

GEOGRAPHY

For the activities that follow, you will need:

1. A modern map of the United States
2. A detailed modern map of the eastern half of North America
3. A detailed modern road map of Virginia

I. The Territory Known as Virginia (Raleigh's Virginia):

(Use maps 1 and 2 for this activity)

In 1584 Sir Walter Raleigh was granted a land patent by Queen Elizabeth I that gave him possession and control over most of the lands claimed for England in North America. He called this vast region Virginia, in honor of Queen Elizabeth I—"the Virgin Queen."

1. Locate the state of Florida on map 2 and look on the east coast and find St. Augustine. The Spanish established a settlement there in 1565.
2. Follow the coastline north to the state of South Carolina and find Hilton Head Island. Close to Hilton Head is Parris Island. In 1566 the Spanish established a settlement there called Santa Elena.
3. Continue up the eastern coast of the United States to Canada. Locate the St. Lawrence River. In 1535, the French explorer Jacques Cartier explored the St. Lawrence, claiming Canada for France. In 1584 the French were active in the region, although they had not yet established a permanent settlement in Canada.
4. Sir Walter Raleigh's land patent was for all of the land in North America that fell between the Spanish settlements in the south and the French territory in the north.
5. Find the border between North and South Carolina—that was the southern border of "Raleigh's Virginia". Now go north to Nova Scotia and locate Halifax—that was the northern border of "Raleigh's Virginia".
6. How far west did "Raleigh's Virginia" extend? You'll need map 1. Look for the Pacific Ocean (or as Sir Walter would call it "the Great Waters"). The Virginia patent extended all the way across the North American continent to the Pacific Ocean. (In the 16th and 17th centuries Europeans were unsure how much land there was between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.)

II. "Southern" and "Northern" Virginia in the 17th Century

(Use map 2 for this activity)

In April 1606, King James I granted the Virginia Company a charter to establish settlements in "Virginia". The Virginia Company had two branches: the London Company and the Plymouth Company. The London Company was granted the southern part of Virginia to settle and the Plymouth Company was granted the northern part.

1. On your map locate New York City. Next, find the present-day border between North and South Carolina. The territory between these locations was "southern Virginia", located between the

northern latitudes of 34° to 41°.

2. Find the southern border of Pennsylvania and then look north to Halifax, Nova Scotia in Canada. This territory was “northern Virginia”, located between the northern latitudes of 38° to 45°.
3. Note that “northern” and “southern” Virginia have overlapping territory: the present-day state of Pennsylvania, located between the northern latitudes of 38° to 41°. Both companies were encouraged to settle this area, but they were not allowed to establish settlements within a hundred miles of each other.

III. Virginia Indian Territory **(Use map 3 for this activity)**

1. Locate Virginia Beach and to the northwest, Richmond, the capital of Virginia. Finally, further to the north, locate Washington, D.C., the capital of the United States.
2. In 1607 the area between these cities was the home of about 15,000 Algonquian-speaking people who called their land Tsenacommacoh (t sen a com ma coe). They were a loosely united chiefdom under the rule of a powerful leader named Wahunsonacock (wah hun sun a cock) but commonly called Chief Powhatan. The English referred to these people collectively as the Powhatan Indians, but they referred to themselves by the names associated with the approximately thirty geographical districts in which they lived, for example: Chickahominy, Rappahannock, Appomattox, Pamunky, etc.

IV. Indian Settlements in Tsenacommacoh **(Use map 3 for this activity)**

The Virginia Indians lived in scattered villages along the rivers emptying into the Chesapeake Bay. These rivers provided both food and a means of travel.

1. On your map find the Chesapeake Bay and then locate the four major rivers that empty into it: the Potomac, the Rappahannock, the York and the James. There were Powhatan Indian villages/towns all along the banks of these rivers when the English settlers arrived in Virginia.
2. Locate the James River and then find the Chickahominy River, which empties into the James River about six or seven miles northwest of Jamestown Island. When the first English settlers arrived in 1607 there was a Paspahagh (Pass-puh-hay) Indian village on the point of land where the Chickahominy empties into the James River.

V. Geography of Southeastern Virginia **(Use map 3 for this activity)**

Southeastern Virginia is a coastal plain – a flat, lowland area stretching from the shores of the Chesapeake Bay to the geographic feature called the Fall Line.

1. Find Washington, D. C. on your map and then Richmond. Locate Interstate 95 (I 95), which connects these two cities. This major highway is the approximate location of the Fall Line. The land to the east of the Fall Line (southeastern Virginia) is low and flat. To the west the land rises in a series of hills until it reaches the Blue Ridge Mountains.
2. Locate the Blue Ridge Mountains on your map. The area between the Fall Line and these mountains is called the Piedmont (which means “foothills”).
3. The Fall Line is the place where the rivers narrow and are difficult for ships to navigate. Locate Richmond, Fredericksburg and Alexandria. These cities are all located on the Fall Line.
4. Southeastern Virginia is also known as the Tidewater because the water levels in the rivers, creeks and marshes are affected by the tides of the nearby Atlantic Ocean. Most of the year, this tidal action carries salty or brackish water up rivers such as the James. Find the James River and follow it to Richmond. Look to the west and locate the Blue Ridge Mountains. In the spring the snows in the mountains melt sending fresh water into the James, making the river water near Jamestown Island fresh. But at other times of the year salty tidal water pushes upriver past Jamestown turning the water there brackish. Settlers arriving at Jamestown in May of 1607 thought they had a whole river full of “sweet water”. They found out their mistake when summer arrived. Salt water poisoning was likely responsible for many deaths that first summer.

VI. English Settlements in “Southern Virginia” (Use map 3 for this activity)

In 1618, the London Company gave land to English settlers in Virginia. Since the settlers were already relying on the James River for transportation, it was natural for them to want to settle on the shores of the river.

1. Locate the James River and follow its course from where it empties into the Chesapeake Bay northwest to present-day Richmond. By 1622 English plantations were seated on both sides of the James River from the bay to the territory just south of Richmond.
2. The Virginia Indians resented having their lands taken by the English. In the spring of 1622, a Virginia Indian leader named Opechancanough (oh pee can canew) staged a carefully organized attack on a number of settlements killing approximately 350 English settlers.

VII. Sir John Harvey’s Palisade (Use map 3 for this activity)

In the decade following this attack, the English declared total war on the Powhatan Indians, destroying their villages and burning their crops. An uneasy peace was established in 1632. Governor Sir John Harvey ordered a palisade or wall built to divide Powhatan Indian territory from the land granted to the English by the defeated Powhatans. Trade between the two peoples was forbidden and Sir John granted settlers permission to attack any “suspicious” Virginia Indians found near their homes.

1. Locate the York River and the James River. Find Williamsburg (known as Middle Plantation until the end of the seventeenth century) in the middle of the peninsula between these two

rivers. Sir John Harvey's six-mile long palisade stretched from Queen's Creek on the York River to College Creek on the James River running through the site of present-day Williamsburg.

2. The Virginia Indians' territory was to the west and north of the palisade; the English were to settle to the east and south. It was not long, however, before settlers began moving beyond Sir John's boundary into Virginia Indian territory.