



NSDAR Educational Resources Committee

"Letters from Jamestown"

Lesson Plan

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State: Texas

Topic: Letters from Jamestown

Grade Level: 8th grade

Time Allocation: 2 hours

1. **Addresses Common Core Standards:** CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST6-8.2, 4, 6, 7, & 8
2. **Addresses State Standards:** History TEKS: 1(A); 2(A) & (B); 29(D); 30 (B); ELA TEKS: 17(B).
3. **Identify the standards to be addressed:** Write a letter that reflects an opinion in a friendly context; identify major events and reasons for European exploration and colonization of America; compare political, economic, religious and social reasons for the establishment of the 13 colonies; identify points of view from historical context surrounding events; use standard grammar, spelling, sentence structure, punctuation, and proper citation of sources.
4. **Statement of the objective and lesson outcomes:** Students will write a letter from the perspective of a colonist to a friend or family member in England, explaining the experiences and hardships encountered in daily life of the Jamestown settlement.
5. **Materials, resources, and technology to be used by teacher/students:** Please see links to materials, resources, and websites in lesson that follows.
6. **Introduction of the topic:** Packing a Trunk for Jamestown activity as described in History is Fun. Teachers may visit this website for instructions and a packing worksheet template. This information explains what early settlers would need and why it was needed to start life in the new country:

<http://www.historyisfun.org/lesson5/>

Before sending students out to ponder their packing list, show visuals of what early colonists might have looked like as well as the Powhatan natives: <http://www.historyisfun.org/pdf/Life-at-Jamestown-Lesson-Plans/LifeatJamestown.pdf>

Further information may be obtained by viewing videos at:

<http://www.history.com/topics/jamestown/videos/jamestown-founded-in-1607>

The visuals will provide contextual information so that students will have an idea of what is needed to survive and what could be used to barter with natives for essential items needed for survival. This activity will set the stage and help create a frame of mind for students in order to place themselves in colonists' shoes and be able to write a letter from the prospective of one of the colonists.

7. **Procedure for instruction:**

Show Jamestown videos to introduce the letter writing activity in order to provide as much related information as possible for students to be able to form a perspective from a colonist's viewpoint. Dates for research should be from the years 1607-1620, and the struggle to create habitable conditions from what supply ships could deliver and the beginning of interaction and co-existence with the Powhatan and other tribes.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RZW6rL7HQQ&feature=youtu.be>

Use this website to help students understand that the purpose of Jamestown was an economic venture of The Virginia Company of London to find silver and gold in the new world and to counter the exploration of other European countries of this new land and also to distinguish the difference between this venture and the later Plymouth settlement: <http://www.historyisfun.org/jamestown-settlement/history-jamestown/>

Even though the first colonists were mostly gentlemen, who were not well suited for the harsh labor needed to establish colonization in an unsettled country, more women were allowed on subsequent supply ships and this site has some key biographical information that students can use to begin to collect data on individual personalities such as Captain John Smith who proclaimed that "those who do not work, will not eat" to encourage more to the hard labor needed to sustain life:

http://www.kidinfo.com/american_history/colonization_jamestown.html

http://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Women_in_Colonial_Virginia#start_entry

In addition to classroom materials and mentioned websites, related literature will engage students and stimulate interest as they prepare to write about life in Jamestown:

1607: A New Look at Jamestown, Karen Lange

You Wouldn't Want to Be an American Colonist, Jacqueline Morley

Jamestown, New World Adventure (Adventures in Colonial America), James E. Knight & David Wenzel

The Jamestown Colony (Cornerstones of Freedom), Gail Sakurai

The Jamestown Colony (We the People: Exploration and Colonization), Brendan January

Once the historical foundation of the purpose and circumstances of the first permanent American colony has been established, students may choose the colonist they wish to study for the purpose of writing to a friend or relative in England about the events and struggles of life in Jamestown. Letters will be written in the friendly style with the narrative including anecdotes of the perilous trip across the Northern Atlantic by ship, the struggle to find food and build habitable structures, the tenuous relationship with the native tribes as each forage for what game and food that the land can offer, the drought of the first years, and the illnesses that the settlers encountered from tainted, stagnant water and other causes; and the famine of "The Starving Time" endured when supplies were exhausted. Have students research mentioned websites and any appropriate related resources for not only the person of choice, but also life in general at the time.

Possible choices of historical figures include:

Captain William Pierce

Joan Pierce

Captain John Smith

Captain Bartholomew Gosnold

John Ratcliffe

John Rolfe

Pocahontas

Jane Pierce Rolfe

Thomas Forrest

Mistress Forrest

John Laydon

Ann Burras Laydon

Sir William Berkeley

Lady Frances Culpeper Stephens Berkeley

Nathaniel Bacon

Ann Cotton

Lydia Cheesman

Sarah Drummond

William Byrd II

Lucy Parke Byrd

Anna Varlett Hack Book

Anne Toft

Governor George Yeardley

Temperance Flowerdew Yeardley West

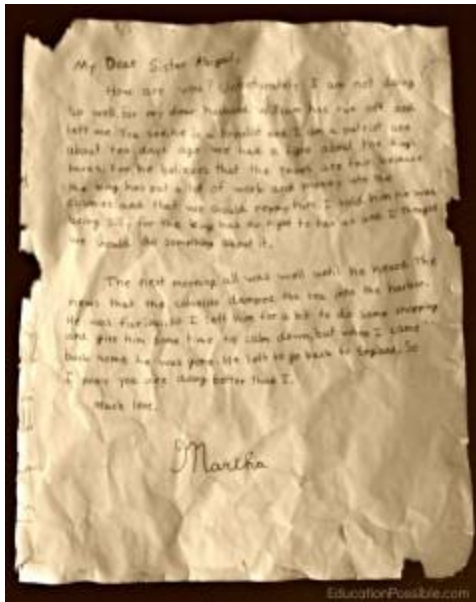
Governor Francis West

Additional sites for information on colonists can be found at:

<https://www.nwhm.org/online-exhibits/jamestownwomen/5.htm>

<http://www.historyisfun.org/jamestown-chronicles/>

Students will write at least one draft that will be submitted for teacher/peer editing and revision and then may be written as a final copy to be submitted for assessment. Students will write final copy letters to be displayed in an aged fashion reminiscent of paper writing materials of the era such as on a scroll or on parchment, brown, or distressed paper similar to an example found in Pinterest:



8. **Lesson closure:** Letters from Jamestown lesson will conclude when students' final products are ready to be read aloud by students to the whole group and then displayed for future reading and enjoyment for the duration of the unit on early American colonization.
9. **Assessment of student understanding:** Assessment of this assignment will be based on adequate student research to enable a clear understanding of the history, hardships and events surrounding the founding of Jamestown colony as presented in students' letters. Letters should reflect the political and economic reasons for Jamestown settlement and be written in the appropriate historical point of view. Assessment will also be based on any rough draft(s), editing, revisions, and final product using correct grammatical use of language in a friendly letter style and on artistic presentation of letters as described above.