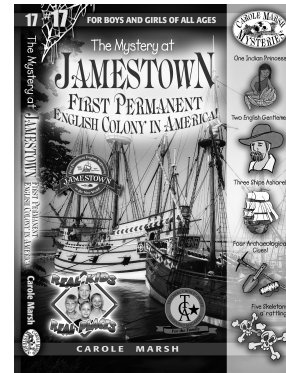


Teacher's Guide for:

The Mystery at Jamestown

First Permanent English Colony in America!

A Word From Carole Marsh

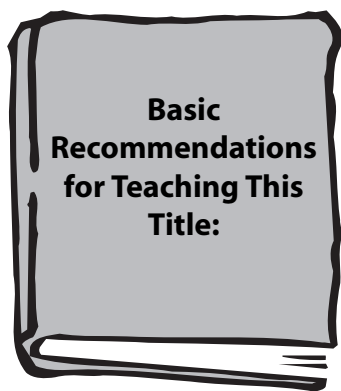


Dear Teacher,

Because I grew up on the East Coast, I guess I just took for granted that America was “old!” However, when I began to travel across the country, I soon realized how “young” some of the country is! So, when we have a 400th anniversary to celebrate in our nation’s history, I think it’s a big deal.

A few years ago, I wrote books for the quadricentennial of The Lost Colony, that failed attempt to establish a permanent English colony in the New World, in North Carolina. In 2006 and 2007, especially, I think it’s important for kids to learn about the 1607 successful colony! (If they had not succeeded, we might not have become America, you know! It was a “close call,” as it was!)

When I visited Jamestown a few years ago, I thought it was a beautiful place. I always say I’m a “fourth-grader forever,” but that day, I acted like one by swinging on vines as thick as my arm...from trees that almost certainly shaded Captain John Smith, Pocahontas, and the others. Bring history to life for your students! Living history is the only kind worth learning. And what more dramatic “ongoing” story is there than America’s story?!



Basic Recommendations for Teaching “The Mystery at Jamestown.”

- Because of the short chapters with intriguing endings, this book is a good choice to read aloud in class.
- Consider using some of the topics below to discuss after the chapter where the subject matter or dilemmas are mentioned.
- Ask students to select a subject for a written essay, oral report, or a project. They can work in teams if you prefer. Subjects might include:

The selection of a site for Jamestown. The colonists were given instructions as to the type of place to select. What were they looking for? Touch on defense from enemies, access to water transportation, and sources of food and water. What turned out to be some big problems at the location they selected? Discuss the marshy land, lack of fresh water, and very few colonists who knew how to farm!

Pocahontas. More than just a young Indian girl in a Disney movie, Pocahontas was a vital link between the powerful Powhatan tribe and the colonists. Talk about how she was the darling of her father, and how her natural curiosity drew her to the colony often. Why was she kidnaped? Why did she leave her native culture to marry an Englishman?

Captain John Smith. Talking about John Smith naturally brings up the importance of leadership. Why do groups need leaders? What character traits are important in a leader? John Smith did not necessarily want to be liked; he wanted to be respected. How do you earn respect? What happened to the colony when he had to return to England? Things fell apart!

Daily Life in James Fort. The colonists were supposed to find ways to make money for the Virginia Company, but first, they had to survive! Discuss immediate needs—building homes, defending against Indians, growing food, providing water. Touch on the enemy they didn’t expect—disease—and its effects on the colony. (It almost wiped them out!)



There's More You Should Know!

Once you start digging into history, you find layer upon layer of really interesting stuff! I never cease to be amazed at what I find. Sharing these pieces of history with your students will make the story of Jamestown come alive.

- It's hard to imagine sailing across the Atlantic Ocean for four months in a wooden ship. It's even harder to imagine doing it in the cramped quarters experienced by the colonists. The *Godspeed*, for example, had an actual deck length of 52 feet. According to "Love and Hate in Jamestown," that's about the length of three parking spaces in a modern parking lot! It was only 15 feet wide at its widest point. And there were 52 people on board who had to eat, sleep, and go to the bathroom!
- During "The Starving Time," colonists were so desperate for food that they ate the starch that was used to keep their collars stiff, and the leather from their shoes.
- What was the injury that sent John Smith back to England for medical attention? Smith was asleep on a boat when a spark or cinder (probably from a pipe or a musket matchcord) landed near the gunpowder bag he wore on his leg. It ignited into flame and burned a large area on his leg and body. Witnesses say he leaped overboard into the river to put the fire out and stop the horrific pain!
- For many years, historians and archaeologists thought that James Fort had simply washed away. But archaeologists began to dig again at a site owned by the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities in 1994. It didn't take them long to discover that this was the real deal! They have discovered more than one million artifacts. One archaeologist is quoted as saying that the "artifacts get in the way of the dirt!"
- The Virginia Colony wanted the colonists to make money for the company. The colonists tried several ways to make a profit in the colony before tobacco became king! Germans tried to make glass for windows, and some colonists tried to make pitch and tar from local trees. Pitch and tar were used to patch wooden ships.
- The evidence from colonists' writings and John Rolfe's writings shows that Pocahontas and John Rolfe were truly in love! John Rolfe is described as a handsome man with a gentle nature who spent sleepless nights thinking about the woman he loved!

Bibliography, Other Resources and Ideas!

The book, "Love and Hate in Jamestown: John Smith, Pocahontas, and the Heart of a New Nation," by David Price, is an incredibly detailed, fascinating chronicle of the people, places, and events of the Jamestown era. I had a hard time putting it down!

Rarely have I seen a group prouder of what they are doing than the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA). The group's acquisition of the James Fort site and their insistence that no one dig on the property until a full-scale archaeological effort was launched has preserved an absolutely priceless piece of history. Don't miss their website at: www.apva.org

Another invaluable contribution of the APVA is their development of the Archaearium at Historic Jamestowne, an exhibit of artifacts unearthed at Jamestown. The Archaearium uses computers to show how the fort would have looked on the land today, and features a place where visitors can watch archaeologists working live! How cool is that? Sounds like a field trip to me!

Make sure you visit the official website for Jamestown's 400 anniversary. There you'll find all kinds of information about the many events planned to commemorate America's first permanent colony! www.americas400thanniversary.com

Another good stop on the web is the Jamestown Settlement web site, Jamestown's living history museum: <http://www.historyisfun.org/jamestown/jamestown.cfm>

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