

What caused the colonists of Roanoke to disappear?

Hypotheses	Supporting Evidence	Discrediting Evidence

Questions to Consider When Interpreting a Primary Source

1. Are there any problems in understanding the literal meaning of the document?
That is, are there words you have to look up? Phrases you don't understand?
(Ask your teacher for help if you do not understand something)
2. Who made the document, and under what circumstances?
3. When was the document made?
4. How well placed was the witness to observe and record the event(s)?
5. Is bias (personal opinion and unreasoned judgment) present?

The colony, landed on Roanoke, consisted of one hundred and seven persons, of whom Ralph Lane was the Governor, Amidas, the admiral, Hariot, the historian and chaplain, and John White the artist. So soon as they were settled at the island, they began the exploration of the country. This was done in boats, and entirely toward the south. Visiting the Neuse and the western shore of Pamlico Sound, they explored Currituck, on the east; while on the north, they penetrated to the distance of one hundred and sixty miles, and ascended Moratio, now known as the Roanoke river, probably more than fifty miles from its mouth. This was done with extreme labor and peril, as the Indians had deluded them with a story of mines of gold, and having notice of Lane's coming, were prepared to attack him.

This river he afterward explored. But ere long, either from oppression or fear of the English, the Indians assumed a hostile attitude, and laid plans to surprise them. The English had to be continually on their guard, and in the mean time famine compelled them to leave Roanoke in large parties, to obtain subsistence from the corn-fields, or proceed along the coast for shell-fish.

About the first of June, 1586, Lane, with a party, left the island, proceeding across the sound, and by a stratagem, hardly authorized in an honorable soldier, captured and killed the chief of the country and many of his people.

Data Set 1:

"Roanoke Island: The Site of the First English Colony in America." *The Continental Monthly* 1, no. 5 (1862): 541-552. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/ncps:@field\(DOCLD\)+@lit\(ABR1802-0001-119\)>::](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/ncps:@field(DOCLD)+@lit(ABR1802-0001-119)>::) (Accessed October 10, 2009).

Data Set 2:

"Raleigh's Lost Colony." *The New England Magazine* 17, no. 5 (1895): 565-588.

[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/ncps:@field\(DOCID\)+@lit\(AFJ3026-0017-83\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/ncps:@field(DOCID)+@lit(AFJ3026-0017-83)):: (Accessed October 10, 2009).

On the way they were reduced to the necessity of subsisting upon a decoction of sassafras leaves; and when they reached the broad sound, which lay between them and their destination, they were weak from want of food. It was on the eve of Easter, and a heavy gale lashing the waters foaming billows warned them against attempting the passage in their frail boats; accordingly they "fasted very truly" that day, and on Easter morning were rejoiced with the pleasant skies and tranquil waters. They were expecting when they reached Chimpanum, a fishing station of friendly natives, to be able to obtain fish to allay the pangs of hunger; but great was their disappointment when they reached the place, late in the afternoon of Easter, to find it deserted. They found, however, a few fish in the abandoned weirs, which revived them somewhat, so that the next morning they reached Roanoke in safety. Here Lane found the people he behind in a perilous situation. Rumors of disaster to his party had reached Roanoke, and Winginia, who upon assuming the chieftainship, had taken the name of Pemisapan, and had for some time regarded the English coldly, became offensively insolent to the little colony in its weakness, and, contemning the Christian faith which they had shown some regard for, openly taunted the English with the weakness of their God, who had been unable to protect his friends against the fury of the savage Renapoaks.

Data Set 3:

"Extreme Droughts Played Major Role In Tragedies At Jamestown, 'Lost Colony.'" *ScienceDaily*, 28 April 1998. Retrieved October 26, 2009, from <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/1998/04/980428075409.htm>

ScienceDaily (Apr. 28, 1998) — WILLIAMSBURG, VA--The worst droughts of the past 800 years likely played a major role in the mysterious disappearance of Roanoke Island's "Lost Colony" and in the "starving time" endured by colonists at Jamestown, researchers from the College of William and Mary and the University of Arkansas have concluded after studying growth rings of ancient trees in the Tidewater area. The findings were just published in the current issue of Science journal.

"If the English had tried to find a worse time to launch their settlements in the New World, they could not have done so," said Dennis B. Blanton, director of the William and Mary Center for Archaeological Research. "From 1587 to 1589, the most extreme drought in 800 years is implicated in the disappearance of the Lost Colony, and the Jamestown settlement was later plagued by the driest seven-year episode in 770 years. These droughts make the dry summer of 1997 pale in comparison."

