

American Indian Cultures

The Powhatans



Standard of Learning Enrichment

Educational Enrichment for Young Patriots

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?

Upon completion you will meet (and hopefully exceed) the requirements for the History and Social Science Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools, adopted in January 2008 by the Board of Education of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Specifically, you will:

History

2.2 Better understand the lives and contributions of Native American Powhatan Indians of the Eastern Woodlands, past and present

Civics

2.10 Explain the responsibilities of good citizens, with emphasis on
a) respecting and protecting the rights and property of others
c) describing actions that can improve the school and community

The People: Who They Were

At the time Captain John Smith and English colonists arrived in the spring of 1607, coastal Virginia was inhabited by the Powhatan Indians, an Algonquian-speaking people.





The People: Who They Were

the Powhatans

The Powhatans had a total population of about 14,000, under the control of Wahunsonacock, sometimes called “Powhatan.”

Villages within the same area belonged to one tribe. Each tribe had its own “werowance” or chief, who was ruled by Wahunsonacock.

The People: How They Lived

The Powhatans lived in villages with houses built of sapling frames covered by reed mats or bark.

Agricultural products – corn, beans and squash – contributed to about half of the Powhatan diet.

Men hunted deer and fished, while women farmed and gathered wild plant foods.

Women prepared foods and made clothes from deerskins. Tools and equipment were made from stone, bone and wood.



The People: How They Lived



The People: What They Wore



According to John Smith, the native Virginians were "Generally tall and straight." The average Powhatan stood at about six feet.

The most common article of clothing for men was a piece of deer skin worn between the thighs. Sometimes men covered themselves with grass, tree leaves, or similar natural materials.

The hair was shaven from the right side of the head (to reduce the risk of entanglement in the hunter's bowstring); the hair on the other side of the head was allowed to grow long and often pulled into a knot and decorated with everything from shells to the dead hand of an enemy.

A man of high status might wear a shirt-like garment made of fringed deerskin or a mantle of turkey feathers.

Men used body paint in preparation for war or games.

The People: What They Wore

The skirt was the most common garment for women; those of higher-status wrapped themselves in fringed deerskin.

The hair of a married women was worn long and braided in the back.

A young girl had her head on the front and sides shaven close, with the rest of the hair growing long and braided down the back.



The People: How They Lived

The Powhatans participated in an extensive trade network with Indian groups within and outside the chiefdom. With the English, the Powhatans traded food and furs in exchange for metal tools, European copper, European glass beads, and trinkets. Farming tools made work easier for the Indians.

The Powhatans helped the English by providing food, knowledgeable guides to help them locate raw materials, precious metals other trade routes.

As English settlement spread in Virginia during the 1600s, the Powhatans were forced to move inland away from the fertile river valleys that had long been their home. As their territory dwindled, so did the Indian population, falling victim to English diseases, food shortages and warfare.

The Powhatan people persisted, however, adopting new lifestyles while maintaining their cultural pride and leaving a legacy for today, through their descendants still living in Virginia.

Was the English colonization of Virginia a good example of respecting and protecting the rights and property of others?

The People: Captain John Smith

Captain John Smith (c. January 1580 – 21 June 1631) was an English soldier, explorer, and author. He helped establish the first permanent English settlement in North America at Jamestown, Virginia.

In 1606 Smith became involved with plans to colonize Virginia with the Virginia Company of London. The expedition set sail in three small ships, the Discovery, the Susan Constant and the Godspeed, on 20 December 1606.

John Smith was apparently a troublemaker . Captain Christopher Newport (in charge of the three ships) had planned to execute him upon arrival in Virginia. However, sealed orders from the Virginia Company named Smith one of the leaders of the new colony.



The People: Pocahontas

Born about 1596, Pocahontas was the daughter of Powhatan, chief of over 30 tribes in coastal Virginia.

