't have to use all the spaces, but you should not use more.

Key word	Synonym (similar word)
Example: gain	acquire

Sequencing

Sequencing means getting the events in the right order. Write these sentences in the correct order, so they make sense.

After he became the company's Director General, Stuyvesant went to the Dutch colony of New Netherland.

But Stuyvesant turned things around to make the colony more profitable.

Peter Stuyvesant was born at the turn of the sixteenth century in the Netherlands.

But Stuyvesant's harsh rule was not popular with all the settlers in the colony.

In 1664, Stuyvesant surrendered New Amsterdam to the English, after they launched a surprise attack.

Stuyvesant worked for the Dutch West India Company.

In New Amsterdam, Stuyvesant found everything in chaos.

Get to the facts

1 Which company did Stuyvesant work for?

2 Where had the Swedish settled?

3 When did Stuyvesant arrive in New Amsterdam?

4 When did the English conquer New Amsterdam?

5 What did the English call New Amsterdam?

Make a story...

When you read a description it often gives you ideas about how the event might be described differently.

The English attack

I was looking out over the ocean from my home in New Amsterdam. I suddenly saw foreign ships on the horizon. They were sailing towards the shore... (now complete the story)

Below is a plain text version for printing:

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For example:

Key word – gain Synonym – acquire

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