

JOHN SMITHS MASTERPIECE AND COPYRIGHT NIGHTMARE

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Introduction:

Why was Captain John Smith's map of Virginia so important and, therefore, copied so many times?

Lesson Images



Smith, John, (1580–1631). *Virginia / Discovered and Discribed by Captayn John Smith, 1606*. Graven by William Hole. G3880 1624 .S5 Voorhees Collection. Archives Research Services Map Collection. Library of Virginia. ([High Res](#))

Standards Of Learning

1.4, 1.5, 2.2, 3.5, 3.6, K.1, K.2, K.3, USI.1, USI.3, VS.1, VS.2, VUS.1, VUS.2, WG.1, WHI.1, WHII.1

Historical Information:

This Lesson Plan was created by Penny Anderson, a teacher at Riverbend High School in Fredericksburg and one of the Library of Virginia's 2010 Brown Research Teacher Fellows.

The Age of Exploration ushered in the age of maps. European explorers needed maps to follow and some created their own as new lands were explored. Some maps became so important to travelers that many copies were made of them. These map copies, known as *derivatives*, were especially useful to the explorers and settlers of the New World. One such influential map was Captain John Smith's map of Virginia. Its importance and accuracy (for that time period) also made it one of the most copied maps. Since there were no copyright laws in effect in the seventeenth century, map derivatives were common. However, John Smith could be proud that his map, which displays the expertise of his research and cartographic skills, would be the object of influence throughout the settling of the American colonies.

Captain John Smith was part of the first permanent English settlement in America. He arrived in

Jamestown, Virginia, and almost immediately set out to survey the mouth of the James River and the Chesapeake Bay area. He began his three-month field survey in 1608. His map *Virginia / Discovered and Described by Captayn John Smith*, is the earliest published map of the Chesapeake region to represent the early Virginia colony with relative accuracy. The map shows the location of Jamestown, as well as the American Indian villages Smith studied along the shores. The orientation of his map is with north to the right of the compass rose and many native- and English-named features are recorded. In the upper-left corner of the map is a cartouche representing the council of Chief Powhatan with the label "Powhatan Held this state and fashion when Capt. Smith was delivered to him prisoner, 1607." In the upper-right corner is a detailed image of an American Indian observed in the upper Chesapeake and the Potomac and Susquehanna rivers. The image is labeled "The Sasquesahanougs are a Gyant-like people and thus atyred (attired)." It shows a large figure arrayed in animal skins, beadwork, and embellishments holding a longbow in one hand and a club in the other.

Smith's map also shows details of the coastlines of the inlets, rivers, and major tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay. He marked his exploration points with crosses and filled in the landscape with different types of trees found on the landscape and the topographic features he saw. He also depicted hunting parties with bows and arrows hunting forest deer. One of the most intriguing features on Smith's map is the location of American Indian settlements shown with the names of the nations and tribes. This is most likely the first written recording of indigenous languages in the American colonies. The spatial distribution of mid-Atlantic Indians is also shown in the location points and depictions of the dwellings of the Indian chiefs and the "ordinary houses."

Smith's map quickly became the most influential map of the time. It showed volumes of geographic information of the region on a single parchment: physical landscape, topography, vegetation, the regional watershed, cultural landscape, languages, housing, and human-environmental interaction. Many explorers and settlers used Smith's map to entice people to make the voyage from England and settle in Virginia. Because of its geographic and cultural importance, it was soon copied by many other cartographers. Some well-known map derivatives are by Jodocus Hondius Jr., Pieter van den Keere, and Willem Blaeu. Although other early surveys of the Chesapeake region and Virginia peninsulas were completed, Smith's map remains the earliest and, arguably, best source of European studies of the Indian language, habits, and geography of Virginia.

Vocabulary Words:

- absolute location—the actual location of a point on the earth's surface, usually in terms of latitude and longitude coordinates or a physical address of a place
- cardinal directions—the directions of north, east, south, and west
- cartouche—the ornamental or decorative framing of inscriptions, titles, symbols, and other relevant information on a map
- compass rose—a symbol that shows direction (north, east, south, and west) on a map
- derivative—a copy or modification of an original work

- headwater—the area at the source of a river
- indigenous—native to place
- map—a drawing that shows what places look like from above and where they are located
- map legend—a list of shapes and symbols used on a map and an explanation of what each one represents
- map scale—a map tool used to measure distance between locations
- orientation—direction in relation to a point on the compass
- peninsula—land surrounded by water on three sides
- region—a place that has common characteristics that are different from the characteristics of the surrounding areas
- relative location—a concept described by using terms that show connections between two places, such as next to, near, or bordering
- symbol—a picture or thing that represents something else
- title—the name or kind of map
- tributary—a stream or river that flows into a larger stream or river

