

Accuracy of pocahontas essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Xzavia Hayden Mr. Knight VA US History Honors March 2, 2012 Historical Accuracy of Pocahontas Like many Americans, we have heard the story of Pocahontas or seen the Disney movie, Pocahontas. The movie attempts to tell and expand on the story of a romantic relationship between an Indian princess, Pocahontas, and a Jamestown colonist, John Smith. However, Disney wrote the movie so that no viewer would be offended by what was told. In this process, a lot of historical facts and event were altered (Larson).

All of this leads to the question of what really happened. In the beginning of the Disney movie, the initial scenes have a little to no resemblance to Virginia, in which is the actual setting in history. Pocahontas's independent attitude does not show until her father, Chief Powhatan, arranges for her to marry an Indian named Kocoum. At the same time as this, Pocahontas observed that the British were arriving and settling in Jamestown. Her attention then turns to, what Disney portrays as, a really handsome blonde named Captain John Smith (Larson).

As the movie goes on, Smith then has his first encounter with Pocahontas and he offered to teach the Indians how to manage their land. Afterwards, Pocahontas gave John Smith an ear of corn, in which was symbolic. The two then fall in love (Larson). This was also the beginning to the "romantic relationship" that Disney portrays. Unfortunately, after their romantic scene, the fate of their relationship begins to change. When an Englishman killed an Indian, Smith was then captured. As punishment, Pocahontas' father ordered him to be murdered by crushing his head with stones.

This is when the heroic scene of Pocahontas sacrificing herself to save Captain John Smith's life takes place. When John is injured by a bullet, supposedly, intended for Chief Powhatan, Chief Powhatan says, " You are always welcome among our people. " Smith and Pocahontas, then say their last goodbyes and John Smith was deported back to England (Larson).

Though Disney gives a very beautiful story of what happened, there are still wonders of who these people really were. John Smith was born in 1580 in Lincolnshire in England (Doherty 9). As child, Smith was a dreamer that wanted to explore the world (11).

As he got older, he began to run away from home (12). In 1600, Smith decided to leave his hometown and during his three-year journey he learned many survival skills. These skills later helped him when he came to Virginia (16). In late April of 1607, Smith's voyage to Virginia was completed and the colonist settled in Jamestown. John Smith was one of the first governing councils that were appointed by the Virginia Company of London (Cooper). Shortly after arrival in Jamestown, Smith and a few others set out to find gold and/or a passage to the Pacific Ocean (Doherty 55).

On May 23, Smith and the others ran into some Indians. These Indians agreed to show the colonist around areas in Virginia (55). This friendly relationship, unfortunately, did not last very long. On May 27, the settlers learned that a tribe of Indians attacked their fort in Jamestown (56). In December of 1607, Smith went on another voyage. When Indians got word of his voyage, they rushed to find him. When they did, the Indians attacked and took Smith hostage (68-69). While Smith was being held captive, he had the opportunity to meet Chief Powhatan (73).

At first things were peaceful until one day Chief ordered for Smith to be killed. At this time, Pocahontas sacrificed her life to save John Smith.

Matoaka was born around 1595 and 1596. She was the youngest daughter of Chief Powhatan, leader of the Algonquian Indians ("Pocahontas" Compton's ...). Matoaka had her first encounters with the English when she was eleven or twelve years old ("Pocahontas" Britannica). The bring about of her interaction with the settlers happened when the Indians would come and trade with them (Doherty 74). According to the settlers, she made a great impression on them.

One wrote: "[She would] gett the boyes [cabin boys who came to the colony on the Susan Constant] forth with her into the markett place and make them wheele, falling on their hands turning their heeles upwards, whome she would follow, and wheele so her self naked as she was all the fort over..." (74). With her actions among the settlers and her everyday behaviors, Matoaka received the nickname Pocahontas. Pocahontas means "playful" or "mischievous" (75). Pocahontas was around the age of twelve, when she first had an encounter with the John Smith.

When Smith was taken prisoner, in 1607, by some Indians, he was brought to Chief Powhatan. Powhatan, then, ordered his men to kill Smith. When the Indians were about to bring Smith to death, Pocahontas sacrificed her life to save him. She then went on to beg her father to let Smith live and free him. After Pocahontas saved him life, Smith then returned back to England ("Pocahontas" Britannica). It was not until the spring of 1613 that Pocahontas had another encounter with the settlers. When a captain named Samuel

Argall, was trading he found Pocahontas and took hostage back to Jamestown.

Argall had a plan to use Pocahontas to bring peace between the Indians and settlers. When Pocahontas arrived back in Jamestown, the settlers treated her nicely. They even taught and converted her to Christianity. When her religion changed, she took on the name Rebecca. Also, while being in Jamestown, Pocahontas met a young widower named John Rolfe. In 1614, Rolfe asked permission to marry Rebecca. Everyone, included Chief Powhatan, agreed with the proposal and the two were married on April 5, in a church in Jamestown. The newlywed couple had their first child, in 1615. After which, the two moved to England (" Pocahontas" Compton's).

In 1616, Pocahontas had a second encounter with her long lost friend, John Smith (Doherty 131). Though they enjoyed England, it wasn't long before the couple wanted to go back to Virginia. Unfortunately, Rebecca became ill with smallpox. She, then, died in March of 1617 in Gravesend, England (" Pocahontas" Compton's). What causes the most controversy with the way Disney presented the story of Pocahontas is how much they changed the historical facts. It is true that there were interactions between Pocahontas and John Smith, but the changes have become emotionally more compelling than the actual written story.

Since not many people will read about Pocahontas, this movie will exist as fact to the new generations of children. What disturbs people most is that Pocahontas was a real person that lived during the exploration times. But yet Disney portrayed her as a grown women, when she was really only an eleven

or twelve year old. Also, John Smith was not a handsome blonde like portrayed (Kilpatrick). Though many arguments can be made about the movie, it all boils down to the fact that history was changed in this movie.

Works Cited Cooper, W, Catherine. " The Legacies of Captain John Smith. Focus on Geography. 01 Jul. 2007: 30. eLibrary. Web. 28 Feb. 2012. Doherty, Kieran. To Conquer Is to Live: The Life of Captain John Smith of Jamestown. Brookfield, CT: Twenty-First Century, 2001. Print Kilpatrick, Jacquelyn. " Disney's `politically correct' Pocahontas.. " Cineaste. 01 Dec. 1995: 36. eLibrary. Web. 28 Feb. 2012. Larson, Charles R.. " Pocahontas animated. " World & I. 01 Feb. 1996: 328. eLibrary. Web. 28 Feb. 2012. " Pocahontas. " Britannica Elementary Encyclopedia. 2003. eLibrary. Web. 18 Feb. 2012. " Pocahontas. " Compton's by Britannica, v 6. 0. 2009. eLibrary. Web. 28 Feb. 2012.