

# How the Jamestown settlers of 1607 overcame the research paper samples

[Countries](#), [England](#)



## **Struggles of the New World**

In 1606, a group of settlers boarded three ships, 'The Susan Constant', 'The Godspeed', and 'The Discovery', financed by the King of England, King James, and they headed toward what they had deemed, 'The New World' ("Britain in the New World"), supposedly filled with prosperous land to farm on and most importantly, gold. These settlers were ordered by the King to sail to North America and create a new colony in the name of England. The settlers sailed to what is today, Virginia, and settled on the banks of the Chesapeake Bay. The settlers were also instructed by the King to find a waterway to "the Orient", not quite knowing just how far away that side of the world really was. In 1607, the settlers arrived in Jamestown and set up a small colony to live and work the land. They encountered new animals and new people and each day came with a new struggle. It took many years for the colony of Jamestown to become prosperous because of all the unknown challenges that lay ahead of them ("History of Jamestown").

When the English settlers arrived in Jamestown, Virginia, they were introduced to the indigenous people, the Algonquians; a group of Native American tribes ("History of Jamestown"). Chief Powhatan's tribe was the tribe closest to the settlers in Virginia, and if not for the generosity of the Powhatans, it is said that the settlers may not have survived the cold winters of America ("Britain in the New World"). The Powhatans often traded the settlers food in exchange for glass beads, copper and iron ("History of Jamestown"). Unfortunately, the settlers were not always nice to the Powhatans and were often attacked by them and other Algonquian tribes ("History of Jamestown"). The Powhatan tribe was extremely suspicious of the

English settlers, since they had already encountered Spanish explorers in the past (“ Britain in the New World”). The English settlers had guns and gun powder and advanced tools and weapons that originally, the Powhatan tribe saw as to their advantage, because they wanted to try and form an alliance with the English, in order to gain access to their weapons to help them to defeat any neighboring hostile tribes (“ Britain in the New World”). The English, being as nervous as they were, usually only took advantage of the Powhatans and were in turn, not rewarded, they were attacked instead, the benefit that the Native Americans had over them was knowing the land, and how to use it to their advantage (“ Britain in the New World”).

The man in charge of Jamestown was a man by the name of John Smith; he kept the colonists moving and farming without giving up hope and had strict rules, as he was the Captain of the ship they arrived on (“ Britain in the New World”). John Smith required all the colonists to farm for at least four hours every day to ensure a continuous food supply would be had by the colonists so they would not have to rely on the Algonquians for food or have to wait for another ship to come from England with rations (“ Britain in the New World”). John Smith’s motto was “ work or starve” because he made sure that each colonist did their part in farming the land and working on improving their chances at survival and successes of this new colony (“ Britain in the New World”). In the New World, the colonists attempted to cultivate tobacco in the fields they had plowed, but they often failed to create a decent crop because of climate differences (“ Britain in the New World”). Because of the strong leadership of Captain John Smith, the colonists continued to pursue their dreams of creating a life for themselves

in the New World and try and become independent of their need for food and supplies from both England and from the Native Americans.

Right before the colonist's second winter in North America, Captain John Smith had an accident involving gun powder, and due to severe burns, was forced to return to England for medical attention ("Britain in the New World"). That winter, the winter of 1609-1610, was one of the worst winters the settlers would encounter, and because the settlers now did not have a leader to help them push on, they had a hard time surviving on their own. This winter was known as "the starving time" because of the fact that the colonists failed to produce enough crops during the growing season to provide them with enough food to last them the winter ("Struggling to Survive"). Diseases such as malaria wiped out many settlers, diseases that settlers had never been exposed to, nor did they have any medical personnel or hospitals to help them ("Britain in the New World"). But famine was one of the largest reasons that settlers died. Failed crops and farming practices left the settlers with very little food provisions. The settlers, desperate for food, would not leave their fort to fish or hunt, in fear of an attack from the Algonquian tribes whom they had stolen food from before the winter had begun ("Struggling to Survive"). Colonists that raided the stores during the "starving time" were hung out on the stocks and left to die ("Britain in the New World"). Information from archaeological digs in Jamestown led historians to believe that settlers ate their horses first, and then ate their dogs, cats, then resorted to eating rats and snakes to survive. Some colonists even resorted to cannibalism, as some studies show that at least one colonist ate their wife to survive ("Struggling to Survive"). Even

though many historical statistics clash in exact numbers, it is said that less than half of the original settlers survived that winter.

