



Then and Now: Daily Life in James Fort

Grade: 3rd-5th

Subjects: History, Virginia Studies, English

Time: 40 to 60 minutes

Class Size: Adaptable

Skills: Using historical documents, non-fiction, interpretation

Strategies: Have students read and interpret primary sources to gain understanding of historical events. Compare and contrast primary sources with archaeological evidence.

| Student will: | SOLs |
|--|---|
| VS.1 Students will demonstrate skills for historical thinking and geographic analysis by: a) analyzing and interpreting artifacts and primary and secondary sources to understand events in Virginia history VS.2 Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between physical geography and the lives of native peoples of Virginia by: f) describing how archaeologists have recovered new material evidence at sites including Jamestown VS.3 Demonstrate an understanding of the first permanent English settlement in America by: f) describing the hardships faced by settlers at Jamestown and the changes that took place to ensure survival VS.4 Demonstrate an understanding of life in the Virginia colony by e) describing everyday life in colonial Virginia | VS.1, VS.2, VS.3, VS.4 |
| 3.4, 4.4, 5.4 Expand vocabulary when reading and apply previous knowledge and context clues to determine meanings of new words 3.6, 4.6, 5.6 Read and demonstrate comprehension of nonfiction texts. Use context to clarify meanings of unfamiliar words. Explain words with multiple meanings. Use word-reference materials, including the glossary, dictionary and thesaurus. | English 3.4, 3.6, 4.4, 4.6, 5.4, 5.6 |

Background

On May 14, 1607, around 100 English colonists of the Virginia Company landed on Jamestown Island to establish a settlement. They were a diverse group including gentlemen leaders, skilled craftsmen, and a number of young boys. Over the next few years, they would face several challenges as they struggled to survive and establish a successful colony.

Historical accounts and archaeological evidence shine light on the daily lives of the English settlers and Virginia Indians who lived in and around the fort during its early years. While the accounts provide a timeline of important events, the day-to-day actions of the Jamestown inhabitants are not often recorded. Archaeological excavations help fill in these gaps. The objects these individuals left behind recovered by archaeologists illustrate the many aspects of life at the fort, from food preparation to military practices to trade with the Virginia Indians.



Resources and materials: Lesson includes a student worksheet. Instructors and/or students will need to access the following on personal or shared screens:

“Digital reDiscovery” StoryMap: <https://historicjamestowne.org/digital-rediscovery/>

“Mussel Shell Beads 360 Animation”: <https://youtu.be/g6oilNbUJQs>

Procedure

In this lesson, students will learn about the daily lives of the James Fort inhabitants. Using the “Digital reDiscovery” StoryMap and selected artifacts, they will draw connections between their own lives and those living at the fort.

Before the lesson begins, open and display the “Digital reDiscovery” StoryMap and “Mussel Shell Beads 360 Animation” on a projected or shared screen. Have the students use the StoryMap and video to complete the following worksheet. If time allows, review their answers in groups or together as a class using the discuss questions below. Students may also complete Part III: A Day at Jamestown as homework.

Discussion Questions

- Why is it important to use historical documents and archaeological excavation together? *Historical documents may contain bias or incorrect information. Excavations help give archaeologists more accurate information about events and people within the past.*
- Were students surprised at the similarities between their lives and those of the colonists? Why or why not? *Answers will vary. Students may express surprise that objects they use every day were also used at Jamestown.*
- What parts of life at Jamestown do students want to know more about? What kinds of artifacts might help them study that topic? *Answers will vary. Cooking pots and food scraps might help them know more about what the colonists and Virginia Indians ate while tools would show what kinds of jobs were being done.*
- Have students think of an object they use every day. If an archaeologist found that object years from now, what would it tell them about daily life in the 21st century? *Answers will vary. Clothing and shoes would illustrate fashion trends. Book bags and pens might show learning practices, while digital devices or sports gear would demonstrate popular forms of entertainment.*

To learn more and view additional lesson plans visit *Jamestown Rediscovery* at <https://historicjamestowne.org/>



Additional Resources

Instructors are encouraged to review the following for additional information on the historical documents and artifacts used within this lesson. Please note that this content is written for adult audiences and is intended as a guide to enhance instructors' background knowledge prior to the lesson.

