

Quentin Bednarz, Alejandro Palacios, Aidan Baker  
Kaufman  
Humanities

### The Jamestown Colony Study Guide

#### **Focus Question 1: Why did England grant the Virginia Company a charter to travel to North America and what caused Jamestown's downfall?**

- The rulers of England decided not to fund the risky venture of colonizing the Americas, but instead granted charters to two joint-stock companies, the Virginia Companies of London and Plymouth to travel to the Americas
- The Virginia Company of Plymouth disbanded, leaving just the Virginia Company of London, or now just the Virginia Company left.
- The Company had lured financial support from lots of investors and the charter, signed by King James I in 1606, guaranteed him one-fifth of all gold and silver found.
- In April of 1607, three months after departing from an English harbor, the Virginia Company's three ships and 150 passengers reached the coast of Virginia, where they named their settlement Jamestown and named the river The James after their king.
- John Smith wrote in his journal that he feared the downfall of the new settlement because the colonists were too focused on finding gold.
- Disease from infected river water and hunger were the first challenges the colonists faced.
- By the Winter of 1607 only 38 colonists remained alive, one of them being John Smith who took control of the settlement and made the colonists farm
- John Smith also befriended the leader of the Powhatans, Chief Powhatan who had watched the English establish their settlement.
- In the Spring of 1609, the Virginia Company sent another 600 colonists, including women and children, to Jamestown
- The Powhatan started to kill the Colonist's livestock and harassed the settlers who attempted to hunt or farm because they feared the growing English population.
- Period of famine known as the "starving time" started during the Winter of 1609 and out of the hundreds of colonists who started the Winter, only about 60 lived to see Spring.

## **Focus Question 2: What was the relationship between Jamestown and the Powhatan people and what role did Pocahontas play in the relationship?**

- the Powhatan Indians were a group of Eastern Woodland Indians who occupied the coastal plain of Virginia. They were sometimes referred to as Algonquians because of the Algonquian language they spoke and because of their common culture. Some words we use today, such as moccasin and tomahawk, came from this language. At the time the English arrived in 1607, ancestors of the Powhatans had been living in eastern Virginia for thousands of years
- Who is Pocahontas and how did she influence behavior
- While periodic violence disrupted the relationship between the Pamunkeys and the English, an extended period of peace followed the marriage between Pocahontas and Rolfe. After Powhatan's death in 1618, he was succeeded by his brother, Opechancanough. Opechancanough grew increasingly unsettled by the growth of the English colony, and launched a massive raid against Jamestown in March 1622, killing 347 settlers.
- Pocahontas (1596–1617) was the daughter of Powhatan, the Pamunkey chief who ruled the confederation of Native American tribes surrounding Jamestown, and the wife of John Rolfe, a Jamestown settler.
- Pocahontas chose to take an English name, “Rebecca,” that means “mother of two peoples,” and they married in the large church inside James Fort on April 5, 1614. They had a son. They traveled to England to promote the colony to investors, and Rebecca was celebrated in the highest London society. But as the Rolfes began their return to Virginia, she took ill and died in Gravesend, England. The Powhatan Indian confederacy rapidly declined after her uncle’s attack in 1622 failed to stop English colonization.

## **Focus Question 3: How did tobacco save Jamestown and lead to slavery?**

- 1612: John Rolfe experiments with tobacco from the Indies and a native strain popular with the Native Americans to create a highly valued strain
- This strain was wildly popular in England
- Tobacco quickly became the cash crop of Jamestown, as well as the currency
- By 1620, Jamestown ships 1.5 million lbs of tobacco to England each year
- As more land was taken from the Native Americans, more tobacco was grown
  - **The Headright System** encouraged the growth of the tobacco industry
  - Gave every new immigrant to Jamestown 50 acres of land and an additional 50 acres for each family member who immigrated
  - More laborers were needed everyday to satisfy the growing demand for Jamestown’s “brown gold”
- Indentured servants made up most of the workforce

- Consisted of English, Irish, and Native Americans
- Native Americans were not good servants because most ran away and the remainder weren't accustomed to working that much
- 1619: Dutch merchants sell 20 Africans to Jamestown as indentured servants, though this is not a significant amount
- These 20 African servants were treated just as normal indentured servants, with full freedom and land after their contract was complete
- Mid 1600's: More workers are needed than ever before, so slaves started to be introduced officially into Jamestown
  - Indentured servants cost  $\frac{1}{3}$  as much as slaves (1000 vs 3000 lbs of tobacco)
  - An overall wealthier colony coupled with a decrease in indentured servant immigrants led to an influx of true slaves into Jamestown