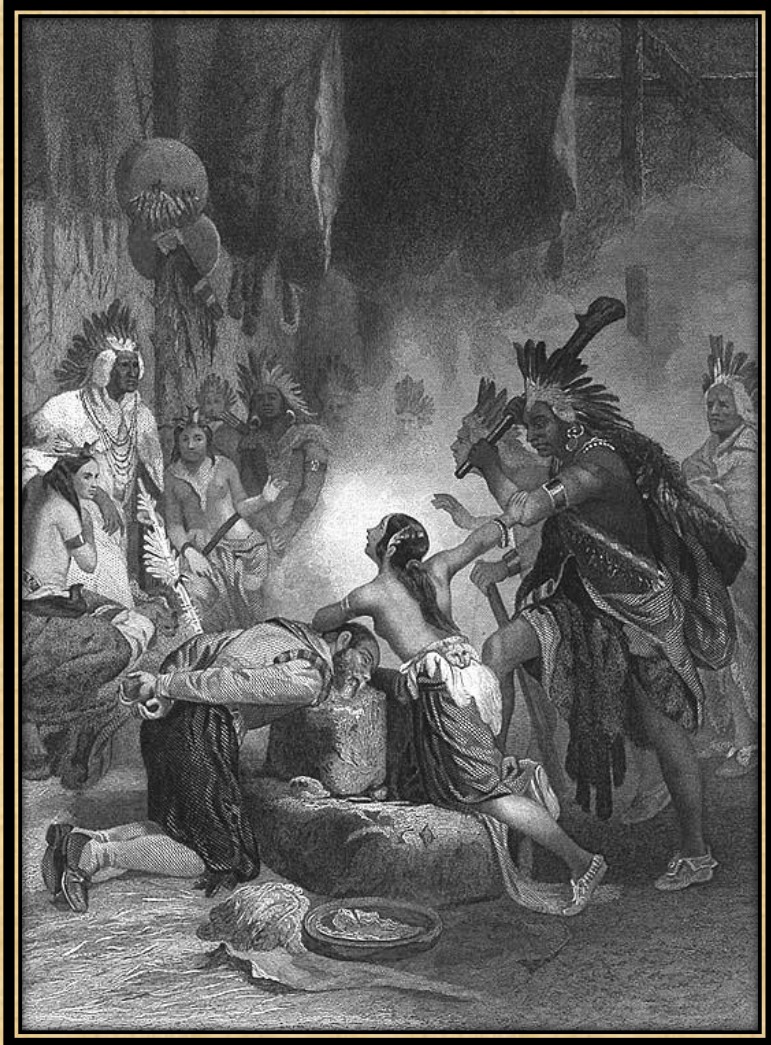
Pocahontas was a nickname meaning “playful one.”

Her formal names were Amonute and Matoaka. Pocahontas was Powhatan’s most dear and well-beloved daughter.

This modern painting is based on a 17th-century engraving of Pocahontas attired in English clothing.



The People: Pocahontas



In December 1607, while seeking food along the Chickahominy River, Smith was captured and taken to meet the chief of the Powhatans at Werowocomoco, the main village of the Powhatan Confederacy.

Although Smith was afraid he would be hurt, he was eventually released without harm and later attributed this in part to the chief's daughter, Pocahontas. According to Smith, Pocahontas threw herself across his body so that he would not be hurt.

The People: Pocahontas



Look at these houses. Did the Powhatans live in these types of homes?

The People: Pocahontas's Capture

Tension existed between the English settlers and the Indians because the English were taking Indian land. Chief Powhatan sometimes held English settlers as prisoners .

Captain Samuel Argall, an English navigator and administrator, captured Pocahontas and held her for exchange with English settlers. However, Pocahontas was not returned and was taken to Jamestown for about a year.

During this time, the English treated Pocahontas very well. Pocahontas took the English name "Rebecca". Later, Pocahontas was allowed to go back to the Indians, but she chose to stay with the English.



Marriage to John Rolfe



When Pocahontas was living with the English, she met and fell in love with John Rolfe. They were married and the English and Indians became friends again.

In 1616, Pocahontas and John Rolfe sailed to England and were introduced to King James I and the royal family.

In March 1617, John Rolfe and Pocahontas returned to Virginia, but Pocahontas became very sick and died.

Questions and Answers

The Powhatans



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Student Life Applications: Leadership Values

History 2.2 The student will better understand the lives and contributions of Native American Powhatan Indians of the Eastern Woodlands, past and present

How did the Powhatans help the English colonists in 1607 at Jamestown?

They helped the English by providing food and guides to locate raw materials, precious metals, and trade routes.

From what animal did the Powhatans make clothing?

Deer

Is the Powhatan Indian tribe extinct?

No. Native American tribes and individual Native Americans are still part of Virginia today. There are 8 tribal groups recognized in Virginia today, to include Chickahominy , Eastern Chickahominy , Mattaponi , Monacan, Nansemond, Pamunkey, Rappahannock , and Upper Mattaponi .

Student Life Applications: Leadership Values

Civics 2.10 The student will explain the responsibilities of good citizens, with emphasis on respecting and protecting the rights and property of others.

Whose rights and property were not respected by the English in 1607 at Jamestown?

The rights and property of the Powhatan Indians

How can you respect the property of others at school?

Do not take things from others that do not belong to you

How can you respect the property of others in your community?

Do not litter and pick up trash when you see it

Student Life Applications: Leadership Values

Civics 2.10 The student will explain the responsibilities of good citizens, with emphasis on describing actions that can improve the school and community

How did the Chief of the Powtahan Indians improve his community?

Traded with English colonists

How can you improve your school?

Do not take things from others that do not belong to you

How can you improve your community?

Do not litter and pick up trash when you see it

Further Study

The Indian Village at Historic Jamestown, Jamestown , Virginia
Plymoth Plantation, Plymouth, Massachusetts

Sources

Danielle Moretti-Langholtz, *A Study of Virginia Indians and Jamestown: The First Century*, The College of William & Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia, December 2005

Lee Cotton, *Powhatan Indian Lifeways*, Park Ranger, Colonial NHP, July 1999