

America's Lost Colony

Has the mystery of Roanoke finally been solved?

In 1587, 117 people set sail from England for America. They were the first English colonists, families eager to start fresh lives in a new world. They had been sent by Queen Elizabeth's most trusted advisor, Sir Walter Raleigh. They were headed to the bountiful shores of Chesapeake Bay, near present-day Maryland. Raleigh was hopeful the settlement would be a huge success for the colonists—and for him. A thriving colony would make Raleigh even more important in Queen Elizabeth's court.

But the colonists never reached Chesapeake Bay. For mysterious reasons, the admiral of their fleet of ships sent them ashore one hundred miles south, on a sandy island known as Roanoke. Then the ships sailed away.

The colonists knew they were in trouble the moment they landed on Roanoke. The

year before, a group of English soldiers had built a fort on the island. The soldiers had made enemies of the area's Native American tribes. The colonists weren't safe on Roanoke. Plus, the sandy soil was unsuitable for planting. They would starve without fresh supplies.

Within a week of landing, the colonists' leader, John White, set sail back to England. He promised to return in three months with supplies. But a war between England and Spain made his return impossible for three years. When White finally returned to Roanoke, he was shocked by what he found: nothing. He could not find one trace of the colony. Brokenhearted, White returned to England.

So what happened to the colonists? And why had they been left on Roanoke in the first place? New research suggests that they were actually doomed before they left England. Sir Walter Raleigh had made enemies in Queen Elizabeth's court. These men knew the failure of the colony would help ruin Raleigh's reputation. So they persuaded the admiral of the fleet

to leave the colonists at Roanoke. The colonists, they knew, would be massacred by hostile Native Americans. Raleigh would be destroyed. And nobody would discover the evil plot. Unfortunately for the 117 colonists, the plan worked all too well.



Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Read “America’s Lost Colony.” Then fill in the circle next to the best answer for each question.

1. This article is mostly about
 - ☐ A. Queen Elizabeth.
 - ☐ B. America’s first English colony.
 - ☐ C. life in the 16th century.
 - ☐ D. wars between Native Americans and settlers.
2. Which of the following is a fact?
 - ☐ E. Raleigh’s enemies were evil.
 - ☐ F. The story of Roanoke is mysterious.
 - ☐ G. The Native Americans had a right to hate the English colonists.
 - ☐ H. The colonists were originally headed for Chesapeake Bay.
3. Who was Sir Walter Raleigh?
 - ☐ I. an adviser to Queen Elizabeth
 - ☐ J. the leader of the colonists
 - ☐ K. the admiral of the fleet of ships that left the colonists at Roanoke
 - ☐ L. an enemy of Queen Elizabeth’s
4. You can guess that life for the colonists in Roanoke was
 - ☐ M. happy and peaceful.
 - ☐ N. boring and predictable.
 - ☐ O. difficult and frightening.
 - ☐ P. fun and exciting.
5. Why did John White originally leave Roanoke?
 - ☐ Q. He went to get supplies for the colonists.
 - ☐ R. He was scared of the Native Americans.
 - ☐ S. He received orders from Queen Elizabeth.
 - ☐ T. He was ill with scurvy.
6. *Thriving*, as it is used in the first paragraph, means
 - ☐ U. large.
 - ☐ V. failing.
 - ☐ W. royal.
 - ☐ X. successful.

Write It Out!

Briefly explain why some people in England wanted the first American colony to fail. Use a separate sheet of paper to write your answer in a complete paragraph.

ANSWERS

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1. B 2. H 3. I 4. O 5. Q 6. X

Write It Out! Answers will vary.