

POCAHANTAS

Adapted for the stage by Dave Morgan

STUDY GUIDE



SYNOPSIS

In this story we meet America's first well-known Native American heroine, Pocahontas. Chief of the Powhattens and his daughter, Pocahontas, gather on shore to greet the pale men in the large ships and soon two societies and cultures are learning and working together. With her amazing aptitude for languages, Pocahontas soon befriends Captain John Smith, learns the mysterious language called English and becomes the official translator between the natives and the newcomers. Pocahontas learns many things from her new found friends and learns even more of her own culture when she has a dream that takes her back to early Texas where she experiences the lives of Native Americans.

THE LEGEND OF POCAHONTAS

- American Indians were the first people to live in Virginia, and in America.
- Artifacts like arrowheads, pottery and tools, tell us these first Americans lived in all areas of Virginia.
- The Powhatan Indians lived in the Tidewater Region now known as the Chesapeake Bay and spoke the Algonquin language.
- It is believed Pocahontas was born around 1595. Her father was a powerful Indian chief who ruled over 30 to 40 Powhatan tribes from his capital Werowocomoco. Her mother's name is not known.
- Pocahontas was known among her own people as Matoaka. Pocahontas was a nickname given to her meaning "little plaything," or "playful one."
- Although little is known about Pocahontas every day life, it is said she was fascinated with the European settlers.
- Captain John Smith was one of the very few European settlers who learned the Algonquian language.
- He was captured by the Powhatan Indians in 1607 and was to be clubbed to death. It is said from Capt. Smith's accounts, Pocahontas pleaded with her father to spare John Smith and actually threw her body over his head as it was about to be crushed. Thus began a special friendship between Pocahontas and Captain Smith.
- The English settlers knew very little about surviving in their new world. They did not know about the land, or how to find fresh water or roots and berries.
- Pocahontas brought food and messages to the new settlers. The Indians taught them to plant corn and tobacco. Pocahontas even warned Capt Smith of an impending attack by her own Powhatan people!
- Without the help of Pocahontas and the Powhatan Indians, the new English settlers would most certainly have died.
- Tension between the Powhatan Indians and the English was common and over time the constant flow of settlers pushed the Powhatan Indians off the lands that were once theirs.
- Around 1612 Captain Smith was forced to return to England and Pocahontas was told he had died.
- In 1613 Pocahontas was kidnapped by another English settler, Captain Samuel Argall. She was held hostage and there were demands for her release. Pocahontas was treated well by her captives. She learned to speak English, and converted to Christianity.
- She eventually took the name Rebecca. She married an Englishman, John Rolfe who successfully developed a milder strain of tobacco. They had a son named Thomas.
- In 1616 Pocahontas, now known as Rebecca Rolfe, traveled to England with her husband and son to promote the Jamestown colony. She was twenty one years old.
- Captain Smith urged Queen Anne to treat his friend well. Pocahontas was called a princess and honored at court. It was hoped she would show the English investors that America was safe.
- Pocahontas was very shocked to find that her friend from so long ago, Capt. Smith, was still alive.
- In 1617 while still in England, Pocahontas became very ill. Varying stories say she had small pox or pneumonia. Either way, she died at the age of twenty two and was buried at Gravesend. Her statue stands there today.

JOURNAL OR DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Pocahontas was a curious and playful child, adored by her father. Why was Pocahontas able to get along with the English settlers AND her own Powhatan people?

Pocahontas adopts the name Rebecca when she marries John Rolfe. Do you think it was a good idea for Pocahontas to change her name? What do you think Powhatan would think of this? Support your ideas!

Some said that Pocahontas marriage to John Rolfe brought two worlds together. What does this mean? Do you agree?

Did Pocahontas do a good job keeping peace between the English and the Powhatan Tribe? Why or why not?

CULTURES LINKED

FILL IN THE BLANK

When the English met the Powhatan Indians in 1607, neither group knew that their lives would be linked forever.

The Powhatan Indians traded _____ for the English glass and copper. They taught the settlers how to grow _____.

The English tried to convert _____-to Christianity. Native American words crept into the _____ language throughout the colonies.

Although there were many political clashes between the English and _____, Pocahontas encouraged her father and Captain _____ to communicate, help each other and share power in Virginia.



MATH -MATH- MATH- MATH

Many native tribes used the Sun and Moon to tell time. How many “suns” are in a week? How many “moons” are in a year?

Hunger was a problem at Jamestown. John Smith has only 14 bushels of corn, enough for one family, but not enough for 200 men.

If one family equals 5 people, how many more bushels of corn does Smith need for 200 men?

Pocahontas was a very helpful to Capt Smith and the English settlers. She visited often. There are 7 days in one week. If Pocahontas brought one message every other day for two weeks, how many messages did she bring?

If she brought four loaves of bread every day for one week, how many loaves did she bring?

WHO MIGHT SAY THIS???

Write in the name of the character who could have said this. Each name may be used more than once

Pocahontas
Captain Smith

Powhatan
John Rolfe

“Now I know these men from the East are very different from us....they may appear gentle and pale as swans, but are they swans that breathe fire?”

“Your curiosity is powerful Pocahontas...But curiosity can bring trouble.”

“Tobacco will make this colony prosper and grow. I’m sure of it.”

“I must learn the Algonquian language of the Powhatan people. I must communicate and get help or my men will die.”

ACTIVITIES

When the English met the Powhatans, they could not understand each other. They used sign language and drew pictures in the sand to talk.

Using the Powhatan words and their English translations below, make up a story about Pocahontas and tell it to a friend.

POWHATAN

ENGLISH

Attawp

A bow

Attonce

Arrows

Crenepo

A woman

Cuppeh

Yes

Matah

No

Mockasins

Shoes

Musses

Pieces of wood

Nemarough

A man

Pokatawer

Fire

Suckquohana

Water

Tamahaac

Hatchet

Wingapo

Welcome "my beloved friend"

Yehakin

House

DO THIS!!!

Pick several Powhatan words and illustrate them. You can make the paper look old by rubbing a damp tea bag over the paper to discolor it, and then let it dry.

?????DID YOU KNOW?????

Early explorers knew little about where they were going as there were no accurate maps or navigational instruments.

They did, however, develop a way to find out how fast they were traveling.

They dropped into the sea one end of a long rope that had been tied to a log. The log just floated where it had been dropped as the ship traveled. The rope had knots tied into it at regular intervals. The sailors counted how many knots were let out in a certain amount of time. A ship's speed is still calculated in knots!

?????DID YOU KNOW?????

Three years after Pocahontas' death a group of English Puritans sailed on the Mayflower to Plymouth Colony. Captain John Smith wanted to lead them but Miles Standish went instead. In 1619 Smith died. Until then he devoted himself to promoting America as a place offering liberty.

?????DID YOU KNOW?????

The last Powhatan leader was captured and killed in 1646.