



## **Powhatan Living**

### **Primary documents and the Native Americans**

**Subjects:** History, Virginia Studies, Computer-based Research/4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades

*Skills:* reading and comprehension, using primary documents,

*Strategies:* Collaborative/cooperative learning, creating predictive models, utilizing web-based research strategies, writing

*Time:* 60 minutes                      *Class Size:* adaptable, designed for teams

### **Objectives:**

<b>Students will:</b>	<b>SOLs</b>
develop skills for historical and geographical analysis including the ability to identify and interpret artifacts and primary and secondary source documents to understand events in history; draw conclusions and make generalizations; make connections between past and present; sequence events in Virginia history; interpret ideas and events from different historical perspectives; evaluate and discuss issues orally and in writing	<b>Virginia Studies VS.1 United States USI.1</b>
The student will demonstrate knowledge of the geography and early inhabitants of Virginia by describing how American Indians (First Americans) adapted to the climate and their environment to secure food, clothing, and shelter.	<b>Virginia Studies VS.2 United States USI.3</b>
Communicate through application software, using local and worldwide network communication systems.	<b>Computer Technology C/T5.4</b>

listen, draw conclusions, and share responses in subject-related group learning activities, participate in and contribute to discussions across content areas. Organize information to present reports of group activities. Summarize information gathered in group activities.	<b>English 5.1</b>
The student will read fiction and nonfiction with fluency and accuracy. Use context to clarify meaning of unfamiliar words. Use knowledge of root words, prefixes, and suffixes. Use dictionary, glossary, thesaurus and other word-reference materials.	<b>English 5.4</b>

Following is a primary source which refers to the way the Powhatans in Virginia in the 1600s gathered food and built their shelters. The writer was Englishman William Strachey, who settled at Jamestown. This was written in 1609.

*They are like garden arbors, at best like our Shepard's cottages . . . of such young plants as they can pluck up. Bow and make the green tops meet together in fashion like a round roof, which they thatch with mats thrown over. The walls are made with barkes of trees . . . In the midst of the house there is a louver out of which the smoke issueth, the fire being kept right under. Every house has two doors, one before and a postern; the doors be hung with mats, never locked nor bolted, but only those mats be to turn up or let fall at pleasure. And their houses are commonly so placed under covert*

*of trees that the violence of foul weather, snow or rain cannot assault them, nor the sun in summer annoy them.*

*About their houses they have commonly square plots of cleared ground which serve them for gardens, some 100, some 200 foot square, wherein they sow their tobacco, pumions, and a fruit like into a muskmillion . . . They plant also the field apple, the maracock—a wild fruit like a kind of pomegranate which increaseth infinitely and ripens in August, continuing unto the end of October when all other fruits be gathered. But they sow neither herb, flower, nor any other kind of fruit.*

*They neither do impale for deer nor breed cattle, nor bring up tame poultry, albeit they have great store of turkeys; nor keep birds, squirrels, nor tame partridges, swan, duck, nor geese. In March they live much upon their weirs and feed on fish, turkeys, squirrels, and then, as also in May they plant their fields and set their corn, and live after those months most off acorns, walnuts, chestnuts, chechinquamins, and fish.*

*In June, July, and August they feed upon the roots of tockohow berries,  
groundnuts. Fish, and green wheat, and sometime upon a kind of serpent,  
or great snake, of which our people like to eat.*

Work in teams, and discuss the different sections in the primary source. Read the material first, and underline the parts you think you need more information about to help you understand it. You can work together to decide what these entries mean. Then you can work individually to answer the following questions:

1. Describe in your own words what the Native houses looked like.
2. Using your imagination, how do you think these houses were different from the English houses?
3. How did the Native Americans supply themselves with food?
4. Do you think this was different than the way the settlers supplied themselves with food?
5. Read the following statement from Strachey:

*They neither do impale for deer nor breed cattle*

The word impale can mean two different things, to impale can mean to stab or skewer. This can make you think that they did not hunt deer. Impale can also mean to build a fence around something. This meaning would say to the reader that the Native Americans did not fence in the deer. Discuss how these two meanings can create two interpretations that are opposite each other. Which one do you think Strachey meant? If archaeologists found deer bones in a Powhatan Indian site, which interpretation would you believe?