The Roanoke Island settlement was established in 1587 but settlers soon mysteriously disappeared, leaving only the enigmatic word 'Croatoan' carved on a tree. More is known about the hardships at Jamestown, which was founded in 1607 but nearly failed during the period from 1609 to 1610 -- historically known as 'the starving time'-- when the colony suffered 'an appalling death rate.' According to historians, 43 percent of the 350 colonists alive in June of 1610 were dead by the end of that summer.

At Blanton's request, Arkansas climatologists spent several months analyzing the existing core samples, which covered the period between A.D. 1185 and 1984, for information about rainfall and temperatures during the Tidewater growing season. Archaeologists from William and Mary's Center for Archaeological Research did extensive historical and archaeological research into past Tidewater climate conditions. Both groups then correlated and interpreted the data.

"The tree-ring data indicate the extraordinary drought conditions that attended the settlement of both the Roanoke and Jamestown Colonies," the Science article says. A tree growth anomaly map for the period 1587-1589, for example, shows that the Lost Colony drought affected the entire southeastern United States, but was particularly severe in the Tidewater region near Roanoke. The cypress growth anomaly map for the Jamestown drought, 1606-1612, reveals that the most severe drought conditions during that period occurred in the Tidewater region near Jamestown. (An anomaly map illustrates specific conditions -- in this case growing-season precipitation -- over a certain geographical area.)

"The Roanoke and Jamestown colonies have both been criticized for poor planning, poor support, and for a startling indifference to their own subsistence," concluded the writers in Science. "But the tree-ring reconstruction indicates that even the best planned and supported colony would have been supremely challenged by the climatic conditions of 1587-1589 and 1606-1612."

Data Set 4:
Odrowaz-Sypniewska, "The Roanoke:
North Carolina." Available from
<http://www.courtlylives.com/Roanoke.html>

Richard Grenville (1542-1591) was on the ship called *Tiger*. They went ashore at Pamlico Sound, hoping to make friends with the locals. Manteo was born on Croatoan Island. Wanshee did not go ashore with the others, as he was tiring of the English and wished only to return home. They went to a settlement called Pomeic, some thirty miles from the *Tiger*. Raleigh had told Grenville that they were to treat the Natives with respect. Their punishment for disobedience was death for rape, twenty blows from a cudgel for striking an Indian, and imprisonment or slavery for entering an Indian's property or home uninvited.

The Natives were hospitable, but the colonists treated them harshly. When Grenville noticed his silver drinking cup missing, his anger rose and he vowed to have his men burn their corn and village, and kill Chief Wingina. This was ignorant behavior for a man who had a colony that needed the Natives to feed them. Grenville was born in Clifton House and was brought up in Buckland Abbey, in Devon, England. He was the cousin of Sir Walter Ralieggh and Sir Francis Drake, and had once met Theodore Paleologus, the last Byzantium emperor. Paleologus retired to Clifton, England. You could say that Grenville had friends in high places. This was not the first time his temper had got him into trouble. In 1562, Grenville was in a dispute on the Strand and ran through Robert Bannister with his sword. He left Bannister to die, offering no assistance. Grenville was pardoned.

Data Set 5:

Drye, Willie. "America's Lost Colony: Can New Dig Solve Mystery?," *National Geographic News*, 2 March 2004.

Recent Clues

Souvenir seekers have been digging on Roanoke Island at least since 1653, when trader John Farrar and three friends from Virginia landed on the island and left with artifacts from the English colonies.

Union soldiers stationed on Roanoke Island during the Civil War dug for artifacts, and in 1895, Philadelphia journalist Talcott Williams, who was also an amateur archaeologist, did some excavations in the area now enclosed by the national park boundaries.

Professional archaeologists have done several excavations since the late 1940s. They found artifacts undoubtedly left by the colonists, including remains from Hariot's science laboratory. But they didn't find the site of the colonists' village.

The members of the First Colony Foundation hope to learn more about Hariot's laboratory and the location of the village. Their curiosity has been piqued by several clues.

In 1982 Evans—who was then a student working at the Fort Raleigh National Historic Site—discovered the remains of an old well thought to be from the 16th century. Evans found the remnants in Roanoke Sound, an indication of serious erosion on the northern end of the island.