In 1613, a tobacco entrepreneur by the name of John Rolfe married the Algonquian chief's daughter, Pocahontas, which, for a few years after, created a cease fire type of atmosphere between the Algonquians and the English settlers ("History of Jamestown"). Following Pocahontas' death three years later, due to illness, and Chief Powhatan's death the following year, due to a broken heart, the situation between the Algonquians and the English grew more hostile. By 1622, the attacks from the Algonquian tribes were increasing, and a brutal battle between them left over 300 English settlers dead, almost completely wiping out the Jamestown colony ("History of Jamestown"). By this time, John Rolfe had figured out that by importing tobacco seeds from the West Indies, the source of all other tobacco, he could create farms in the New World, which led to an increased number of farms, and increased need of land, thus pushing the colony further into the land settled on by the Native American tribes ("Britain in the New World"). This enraged the Natives and the battles between them pressed on. During the sixty years that the English settled Virginia, over ninety percent of the Native American population in Virginia was wiped out by disease and warfare brought on by the English settlers ("Britain in the New World").

The colonists were told that if the King did not receive wealth from the new colony, then their financial support would be cut off. Unfortunately, there were too many settlers searching blindly for gold rather than farming as they should have been doing in order to survive. In 1624, the King declared the colony "bankrupt" and a failed business venture. Investors in the New World

financial venture lost a combined 200,000 pounds, which is hardly any money compared to the cost the colonists were paying, they were gambling with their lives. The colonists, now a royal colony, decided to try their hand at other ways of creating a cash flow for the King of England. They tried their hand at glass blowing, at silkworm farming, and they even tried to cultivate vineyards to aid in alcohol consumption, but only one item was getting a fair market price in England: tobacco. The colonists slowly let the notion that Virginia was not actually filled with gold go, and decided to try and create a sustainable life for themselves, because no money would mean no food. Jamestown's tobacco seeds eventually paid off and the settlers were creating fields for the tobacco to grow and then creating more fields when the original fields needed to rest to replenish the amount of nutrients found in the soil. By 1630, over a million and a half pounds of tobacco were being exported out of Jamestown to England each year ("Britain in the New World"). This new growth in the tobacco market and growth in the need of more people to help with the harvesting of the fields, led to the age of indentured servants. Indentured servants were those people in England that could not afford the ship fare in order to come to the New World, so they had a sponsor pay the way for them to get to Jamestown, in exchange for about four or five years of work from them. They would hang up signs in England prompting people to start a new life in Virginia and that everything was free and good. Little did they know the challenges the settlers faced in America. Any servant or slave that ran away from their masters and was found would be branded on the cheek with the letter 'R' for rogue. For every new person that the English settlers brought to America, England would allow the farmer in

Virginia to have 50 additional acres of land to farm on, meaning that the King of England was the assumed owner and controller of all the land in North America (“ Britain in the New World”).

The English colonists set up the first form of democratic leadership in government called the House of Burgesses. This was the first ever, elected by the popular vote, legislature in the ‘ New World’. This was important because now a vote from England as well as the democracy was needed in order to change how things operate in Virginia and the other colonies.

Landowners were insistent that they meet with the heads of the legislature to talk about terms and local news. King James in England was opposed to the newly formed government party in Virginia and wanted to “ dissolve it” but the Virginians stood their ground in order to ensure they would be able to have their own rights in the New World (“ Britain in the New World”).

Of all the struggles the English settlers faced while in Jamestown, Virginia, the worst was most likely the lack of food and the notion that food was easily attainable in the New World. This lack of sense from the settlers, who most likely should have known more about farming, should be blamed on both the King of England as well as those in charge of recruiting people to head to Jamestown. A thorough search for the best farmers and best hunters should have been done in order to settle Jamestown with more of a chance for survival. They had no way in knowing that the Powhatan tribes would be so brutal in their advances, but still, the settlers could have easily gone about trades and exchanges with the tribes in a more peaceful way as to not set off a colony there long before the English. Stories of looting from the Native Americans and looking down upon their culture are some of the ignorant

ideals the English still hold, which should not have been present in any exchanges with the Native Americans, but nonetheless, the English persevered and eventually upheld their end of the bargain and exported large enough amounts of tobacco to England to make it worth their while. Regardless of the struggles of the Jamestown settlers, the colony ultimately prospered into the country we know today.

## **Works Cited**

“ History of Jamestown”. Historic Jamestowne. Preservation Virginia, n. d.

Web. 15 Dec. 2014

“ Struggling to Survive” Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History.

Smithsonian Institution, 2014. Web. 15, Dec. 2014.

“ Britain in the New World”. USHistory. org. Independence Hall Association,

2014. Web. 15 Dec. 2014.