



The King’s Instructions: Working with primary documents

Grade: 3rd-5th

Subjects: History, Virginia Studies, English

Time: 30 to 40 minutes

Class Size: Adaptable

Skills: Using historical documents, non-fiction, interpretation

Strategies: Have students read and interpret primary sources to gain understanding of historical events.

Compare and contrast primary sources with archaeological evidence.

Student will:	SOLs
VS.1 Students will demonstrate skills for historical thinking and geographic analysis by: a) Analyzing and interpreting artifacts and primary and secondary sources to understand events in Virginia history VS.2 Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between physical geography and the lives of native peoples of Virginia by: f) Describing how archaeologists have recovered new material evidence at sites including Jamestown VS.3 Demonstrate an understanding of the first permanent English settlement in America by: f) Describing the hardships faced by settlers at Jamestown and the changes that took place to ensure survival VS.4 Demonstrate an understanding of life in the Virginia colony by describing everyday life in colonial Virginia	VS.1, VS.2, VS.3, VS.4
3.4, 4.4, 5.4 Expand vocabulary when reading and apply previous knowledge and context clues to determine meanings of new words 3.6, 4.6, 5.6 Read and demonstrate comprehension of nonfiction texts Use context to clarify meanings of unfamiliar words. Explain words with multiple meanings. Use word-reference materials, including the glossary, dictionary and thesaurus.	English 3.4, 3.6, 4.4, 4.6, 5.4, 5.6

Background

On May 14, 1607, around 100 English men and boys of the Virginia Company landed on Jamestown Island to establish a colony. In 1994, archaeologists at Jamestown discovered the exact location of the 400-year-old James Fort. The evidence they found shows that that the settlement was in a secure place down the James River where Spanish ships could not fire point blank into the fort. This contrasts with a historical account that states settlers chose that location because the deep water channel let their ships ride close to shore, close enough to moor them to the trees. This is one example of historical documents disagreeing with archaeological “ground-truthing.”

Resources and materials: Lesson includes a student worksheet with a 1606 excerpt from the Virginia Company records and John Smith’s 1612 map of Virginia

Procedure



In this lesson, students will compare and contrast the Virginia Company's plans for the settlement and how well settlers followed these directions. Have the students read the documents and complete the following questions. If time allows, review their answers in groups or together as a class using the discuss questions below.

Discussion Questions

- Why might historical records be different than what actually happened in the past? *People may have to change their plans based on new information or adapt to a new environment. They might have written down information they heard from a second-hand source. Their tools were not the same as today so measurements might be slightly different.*
- Why is it important to use historical documents and archaeological excavation together? *Historical documents may contain bias or incorrect information. Excavations help give archaeologists more accurate information about events and people within the past.*
- Discuss the other documents students list in Part IV, Question 3. What would each type of those documents tell them about how people lived in the past? *Answers will vary. Students may list drawings, letters, diaries, oral histories, etc. Drawings show what structures looked like. Letters and diaries give first-personal accounts of historical events. Oral histories can record stories of events that are passed down through generations.*

To learn more and view additional lesson plans visit *Jamestown Rediscovery* at <https://historicjamestowne.org>



Name: _____

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Vocabulary

Archaeologist: a scientist who studies how people lived within the past

Artifact: an object made or used by a person in the past

Excavation: the scientific removal of soil and artifacts from an archaeological site

Feature: a non-moveable part of an archaeological site, such as pits or building walls

Site: a place used by people in the past, often containing artifacts

Background

On May 14, 1607, around 100 English men and boys of the Virginia Company landed on Jamestown Island to establish a colony. Historical documents and archaeological excavations help us understand where and how James Fort was built. However, things did not always go according to plan.

Directions

Part I

Below are the instructions the Virginia Company in London gave to the settlers before they sailed for Virginia. Read the document carefully. Pay attention to the words in bold. Language changes through time and it can be hard to understand historical documents. While you read, underline the words and ideas that are difficult or may mean something different today.

*Instructions given by way of advice, by **us whom it hath pleased the King's Majesty to appoint** for the intended voyage to Virginia, to be observed by those captains and company which are sent at this present to plant there.*

*As we doubt not but **you will have especial care to observe the ordinances set down by the King's Majesty** and delivered unto you under the Privy Seal, so for your better directions upon your first landing **we have thought good to recommend unto your care these instructions** and articles following.*

*When it shall please God to send you on the **coast of Virginia**, you shall do your best endeavor to find out a **safe port in the entrance of some navigable river**, making choice of such a **one as runneth furthest into the land**. And if you happen to discover divers portable rivers, and amongst them **any one that hath two main branches, if the difference be not great, make choice of that which bendeth most toward the northwest**, for that way shall you soonest find the other sea.*

*But if you choose your place **so far up as a bark of fifty tons will fleet**, then you may lay all your provisions ashore with ease, and the **better receive the trade of all the countries about you in the land**. And such a place you may perchance find a hundred miles from the river's mouth, and **the further up the better**. For you to sit down near the entrance, except it be in **some island that is strong by nature**, and enemy that may approach you on even ground may easily pull you out.*



*First, erect a little sconce at the mouth of the river that may lodge some ten men, with whom you shall leave a light boat, that when any fleet shall be in sight **they may come with great speed to give you warning.** Secondly, you [may] **in no case suffer [any] of the natural people of the country to inhabit between you and the seacoast;** for you cannot carry yourselves so towards them but **they will grow discontented with your habitation...***

Part II

Use the Virginia Company's instructions to answer the questions below.

1. What is the purpose of this document?

2. What does it tell you about the plans for settling at Jamestown?

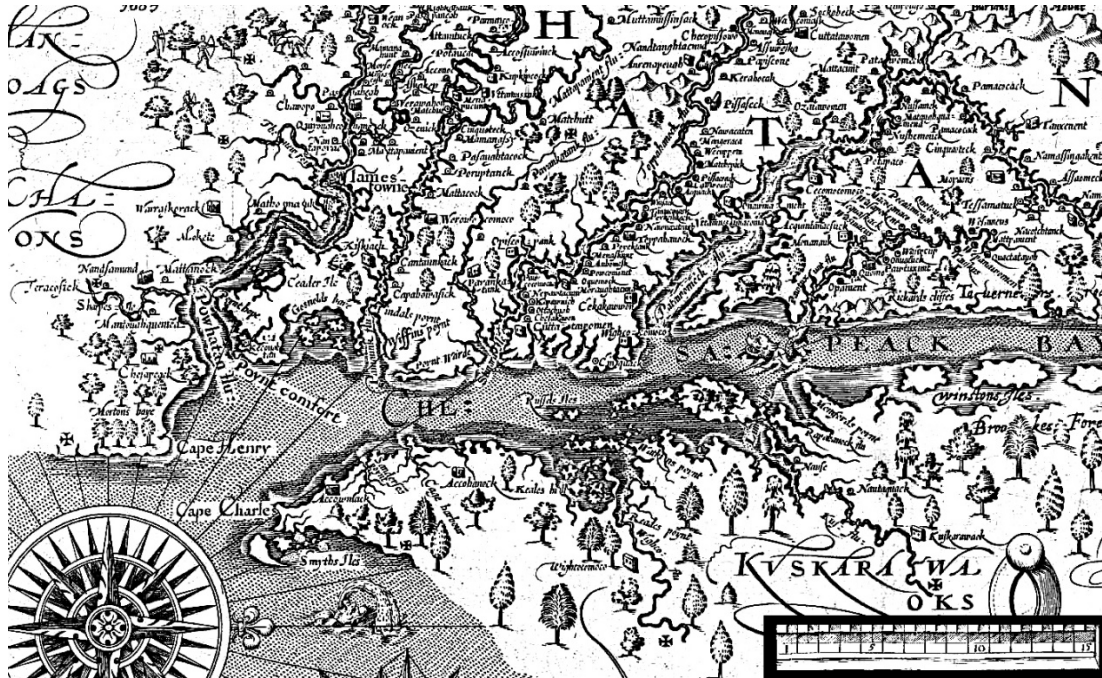
3. What kind of area was recommended?
 - a. A place right on the Atlantic Ocean
 - b. Somewhere next to Native settlements
 - c. A place upriver that was easily protected

4. Who is the Virginia Company talking about when they say "when any fleet should be in sight"?
 - a. Virginia Indians
 - b. The Spanish or other Europeans
 - c. The men left as guards

5. What else would you like to know about this document?

Part III

Below is part of Captain John Smith's 1612 map of Virginia. The top arrow in the large compass in the bottom left corner points north. The bar in the bottom right corner is Smith's scale in leagues (1 league = 3 miles). Examine the map closely and use it to answer the following questions.



1. Find and circle Jamestown. What do the other names on the map represent?

2. Compare and contrast this map with the Virginia Company document. How well did the settlers follow their directions? Write down two similarities and two differences.



Part IV

1. Archaeologists found James Fort near to where Smith's map said it was. Does that fact surprise you? Why or why not?

2. Do you think the Virginia Company gave good advice to the settlers? What other advice would you give them?

3. What other historical documents do you think archaeologists could use to learn more about the fort?