

# Good example of differences in themes and intentions of malick and smith essay

[Countries](#), [United States](#)



The story of Pocahontas and the English explorer John Smith is one of the central stories told about the colonization of the United States. Despite the many other instances of contact between colonizers and the native people living in what we now know as North America, this one has persisted, has been represented in many movies and is carefully studied in history classroom. The story touches about the central themes of colonization, but goes beyond the history of it by giving a narrative story of two people, one from England, the other native to The New World. These characters give us better understanding than just the bland facts of how North America was colonized. Two works that relate this story is " The Generall Historie of Virginia" by Captain John Smith himself, which provides an accurate description of John Smiths impressions as he landed and settled in what is today Virginia. More recently is the 2006 film The New World, which cinematically retells this story. While both offer different insights into events of nearly four hundred years ago, it is the recent rendition of the story in film, which most compelling tells the story in away, that relates to modern day audiences. Both were creating their works with different audiences in mind, and therefore went about it with different intentions.

The intention of " The New World" was to retell the story of Virginia's settlement to a modern audience. " The Generall Historie of Virginia" is one of the earliest books of the territory that is now Virginia. It was written for The Virginia Company of London. It is not a widely read volume, but it is an important one. Much of the book relates the daily struggle for survival for those settling Virginia. He discusses finding game, " Beuers (beavers), Otters, Beares (Bears), Martins and Minks and also an abundance of fish,

which his company had particular trouble trying to catch with a frying pan” (Smith, 1624). Smith’s account often feels less like reading a narrative, and more like feeling a bulleted list of things that were found, problems that were encountered, and what was done to remedy these situations.

John Smith's uninspired prose and different spellings (due to the time period) make his work less accessible to modern day audiences. What Smith never does is give audiences a sense of wistful wonder in the face of earth shattering discoveries being experienced by a European for one of the first times. In describing issues with the native people, that he terms, the Salvages, he writes “ At all time we so encountered them, and curbed their insolences, that they concluded with presents to purchase peace’ yet we lost not a man” (Smith, 1624).

In many ways, Smith’s account of his experiences and Terrence Malick’s “ The New World” serve entirely different purposes. Their similar theme, is the meeting of two cultures, but they handle this theme very differently. Smith seems intent on relating the “ what happened?” while Malick’s film seems focused on depicting “ how did it feel?” It is a film of few words, with fantastic cinematography that transports viewers into a time now long gone. “ The New World” shifts viewpoint from Smith to Pocahontas in an attempt to capture the sentiments both cultures meeting across the ocean that once separated them. Where the prose in Smith’s account is dry and cumbersome, the color pallets in “ The New World” would render the film worth seeing even if the video player were muted.

Pocahontas is never called by name in “ The New Word,” but she is the focus of the camera and is depicted as a bridge between the English and the

Native Americans. The climax of “ The New World” occurs when Pocahontas throws herself between Smith when her father orders that he be killed. The film seems to foreshadow future conflicts between settlers and Native Americans. It has been estimated that there were around 50, 000 Native Americans living in Virginia around the time that settlers began to arrive (Wood, 2007). These people occupied this area for nearly 12, 000 years. There is sadness in “ The New World” in the pallet choices, to the fear in the English settlers eyes, to the stoic eyes of Pocahontas. Malick likely saw no other way to tell the story. The arrival of Europeans in Virginia would eventually lead to the their loss of culture, lands, lives and force many to leave these lands that their ancestors had lived in for thousands of years. Malick’s film conveys this feeling of nostalgia, sadness, wonder and discovery. Very frequently, he is able to do it without words, but setting up slow scenes. There is a particularly vivid scene between John Smith and Pocahontas, when they first meet, and the audience is able to hear their questioning thoughts.

Through Smith’s account one would be able to more accurately construct a timeline of events for the settlement of Virginia, but in the process the sense of wonder is lost. Portraying the past is difficult, since future generations share very few reference points. It is difficult to do with text, and while Smith’s account is important for the historical record, it was Malick who was able to better give modern audiences a real window into the past.

## References

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