



Focus Activity

READ TO LEARN

What is the mystery of the "Lost Colony" of Roanoke?

VOCABULARY

- charter
- armada

PEOPLE

- Queen Elizabeth I
- Sir Walter Raleigh
- John White
- King Philip II

PLACES

- Virginia
- Roanoke Island

LESSON 1



Early European Settlements

Read Aloud

The word **CROATOAN** (kroh uh TOH un)—carved into a tree—was one of the last messages left by a small group of English colonists. In 1587 over 100 English people had begun new lives on Roanoke Island off the coast of present-day North Carolina. Three years later, they were gone. The eight letters they left provide a clue to where they had gone. But we still do not know what happened to them.

THE BIG PICTURE

By the late 1500s Spain claimed most of South America and North America. But other European countries ignored Spain's claims. They wanted to share in the riches of these lands.

England challenged Spain in several ways. Some English sea captains called "sea dogs" raided Spain's colonies and seized its treasure ships. England also planned to begin colonies in North America. It claimed a region north of Florida that the Spanish also claimed. The English named it **Virginia** in honor of **Queen Elizabeth I**, who was known as the "Virgin Queen."

The early English colonists in Virginia faced many hardships. They failed in their first two attempts to start a colony.

ROANOKE ISLAND

Sir Walter Raleigh was one of the first people to tell Queen Elizabeth to begin a colony in North America. Queen Elizabeth had made Raleigh a knight because of battles he had won in Europe.



Sir Walter Raleigh's interests included military fighting, navigation, and writing history and poetry.

Explorers told Raleigh about **Roanoke Island** off the Atlantic Coast of North America. Find it on the map on this page. The island was "sweet, fruitful and wholesome," they said, and was hard for Spanish sailors to see. The Queen granted Raleigh a **charter** to start a colony in Virginia. A charter is a document that permits one to settle land.

He chose **John White** as governor. White, a painter, had gone to Virginia the first time. He had sketched the plants, animals, and people he saw there.

In July, more than 100 people landed with him at Roanoke. His granddaughter was born soon after. White named her Virginia Dare.

White returned to England for more supplies. He promised to come back. He told the colonists to carve a message into a tree if they should move. "Mark a cross if you are in danger," he added.

The First Try

Roanoke, an Algonkian word, comes from a people called Roanoac (ROH uh noh uk). They and the Hatteras (HAT ur as) and the Tuscarora (tus kuh ROHR uh) lived along the Atlantic Coast.

In 1585 the first English people came to Roanoke Island. They faced hunger and hardship. The Roanoac helped them. But a colonist killed their leader Wingina (WIHN jih nuh), and they no longer helped. The English soon went back to England.

A Second Try

In 1587 Raleigh again sent colonists across the Atlantic Ocean.

ROANOKE AND NEIGHBORING ISLANDS, Late 1500s



"Secotan" was the name of the village and the people White met on his first voyage.

1. Besides the Secotan people, which Native Americans lived near Roanoke Island?
2. Based on the scale of miles, how far is Roanoke Island from Secotan village?

THE LOST COLONY

White reached England when it was getting ready for war. Spain was preparing an **armada**, or large fleet of ships, to invade England. Queen Elizabeth needed all her ships and sailors. White had to delay returning to Roanoke.

The Spanish Armada

Spain's **King Philip II** wanted to punish England for attacking Spain's colonies and ships. In 1588 the Spanish Armada set sail for England. Sir Francis Drake, the "sea dog," led the English fleet. England had smaller, faster, better-armed ships and won the battle.

The Mystery and Its Clues

John White returned to Roanoke in August 1590. His hopes soared as

he neared land. He found no one there, only some clues on a tree. He wrote:

One of the chief trees . . . had the bark taken off, and five [feet] from the ground in fair capital letters was CROATOAN without any cross or sign of distress. . . .

Croatoan was an island south of Roanoke. It also was the name of Native Americans who might have been living on the island.

Storms, low supplies, and complaints from his crew forced White to end his search for the "lost colonists." People still wonder what happened to them. Did they fight with the Roanoac nearby or with Spanish soldiers from Florida? White thought they might be safe among the Croatoan people. Today, the Lumbee people of North Carolina believe they are descendants of

John White's watercolor (left) shows the Secotan people's village in what is now North Carolina. Below is a nineteenth-century artist's painting of John White's return to Roanoke.



the "lost colonists." No one knows for sure.

WHY IT MATTERS

England's efforts in the 1500s to start colonies in North America seemed doomed. But the defeat of the Spanish Armada boosted English confidence. Spain was still the strongest country in Europe. But English sea power was growing stronger. In the 1600s England would soon start permanent colonies of its own along the Atlantic Coast of North America.

Yet England would not be the only European country to start colonies along the coast. Sweden, the Netherlands, and France would also send colonists across the Atlantic Ocean.

Reviewing Facts and Ideas

SUM IT UP

- By the late 1500s England was challenging Spanish claims to North America by trying to start its own colonies there.
- When the English first tried to establish a colony on Roanoke Island, they met the Roanoac, who had lived there for many years.
- John White brought a second group of colonists to Roanoke, but they disappeared. To this day no one knows what happened to them.

Links to LANGUAGE ARTS

A Play About the Lost Colony

How do people today remember the 400-year-old lost colony of Roanoke?

Paul Green wrote the play *The Lost Colony*, which is performed every year on Roanoke Island. Using songs, dances, and drama, it tells the story of the colonists who disappeared.



In groups, use what you have read about the colony to choose an event that may have happened at the Roanoke colony. Then work together to write a play, poem, or television or film script that brings that event to life.

THINK ABOUT IT

1. Which Native Americans lived near the coast of present-day North Carolina in the late 1500s?
2. Why did the first colonists on Roanoke Island return to England?
3. **FOCUS** Why do you think people are still interested in the story of the "Lost Colony" of Roanoke?
4. **THINKING SKILL** What *effect* did England's war with Spain have on England's attempts to colonize Roanoke Island?
5. **GEOGRAPHY** What natural features of the coast of Virginia might have helped to hide the Roanoke settlement from Spanish sailors?