Halberd: Fifty halberdiers arrived at Jamestown in 1610 to serve as the personal guard of the new governor Thomas West, Lord De La Warr. The blade is engraved with griffins reflecting De La Warr's coat of arms. Found in James Fort's second well, its owner might have bent it into a hook to retrieve the nearby pistol. Learn more: <https://historicjamestowne.org/collections/artifacts/halberd/>

Roman Lock Pistol: This pistol was still loaded with two lead pistol shot when it was found by archaeologists at the bottom of James Fort's second well. It is unlikely that this expensive item was thrown away while it was still useable. It may be that its owner was trying to retrieve it using the halberd bent into a hook that was also found in the well. Learn more: <https://historicjamestowne.org/collections/artifacts/roman-lock-pistol/>

Shipping Tag: This small lead shipping tag is stamped "YAMES TOWNE." It probably marked a container of goods warehoused in England and shipped to Jamestown. It is the first object found that is labeled for the settlement. Learn more: <https://historicjamestowne.org/collections/artifacts/shipping-tag/>

West Indian Top Shell: This shell was likely picked up by a colonist in Bermuda or the Caribbean and brought to Jamestown. It might have been a memento for time spent on the islands, or intended for use in a gentlemen's cabinet of curiosities. Learn more: <https://historicjamestowne.org/collections/artifacts/top-shell/>



Name: _____

Then and Now: Daily Life in James Fort

Vocabulary

Archaeologist: a scientist who studies how people lived within the past

Artifact: an object made or used by a person in the past

Excavation: the scientific removal of soil and artifacts from an archaeological site

Feature: a non-moveable part of an archaeological site, such as pits or building walls

Site: a place used by people in the past, often containing artifacts

Background

On May 14, 1607, around 100 English settlers landed on Jamestown Island to establish a colony. Among them were the gentlemen leaders, skilled craftsmen, and young boys. They would soon be joined by several hundred new colonists including women and children.

Archaeologists use both historical documents and excavation to understand how these people and their neighbors, the Virginia Indians, lived in the past. However, historical records might leave out important people, events, or details depending on who is writing them and when. That is where archaeology can help. By studying the objects that people left behind, archaeologists can understand more about their lives including what they ate, what kinds of jobs they did, and how they interacted with one another.

As you complete this lesson, think about what a day in James Fort would be like. Who was there? What were they doing? And how do you know?

Part I: The People

According to historical documents, these are some of the people who were living in Jamestown by 1608. Read the list carefully.

Council

Edward Maria Wingfield, President
John Smith
George Kendall

Gentlemen

John Brookes
Stephen Halthrop
George Percy

Blacksmith

James Read

Carpenters

William Laxon
Robert Small

Perfumer

Robert Alberton

Pipe Maker

Robert Cotton

Surgeon

Thomas Wotton
William Wilkinson

Tailors

John Powell
William Ward

Boys

Samuel Collier
Nathaniel Peacock

Women

Mistress Forrest
Anne Burras, her maid



1. Were you surprised about any of the jobs these people had? Why or why not?
2. There were women and children at James Fort. What kinds of chores do you think the children did?
3. The Virginia Indians lived nearby James Fort. Some lived in the fort with the English colonists. They supplied the settlers with corn, meat, and cooked stews. How did the Powhatan and the English get the ingredients they needed? How is that the same or different than what people do today?

Part II: The Artifacts

Artifact #1: Shell

Watch the video of the shell animation. A colonist likely picked this shell up in Bermuda or the Caribbean and brought it to Jamestown. The colonist might have been one of the survivors of the *Sea Venture* shipwreck who spent nine months on Bermuda before making it to the fort in 1610. The shell once contained a snail that could have been eaten.

1. List two reasons why this shell might have been important to a colonist. Why do you think they brought it to Jamestown?
2. Describe one example of how you collect items today. For example, you might have brought home a seashell from the beach or own a coin collection. What does this item (or items) mean to you?



Artifact #2: Breastplate

Look at the “Digital reDiscovery” StoryMap. Click on the Anas Todkill tour. Scroll down to the Blacksmith Shop stop.

1. The colonists had small numbers of supplies and so often had to make do with what they had. Watch the video “Blacksmithing at James Fort.” What two things did blacksmiths do with iron objects?

2. After watching the video, scroll down until you see the picture of the breastplate. This was once a piece of armor that a colonist wore for protection. A blacksmith then turned it into something else. What was it?

3. Think about an object you own that was once used for something else. What is it? How do you use it now?

Artifact #3 and 4: Pistol and Halberd

Click on the Archaeology Tour tab in the “Digital reDiscovery” StoryMap. Scroll down to the Second Well stop. This well once held drinking water. The colonists eventually used it as a place to throw their trash—just like today’s trash cans and garbage dumps!

1. How can looking at the objects the colonists threw away help archaeologists know more about life in James Fort?

2. Think about an object you threw away recently. What was it? What could it tell an archaeologist about what you did that day?





Watch the first video called "The Second Well."

1. The halberd and pistol were both expensive. Who might have owned these items?
2. Why was the halberd made into a hook?
3. The shipping tag was once attached to supplies that were headed to Jamestown. Think about the tags you have on your luggage or clothing. What can the tags tell you about those objects?

Part III: A Day at Jamestown

Take your time to explore the StoryMap. Pay close attention to who was living in the fort and the objects they used.

When you are finished, imagine that you are one of the people living at James Fort. Pick one of the artifacts you learned about. Use that object to write a diary entry about what you did one day at the fort. Be sure to include what your chosen artifact is and how you might have used it.