



## John Smith's account of Virginia

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Read the following excerpt entitled "Of the naturall Inhabitants of Virginia" from [Smith's account](#) that accompanied his map in 1612:

### *Of the naturall Inhabitants of Virginia.*

*The land is not populous, for the men be fewe; their far greater number is of women and children. Within 60 miles of James Towne there are about some 5000 people, but of able men fit for their warres scarce 1500. To nourish so many together they have yet no means, because they make so smal a benefit of their land, be it never so fertill. 6 or 700 have beene the most hath beene seene together, when they gathered themselves to have surprised Captaine Smyth at Pamaunke, having but 15 to withstand the worst of their furie. As small as the proportion of ground that hath yet beene discovered, is in comparison of that yet unknowne. The people differ very much in stature, especially in language, as before is expressed.*

*Some being very great as the Sesquesahamocks, others very little as the Wighcocomoco: but generally tall and straight, of a comely proportion, and of a colour browne when they are of any age, but they are borne white. Their haire is generally black; but few have any beards. The men weare halfe their heads shaven, the other halfe long. For Barbers they use their women, who with 2 shels will grate away the haire, of any fashion they please. The women are cut in many fashions agreeable to their yeares, but ever some part remaineth long.*

*They are inconstant in everie thing, but what feare constraineth them to keepe. Craftie, timerous, quicke of apprehension and very ingenuous. Some are of disposition fearefull, some bold, most cautelous, all Savage. Generally covetous of copper, beads, and such like trash. They are soone moved to anger, and so malicious, that they seldome forget an injury: they seldome steale one from another, least their conjurers should reveale it, and so they be pursued and punished. That they are thus feared is certaine, but that any can reveale their offences by conjuration I am doubtfull. Their women are carefull not to bee suspected of dishonesty without the leave of their husbands.*

*Each houshold knoweth their owne lands and gardens, and must live of their owne labours.*

*For their apparell, they are some time covered with the skinned of wilde beasts, which in winter are dressed with the haire, but in sommer without. The better sort use large mantels of deare skins not much differing in fashion*

*from the Irish mantels. Some imbroidered with white beads, some with copper, other painted after their manner. But the common sort have scarce to cover their nakednesse but with grasse, the leaves of trees, or such like. We have seen some use mantels made of Turky feathers, so prettily wrought and woven with threeds that nothing could bee discerned but the feathers, that was exceeding warme and very handsome. But the women are alwaies covered about their midles with a skin and very shamefast to be seene bare.*

*They adorne themselves most with copper beads and paintings. Their women some have their legs, hands, brests and face cunningly imbroidered with diverse workes, as beasts, serpentes, artificially wrought into their flesh with blacke spots. In each eare commonly they have 3 great holes, whereat they hange chaines, bracelets, or copper. Some of their men weare in those holes, a smal greene and yellow coloured snake, neare halfe a yard in length, which crawling and lapping her selfe about his necke often times familiarly would kiss his lips. Others wear a dead Rat tied by the tail. Some on their heads weare the wing of a bird or some large feather, with a Rattell. Those Rattels are somewhat like the chape of a Rapier but lesse, which they take from the taile of a snake. Many have the whole skinne of a hawke or some strange fowle, stuffed with the wings abroad. Others a broad peece of copper, and some the hand of their enemy dried. Their heads amd shoulders are painted red with roote Pocone braied to powder mixed with oyle; this they hold in somer to preserve them from the heate, and in winter from the cold. Many other formes of paintings they use, but he is the most gallant that is the most monstrous to behould. Their buildings and habitations are for the most part by the rivers or not farre distant from some fresh spring. Their houses are built like our Arbors of small young springs bowed and tued, and so close covered with mats or the barks of trees very handsomely, that notwithstanding either winde raine or weather, they are as warme as stooves, but very smoaky; yet at the toppe of the house there is a hole made for the smoake to goe into right over the fire. Against the fire they lie on little hurdles of Reedes covered with a mat, borne from the ground a foote and more by a hurdle of wood. On these round about the house, they lie heads and points one by th other against the fire: some covered with mats, some with skins, and some starke naked lie on the ground: from 6 to 20 in a house.*

*Their houses are in the midst of their fields or gardens; which are smal plots of ground, some 20, some 40, some 100 some 200 some more, some lesse. Some times from 2 to 100 of these houses together, or but a little separated by groves of trees. Neare their habitations is little small wood, or old trees on the ground, by reason of their burning of them for fire. So that a man may gallop a horse amongst these woods any waie, but where the creekes or Rivers shall hinder.*

*Men women and children have their severall names according to their severall humor of their Parents. Their women (they say) are easilie delivered of childe, yet doe they love children verie dearly. To make them hardy, in the coldest mornings they wash them in the rivers, and by painting and ointments so tanne their skins, that after year or two, no weather will hurt them.*

*The men bestowe their times in fishing, hunting, wars, and such manlike exercises scorning to be seene in any woman like exercises, scorning to be seene in any woman like exercise; which is the cause that the women be verie painefull and the men often idle. The women and children do the rest of the worke. They make mats, baskets, pots, morters; pound their corne, make their bread, prepare their victuals, plant their corne, gather their corne, beare al kind of burdens, and such like.*

*Their fire they kindle presently by chafing a dry ponted sticke in a hole of a little square peece of wood, that firing it selfe, will so fire mosse, leaves, or anie such like drie thing that will quickly burne. In March and Aprill they live much upon their fishing, weares; and feed on fish, Turkies and squirrels. In May and June they plant their fieldes; and live most of Acornes, walnuts, and fish. But to mend their diet, some disperse themselves in small companies, and live upon fosh, beasts, crabs, oysters, land Torteyses, strawberries, mulberries, and such like. In June, Julie, and August, they feed upon the rootes of Tocknough, berries, fish, and greene wheat.*

*It is strange to see how their bodies alter with their diet; even as the deare and wilde beastes, they seeme fat and leane, strong and weak. Powhatan their great king and some others that are provident, rost their fish and flesh upon hurdles as before is expressed and leepe it till scarce time.*