Lesson Activities

MAP ANALYSIS

Project the Smith map on a screen

- Allow time for students to comment on the map. Define orientation. Point out that the orientation of the map is with north to the right. Note that the embellishment on the compass rose is pointing to the right.
- Have the students identify the map title, compass rose, map legend, any geographic features or symbols, and any place-names. Note that the map scale uses “leagues” and “half leagues” as measurement.
- Differentiate between the land features and the water features. Find the Chesapeake Bay, Powhatan Flu (river), Patawomek Flu (river), Toppahanock Flu (river), Pamaunk Flu (river), Virginian Sea, Cape Henry, and Cape Charles. Note the Indian names and the English names. What are these features called today?
- Find the different areas of trees. Do you see an abundance of potential farm land? Find the hunters. Do you expect an abundance of meat for food?

- ◆ Which American Indian tribes are listed on the map?
 - ◆ Tidewater area (Powhatan = Algonquian language families)
 - ◆ headwaters of the Powhatan Flu (Monacans = Siouan language families)
 - ◆ headwaters of the Toppahanock Flu (Mannahoacks)
 - ◆ southern lands of the Powhatan Flu (Mangoags, Chawons)
 - ◆ Eastern Shore (Delmarva Peninsula) (Kuskarawoocks, Tockwoughs)
 - ◆ upper Chesapeake Bay (Sasquesahanougs, Atquanachukes)
 - ◆ western lands (Massawomecks)
- Look at smaller settlement points across Virginia and close to your present-day location. Do you recognize any names? What Indian names have remained in your community?
 - Brainstorm ideas about what else John Smith could have put on his map. (economic/trade routes, hunting trails, communication roads, ceremonial locations, entertainment arenas, etc.)
 - How would John Smith's map have been beneficial for early European settlers to the region? Does Smith's map show that Virginia was a good source of fresh water? Food? Soil? Building materials? Do you think his map was successful in "selling" Virginia to settlers from Europe? Why or why not?

COMPARE / CONTRAST

- Using a modern wall map of Virginia, compare it with the Smith map.
 - ◆ Have students identify the map title, any geographic features or symbols, and place-names. Note the difference in orientation (westward vs. northward).
 - ◆ Compare the locations of the following places on the maps: Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, Atlantic Ocean (Virginian Sea), Chesapeake Bay, James River (Powhatan Flu), Jamestown, Richmond, York River (Pamaunk Flu), Yorktown, Werowocomoco (on the north shore of the Pamaunk Flu), Blue Ridge Mountains, Potomac River (Patawomek Flu), Rappahannock River (Toppahanock Flu), Hampton Roads, Washington, D.C., and Virginia's Eastern Shore.
 - ◆ Discuss how place-names can represent geographic features, why place-names may have changed, and whether any commemoration or honor place-names are given. (Explorers may name places for their king/queen/benefactor, the expedition leader, the local native name, what it looks like, a family member, religious figures/reasons, or personal feats, etc.)
 - ◆ Was the area at the mouth of the James River a safe harbor for shipping? What is that area called now? Does the number of ports, cities, and population settlements prove that, after 400 years, Hampton Roads is still a protective harbor? Was Smith correct about

Virginia being a source of prosperity?

EXTENSION

Use the Smith map scale to measure distance between places, tribes, and rivers, etc. (one league was about three miles). Use other maps and scales to practice distance.

Compare John Smith's map with any of the Smith derivatives (i.e., Hondius's Nova Virginiae Tabula) and observe the similarities and differences between them (languages, place-names, map tools, etc.).

Lesson Handouts

Virginia / Discovered and Described by Captayn John Smith. Panels to print  (2 MB)

Blank Venn Diagram  (94 KB)

Related Links

[Online Exhibition: Maps, Charts & Atlases: The Alan M. Voorhees Collection at the Library of Virginia](#)

[Fry-Jefferson Maps, Surveys and Derivatives](#)

[Alan M. Voorhees Map Collection](#)

[Virtual Jamestown: The Original Maps](#)

[LVA Research Note: "Virginia, Discovered and Described: John Smith's Map of Virginia and Its Derivatives"](#)

[On the Trail of John Smith: National Geographic Kids: Interactive Adventure](#)

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