

Was the settlement of jamestown a fiasco? essay sample

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In the book of Taking Sides, there are two points of view from the article “Was the Settlement of Jamestown a Fiasco?” On the Yes side, Edmund S. Morgan makes the argument that the settlement of Jamestown was a fiasco more than a plan. The other side Karen Ordahl Kupperman think that the whole Jamestown settlement was an experiment of trial and error. Edmond Morgan argues that one reason for failure was a lack of organization and he doesn't think that Jamestown has good leadership. The colonies government was made up of a council and a president. The president had virtually no authority, and the council spent most of its time arguing and not actually accomplishing any governing. The next problem that Morgan brings to attention is a combination of laziness and the makeup of the population. When the colonists first arrived to Jamestown they functioned as a socialist like community. The colonists farmed as a whole and everyone was given equal portions of the crop, so this was not boost to plant and farm as much as possible. “The work a man did bore no direct relation to his reward. The laggard would receive as large a share in the end as the man who worked hard” (Morgan p. 31).

Governor Dale then caught on to this and changed their functioning to that of a capitalist like private enterprise. He gave each man three acres or twelve if he had a family, and each man or family could keep what they grew except for a tax of two and a half barrels of corn per year. This put the colony into a surplus, then they think that was good enough and a new aspect of laziness appeared. Out of a population of roughly three hundred, roughly one hundred were gentleman. “Gentleman, by definition, had no manual skill, nor could they be expected to work at ordinary labor.” (Morgan

p. 32) In other words, the gentlemen were lazy, ignorant to the trade of labor, and thought too highly of themselves to participate in labor. This hurt the production of crops needed to survive. On the other side, Karen Ordahl Kupperman mentioned, “ Jamestown, however imperfectly, managed to hold on until it found the formula for recreating a successful version of English society abroad. Once that formula was devised, then all other colonies, beginning with Plymouth, had a much easier time of it and gained stability much more quickly.

Jamestown’s contribution was to develop the model for a true English colony, one that would actually work in America.” In this quote, Karen is explaining how Jamestown’s purpose was to create a true English colony that will hold through all the difficulties. Jamestown did hold. No one could say how to have a functional colony, but Jamestown was able to take as many settlers that came and provided them with various resources. Another reason Jamestown was a successful project was that it made the settlers make life for themselves. Karen also mentions how successful it was by saying, “ The truly remarkable thing about Jamestown is that it somehow survived through years of hardship and discouragement until a few settlers finally embarked on the course to success at the end of 1610.” (Kupperman p 43) Therefore, Jamestown was a true model for other colonies. Its surviving and setting. After I read this article, I would agree with Morgan that Jamestown was a fiasco. Edmond Morgan explaining the failures of the Jamestown colony, because he believe the failures to lack of organization, laziness, the makeup of the population, and poor ideas for prosperity. What I understand from him

that is the English didn't put enough effort into growing their own food was because the Indians already had it, so their food produce decreased. In my opinion, Edmond Morgan and Karen Ordahl Kupperman they both make very good arguments and there is truth to both sides.