

# Teachers Resource Guide

## John Rolfe Transcript

### **Who are you and why are you at Jamestown (or in Virginia)? What year is it?**

Greetings to you new settlers. My name is John Rolfe, but you perhaps know my wife's name better than you know mine. Pocahontas, also known as Matoaka among the natives and as Rebecca among the English was my wife. I say was my wife rather than is my wife, for in this year, the year 1621, Pocahontas sadly no longer lives. She perished on a journey she and I made to England in 1616 and 1617. You may ask why I am here in the Colony of Virginia. More than for any other, 'tis for the reason that I see this place as one of great opportunity. As with all other people, I seek to profit from my labors, and I know of no better place for that than in this colony. This is a place where one can find not only abundant land, but also limitless opportunity and profit...if one has sufficient perseverance and is willing to work.

### **Describe your daily activities**

Most of my days during the summer I spend visiting my properties up and down the James River checking upon my tobacco crops. I investigate new and more efficient ways to cultivate this plant that the native people know so well. The better the quality and the greater the harvest of tobacco, with the same labor and investment, the greater the profit. At certain times I have responsibilities to the government of the Virginia Colony. I have served as secretary and recorder of the Colony as well as serving on the Governor's Council of State and, thus, have been part of the General Assembly where we work to make this Colony a successful, peaceful and fair place for all who come here to live and work. I am constantly trying to think of things that will benefit myself and my neighbors throughout the Colony.

### **What do you think about Jamestown and Virginia?**

I have seen this Colony in the depth of failure and distress. Envy and dissensions choked the seeds and blasted the fruits of all men's labors. All fashioned themselves Caesars. They did nothing, for working might have caused other settlers to think themselves laborers, and they would not wish to be considered as inferior to any of the other settlers. And I have also since seen the Colony in the best of times, transformed completely. I have written King James that Virginia is now "a country as worthy good report as can be declared by the pen of the best writer." The ills once so common have now been cast out through our learning and adapting to our new knowledge. Where once many looked for supply out of England and neglected husbandry, their planting and farming, as they could not be bothered to work, every man now sits under his own tree in safety, gathering and reaping the fruits of his own labors with much joy and comfort.

### **What expectations do you have for your future?**

I have the very highest of expectations for myself, also for you and for the rest of the Colony. I expect I will continue to increase my profits in tobacco and, thus, the fortunes of the entire Virginia Colony. I have the greatest expectation that I will once again see my son Thomas Rolfe, whose mother was of course Pocahontas, and whose grandfather was the great Powhatan. Thomas is presently living in England in the care of my brother Henry Rolfe. He will certainly have a greater opportunity to acquire and education there in England than here in Virginia. I

expect to see the extension of the benefits of the Great Charter of 1215 and the English Common Law through our recent General Assembly, which is nothing less than a small copy of England's Parliament. It is in that Assembly where elected burgesses assist in the making of the laws and taxes, should we need them. None others in Europe or around the world have such a thing.

**Items that would identify John Rolfe:**

Smoking pipe-Tobacco entrepreneur

Quill pen/ink well-Secretary of the Colony, serving in the first General Assembly

Coin from Sommer Isles-Profit through tobacco for the Colony, the company stockholders and for settlers (Sommer Isles coins have the Sea Venture on them, the very ship in which Rolfe left England for Virginia)

Indian necklace with copper pieces-Representing Pocahontas, his wife, the daughter of Powhatan who valued copper so highly