In 2000 National Park Service archaeologists using ground-penetrating radar discovered rectangular-shaped objects buried beneath several feet of sand. (Park Service staff did not excavate the objects, but suspect they could be related to Hariot's work.) In 2002 a swimmer stepped on a 16th-century ax head in shallow water just off the northern end of Roanoke Island.

Finding the well and the ax head offshore has prompted some members of the First Colony Foundation to wonder if the site of the colonists' village eroded away and now is submerged. Underwater archaeologist Gordon Watts says that at least 600 feet (180 meters) and perhaps as much as a quarter-mile (0.4 kilometer) of the island has gone underwater since the 16th century.

"That's one fact that you cannot ignore," Watts said. "If you're doing a comprehensive search for the 1585-1587 settlement, you can't ignore the possibility that the site is now underwater."

Like any classic mystery, however, there's polite disagreement among some of the experts about where the village might have been. Acclaimed archaeologist Ivor Noël-Hume, who led an excavation in the Fort Raleigh National Historic Park in the 1990s, thinks it's highly unlikely the village site is now underwater.

"That's only a personal view, I do assure you," Noël-Hume said. "I wouldn't want to discourage further excavations. But I think you're going to find the remains of the settlement on a piece of land."

Noël-Hume says he'd like to see an excavation done in an area of sand dunes near the beach on the northern end. That could be "very informative," he says.

Virginia archaeologist Nick Lucchetti, who also has worked at Fort Raleigh, says he has a reason to believe that maybe the village site hasn't been lost to erosion. "I've talked to collectors who have walked the beach on the north end for 30 years, and they don't have any 16th-century European artifacts in their collections," Lucchetti said.

Despite their disagreements about where the colonial village may have been, the experts concur that the English effort to plant colonies on Roanoke Island was a milestone in U.S. history.

"It earned its place in American history when Thomas Hariot worked in the science center and sent back a report that said America is worthy of commercial investment," Noël-Hume said.

Lucchetti thinks lessons learned at Roanoke Island helped ensure the survival of the Jamestown colony 20 years later. Hariot told the Jamestown colonists about the Native Americans' extreme fondness for copper ornaments, and so the colonists brought copper with them. When the Jamestown colonists were on the verge of starving, they traded copper to the Indians for food, and that saved the Jamestown colony from extinction, Lucchetti says.

Still, Evans thinks the mystery of the Lost Colony also is important because it lures people into the story of Roanoke Island.

"As long as the Lost Colony is unexplained, it stays fascinating for a lot of people," Evans said. "It's their entry into the story. They go in trying to figure out what happened to the colonists, and then they learn history. I don't want to take away the mystery. That's what makes it different and exciting."

Data sets sited:

de Bry, Theodor. "A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia." Copper-Plate Engravings. *Rare Book & Special Collections Division*. From American Treasures of the Library of Congress Online Catalog.

<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/trm069.html>.

Drye, Willie. "America's Lost Colony: Can New Dig Solve Mystery?," *National Geographic News*, 2 March 2004.

"Extreme Droughts Played Major Role In Tragedies At Jamestown, 'Lost Colony.'" *ScienceDaily*, 28 April 1998. Retrieved October 26, 2009, from <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/1998/04/980428075409.htm>

Odrowaz-Sypniewska. "The Roanoke: North Carolina." Available from

<http://www.courtlylives.com/Roanoke.html>

"Raleigh's Lost Colony." *The New England Magazine* 17, no. 5 (1895): 565-588.

[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/ncps:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(AFJ3026-0017-83\)\)::](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/ncps:@field(DOCID+@lit(AFJ3026-0017-83))::) (Accessed October 10, 2009).

"Roanoke Island: The Site of the First English Colony in America." *The Continental Monthly* 1, no. 5 (1862): 541-552. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/ncps:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(ABR1802-0001-119\)\)::](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/ncps:@field(DOCID+@lit(ABR1802-0001-119))::) (Accessed

October 10, 2009).

Inquiry Lesson Writing Rubric

Name: _____

	Thesis	Evidence	Mechanics
3	Thesis is clearly stated.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. At least 3 pieces of evidence are present. 2. Evidence clearly supports thesis 3. At least one primary source is used as evidence 	Sentence structure, grammar and spelling are free from error
2	Thesis is present, but unclear	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. At least 2 pieces of evidence is present 2. Evidence somewhat supports thesis 	Few errors in sentence structure, grammar and spelling
1	Thesis is not present	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Only 1 piece of evidence present 2. Evidence is unclear, does not support thesis 	Frequent errors in sentence structure, grammar and spelling

Score: _____

Comments: