



*“You shall do your best endeavor”*

**Working with primary documents**

**Subjects:** History, Virginia Studies, English/3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades

*Skills:* Using historic documents, non-fiction, interpretation

*Strategies:* Have students read and interpret primary sources to gain understanding of historic events.

*Time:* 30 to 40 minutes

*Class Size:* Adaptable

**Objectives:**

<b>Student will:</b>	<b>SOLs</b>
read fiction and nonfiction with fluency and accuracy. Use context to clarify meanings of unfamiliar words. Explain words with multiple meanings. Use word-reference materials, including the glossary, dictionary, and thesaurus.	<b>English 4.3</b>
Develop historical analysis skills using primary sources including artifacts, diaries, letters, photographs, art, documents, and newspapers.	<b>VS 4.7</b>
Summarize and sequence major events in Virginia history from 1607 to the present and locating significant places and events on a map.	<b>VS 4.7</b>
Describe the first permanent English settlement in North America, with emphasis on the people, their motives, the obstacles they encountered and the successes they achieved.	<b>History 3.2</b>

**Background** (from [www.apva.org](http://www.apva.org)): On May 14, 1607, the Virginia Company explorers landed on Jamestown Island, to establish the Virginia English colony on the banks of the James River 60 miles from the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay. By one account, they landed there because the deep water channel let their ships ride close to shore; close enough, to

moor them to the trees. Recent archaeological excavations by Jamestown rediscovery archaeologists discovered the exact location of the first settlement and its fort. Archaeological evidence indicates that the actual settlement site was in a more secure place, away from the channel, where Spanish ships could not fire point blank into the Fort.

**Resources and materials:** You have excerpts from the documents that the archaeologists at Jamestown Rediscovery have used for their own research. Have the students read the documentary evidence and complete the accompanying activity.

**Discussion Points:**

- Who was the author of the directions written to the settlers?
- Do you think they gave good advice?
- What other advice might you give the settlers?
- Why were the King and his representatives allowed to tell the settlers where to settle?
- What did the archaeologists find out about how well the settlers followed these directions?

**For follow-up:** visit Jamestown Rediscovery at [www.apva.org](http://www.apva.org)

This is a transcript of a primary document. It has copies of sections from the instructions given to the settlers by the council.

Working in teams, read this account and then discuss and answer the questions on the attached work sheet. Read it completely first. Underline the words and ideas that may be hard to understand today. These are the areas that you may want to discuss. Remember, language changes through history, and it can be hard to understand old historic documents. Pay attention to the language that has been put in bold face for you.

*Instructions given by way of advice, by us whom it hath pleased the King's Majesty to appoint for the intended voyage to Virginia, to be observed by those captains and company which are sent at this present to plant there.*

*As we doubt not but you will have especial care to observe the ordinances set down by the King's Majesty and delivered unto you under the Privy Seal, so for your better directions upon your first landing we have thought good to recommend unto your care these instructions and articles following.*

*When it shall please God to send you on the coast of Virginia, you shall do your best endeavor to find out a safe port in the entrance of some navigable*

*river, making choice of such a one as runneth furthest into the land. And if you happen to discover divers portable rivers, and amongst them any one that hath two main branches, if the difference be not great, make choice of that which bendeth most toward the northwest, for that way shall you soonest find the other sea.*

*But if you choose your place so far up as a bark of fifty tons will fleet, then you may lay all your provisions ashore with ease, and the better receive the trade of all the countries about you in the land. And such a place you may perchance find a hundred miles from the river's mouth, and the further up the better. For you to sit down near the entrance, except it be in some island that is strong by nature, an enemy that may approach you on even ground may easily pull you out.*

*First, erect a little sconce at the mouth of the river that may lodge some ten men, with whom you shall leave a light boat, that when any fleet shall be in sight they may come with great speed to give you warning. Secondly, you may in no case suffer any of the natural people of the country to inhabit*

*between you and the seacoast; for you cannot carry yourselves so towards them but they will grow discontented with your habitation . . .*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Working with Primary Documents**

- 1. What is the purpose of this document?**
- 2. What does this tell us about the plans for settling at Jamestown?**
- 3. What kind of area was recommended to the settlers?**
  - a. a place right on the Atlantic Ocean
  - b. somewhere next to Native settlements
  - c. someplace a distance upriver, that was easily protected
- 4. Look at John Smith's map of Jamestown Island and Virginia. You can find it at [www.lewis-clark.org/MAPTERRINCOG/nav\\_mtiG1.htm](http://www.lewis-clark.org/MAPTERRINCOG/nav_mtiG1.htm)**
- 5. How well did the settlers follow these directions?**
- 6. Did the archaeological evidence tell us how well they chose their location?**
- 7. Who do you think is being referred to by the quote "when any fleet shall be in sight"?**
  - a. the natives
  - b. the Spanish or other Europeans in ships

c. the men left as guards

**8. What else would you want to research about this document?**