

PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS

Letter to Queen Anne

Pocahontas visited London in 1616. John Smith wrote a letter to England's Queen Anne, asking her to give special attention to Pocahontas during her visit.

Read the numbered text and answer the questions.

Excerpt from John Smith's Letter to Queen Anne

- 1) So it is, that some ten years ago being in Virginia, and taken prisoner by the power of Powhatan their chief King,
- 2) I received from this great Salvage exceeding great courtesy,
- 3) especially from his son Nantaquaus, the most manliest, comeliest, boldest spirit, I ever saw in a Salvage,
- 4) and his sister Pocahontas, the Kings most dear and well-beloved daughter, being but a child of twelve or thirteen years of age,
- 5) whose compassionate pitiful heart of my desperate estate, gave me much cause to respect her.
- 6) After some six weeks fasting amongst those Salvage courtiers, at the minute of my execution, she hazarded the beating out of her own brains to save mine,
- 7) and not only she, but she prevailed with her father, that I was safely conducted to Jamestown:
- 8) where I found about eight and thirty miserable poor and sick creatures, to keep possession of all those large territories of Virginia;
- 9) such was the weakness of this poor commonwealth, as had the salvages not fed us, we directly had starved.
- 10) And this relief, most gracious Queen, was commonly brought us by this Lady Pocahontas.

PART A: Use the text and a dictionary to answer the questions about vocabulary.

1. Define compassionate by giving a synonym, antonym, and example.
2. Define commonwealth. What is John Smith referring to when he uses this term?

PART B: Analyze each statement to determine whether it is a **fact** or an **opinion**.

3. _____ “I received from this great Salvage exceeding great courtesy”
4. _____ “she hazarded the beating out of her own brains to save mine”
5. _____ “Nantaquaus, the most manliest, comeliest, boldest spirit”
6. _____ “[She] so prevailed with her father, that I was safely conducted to Jamestown.”
7. _____ “had the salvages not fed us, we directly had starved.”

PART C: Use the text to identify who was being described.

8. “most compassionate pitiful heart”
9. 38, miserable, poor, and sick.
10. “this great Salvage exceeding great courtesy”
11. “manliest, comeliest, boldest spirit”
12. “most gracious Queen”

PART D: Use inferences from the text to answer the questions.

13. What is the theme of sections 8-10?
14. What words/phrases communicate John Smith’s gratitude toward Pocahontas?
15. What is John Smith’s purpose for writing to Queen Anne? Cite evidence to support your answer.
16. What is meant by the phrase “we directly had starved”?
17. According to the text, how did the Powhatan tribe help the Jamestown colonists survive?
18. What does Smith cite as reasons why Pocahontas saved him?

Writing Prompt

Use an online resource to research the negative ways in which the colonists affected the Native Americans. Type a report on your findings and present your report orally. Discuss as a class.

PRIMARY SOURCE VOCABULARY ANALYSIS

Powhatan Words

Captain John Smith often wrote about the Jamestown colonists' experiences of adapting to a new environment and interacting with the Powhatan Indians. He included Powhatan words and phrases in many of his writings.

Review each entry. Why might each Powhatan word or phrase have been important for Jamestown colonists to know when living in a new environment and dealing with the Powhatan tribe?

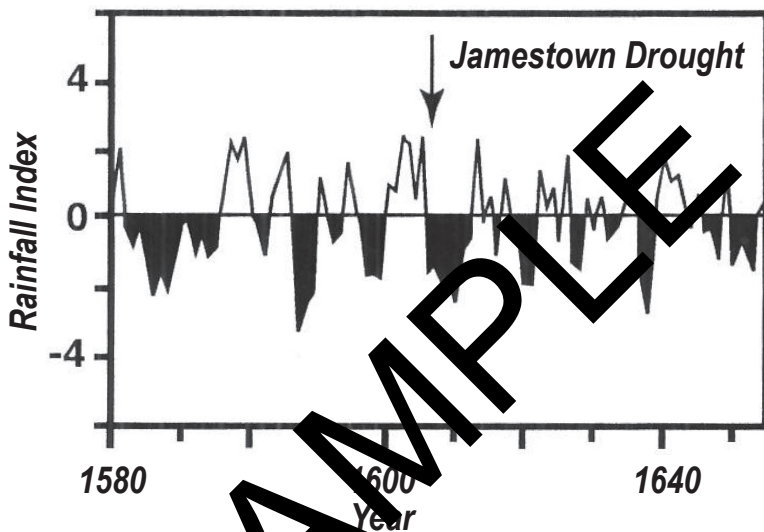
Powhatan	English	Importance for Colonists
<i>Pokatawer</i>	fire	
<i>Suckahanna</i>	water	
<i>attawp, attonce</i>	bow, arrows	
<i>monacookes</i>	swords	
<i>pawcussacks</i>	gun	
<i>tomahacks</i>	axes	
<i>moccasins</i>	shoes	
<i>nemaroung</i>	man	
<i>crenepo</i>	woman	
<i>netoppew, marrapough</i>	friends, enemies	
<i>yehawkans</i>	houses	
<i>Ka ka torawincs yowo</i>	What do you call this?	
<i>Tawnor neheigh Powhatan</i>	Where dwells Powhatan?	

DATA ANALYSIS

Analyzing Tree Rings

How might lack of rain affect the Jamestown colonists? Scientists decided to examine tree ring growth patterns from very old bald cypress trees in southeastern Virginia. A year of good rainfall produced a wide ring, while a year of drought produced a thin ring. The scientists' findings give us a better idea of the difficulties encountered by the first settlers in America.

Look at the chart and answer the questions.



- What do the white spikes indicate?
 - What do the black spikes indicate?
- Find the year of Jamestown's founding on the chart. Was it a year of drought or good rainfall? Approximately how long did the drought last?
- Between 1580 and 1655, approximately how long was the longest drought?
- Find the winter of the "Starving Time" (1609-1610) on the chart. What type of rainfall condition was in effect? How might this condition have caused colonists to starve?
- Predict how the colonists' experience might have been different if they landed at Jamestown in the year 1600 instead of 1607.