Additional Work:

1. Re-read the quotations from Strachey. What items might be found by archaeology? Look for things that would leave impressions in the ground, or would last in the earth for hundreds of years. After making a list of what you would expect to find, go to the following websites and see if any of the evidence you expected to see was discovered by the archaeologists at Jamestown Rediscovery. Remember, the types of food found at James Fort would also be something you could find on a Powhatan site from the same time period.

[www.apva.org/exhibit/trade.html](http://www.apva.org/exhibit/trade.html)

[www.apva.org/exhibit/eats.html](http://www.apva.org/exhibit/eats.html)

[www.apva.org/ngex/xfood.html](http://www.apva.org/ngex/xfood.html)

2. Draw a picture of how you think a Powhatan home site might have looked, using Strachey's descriptions. What is included? What is missing?

For further research on Virginia archaeology and Virginia Indians—past and present, visit the following web sites:

[www.apva.org/resource/jt2000/sites.html](http://www.apva.org/resource/jt2000/sites.html)

[www.vmnh.org/indbackgr.htm](http://www.vmnh.org/indbackgr.htm)

[www.indians.vipnet.org/](http://www.indians.vipnet.org/)

## Teacher key to possible archaeological evidence

The bold faced items are the potential areas for archaeological evidence. There are descriptions of how they may be seen when they are discovered.

<b>Primary source: Writings of William Strachey</b>	<b>Possible archaeological evidence</b>
<p>They are like garden arbors, at best like our Shepard's cottages . . . of such <b>young plants as they can pluck up</b>. <u>Bow and make the green tops meet together in fashion like a round roof, which they thatch with mats</u> thrown over. The walls are made with barks of trees . . . In the midst of the house there is a louver out of which <u>the smoke issueth, the fire being kept right under</u>. Every house <u>has two doors, one before and a postern</u>; the doors be hung with mats, never locked nor bolted, but only those mats be to turn up or let fall at pleasure. And their <b>houses are commonly so placed under covert of trees</b> that the violence of foul weather, snow or rain cannot assault them, nor the sun in summer annoy them.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">☞</p>	<p>Post holes where the framing is pushed in to the ground create stains that are seen by archaeologists. Spacing can often tell us where doors are placed, as well as variation in surface elevations. Fragment of some kind of natural mat was found in a Jamestown trash pit. The heat from a fire would create a stain in the soil, which could be tested with archaeomagnetic dating techniques.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">☞</p>
<p>About their houses they have commonly <b>square plots of cleared ground</b> which serve them for <b>gardens</b>, some 100, some 200 foot square, wherein they sow their tobacco, pumions, and a fruit like into a muskmillion . . . <u>They plant also the field apple, the maracock—a wild fruit like a kind of pomegranate</u> which increaseth infinitely and ripens in August, continuing unto the end of October when all other fruits be gathered. But they sow neither herb, flower, nor any other kind of fruit.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">☞</p>	<p>Soil and water can be tested for pollen, and traces of plants called phytoliths. Some plants leave traces better than others. Corn leaves diagnostic pollen and tobacco leaves behind almost nothing. Tobacco residue in pipes can be analyzed however.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">☞</p>
<p>They neither do impale for <b>deer</b> nor breed cattle, nor bring up tame poultry, albeit they have <b>great store of turkeys</b>; nor keep birds, squirrels, nor tame partridges, swan, duck, nor geese. In March they live much upon their <u>weirs and feed on fish, turkeys, squirrels</u>, and then, <u>as also in May they plant their fields and set their corn</u>, and live after those months most off <b>acorns, walnuts, chestnuts, chechinquamins, and fish</b>.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">☞</p>	<p>Animal bones, fish bones and other animal pieces can be analyzed by specialists, or zooarchaeologists. This tells us about diet, economic strategies, subsistence and trade. Other very small artifacts can be found using flotation, a method used to capture the very smallest traces of bone, seeds and artifacts. Samples of soil are run through a flotation tank, and the bits and pieces are captured in fine mesh fabric.</p>
<p>In June, July, and August they feed upon the <u>roots of tockohow berries, groundnuts. Fish, and green wheat, and sometime upon a kind of serpent, or great snake</u>, of which our people like to eat.</p>	

