

Cultures at Jamestown – Comparing Cultures
Period Quotes

Powhatan Indians

For their apparel, they are some time couered with the skinnes of wilde beasts, which in winter are dressed with the haire, but in sommer without. The better sort vse large mantels of deare skins not much differing in fashion from the Irish mantels. Some imbrodered with white beads, some with copper, other painted after their manner.

John Smith

But the women are always couered about their middles with skin and [are] very shamefast to be seene bare. They adorne themselues most with copper beads and paintings.

John Smith

They take most commonly a place about ther howses to sett ther corne,...and in this place they dig many holes which before the English brought them scauels and spades they vsed to make with a crooked peece of woode beinge scrapped on both sides in fation of a gardeners paring Iron. they put in to thes holes ordinarily 4 or 5 curnels of ther wheat and 2 beanes like French beanes,...

Henry Spelman

Their buildings and habitations are for the most part by the rivers, or not farre distant from such fresh spring. Their houses are built like our Arbors, of small young springs bowed and tyed, and so close covered with Mats, or the barks of trees very handsomely, that not-withstanding either winde, raine, or weather, they are as warme as stoves, but very smoky, yet at the toppe of the house there is a hole made for the smoake to goe into right over the fire.

John Smith

Their fishing is much in Boats. These they make of one tree by burning and scratching away the coales with stones and shells, till they have made it in forme of a Trough. Some of them are an eine deepe, and fortie or fiftie foote in length, and some will beare 40 men, but the most ordinary are small, and will beare 10, 20 or 30. according to their bignesse. In stead of Oares, they use Paddles and stickes, with which they will row faster then our Barges.

John Smith

For fishing, hunting, and warres they use much their bow and arrows. They bring their bowes to the forme of ours by the scraping of a shell. Their arrows are made of some of straight young sprigs, which they head with bone, some 2 or 3 inches long. These they use to shoot at Squirrels on trees. Another sort of arrows they use made of Reeds. These are peece with wood, headed with splinters of christall, or some sharpe stone, the spurres of a Turkey, or the bill of some bird.

John Smith

Africans

They (the canoes) are generally 16 foot long and one and a half or two foot wide. They also have others which they use for warfare or for taking Oxen from other places, and these are bigger. I have seen one that was as big as a Sloop...It was 35 foot long, 5 foot wide and three foot high...the whole made and cut out of one trunk.

Pieter de Marees

In general the houses of these kingdoms...have only one story. They are round, made of stakes driven into the ground and on the outside...(covered) with a coat of clay missed with straw. The roof is formed with pieces of palm or with other fine stalks that resist water.

Cavazzi ki Montecucculo

Fathers teach their sons to spin yarn from the bark of trees and to make nets; and once they know how to make Nets, they go with their Fathers to the sea to Fish.

Pieter de Marees

Regarding the Girls,...they learn how to make Baskets, Hampers, Mats and straw Hats made of green Rushes, which they make with their own hands. They also learn to make Caps, Purses and cloth from the bark of trees, dyed in all sorts of colours and very artfully made, as if made with a Loom, to the wonder of many people;...Thridly, they learn to grind Millien and to make bread.

Pieter de Marees

Their spears are very beautifully and cleverly made, for they are wonderfully skilled in iron work.

Pieter de Marees

They use the Iron to make their weapons, namely Assegais, Machetes, Daggers, etc...The Machetes they use in Agriculture to dig the earth with, instead of spades; on the other hand, they also use them to cut wood in the Forest and for carpentry.

Pieter de Marees

...the commodities which are most popular there and are used and traded in great quantities are Linen, wollen Cloth, Copperware such as Basins and Caldrons, Knives and Beads.

Pieter de Marees

There are many types of meat, such as domestic cattle that they raise as well as wild game that they take. There are an infinite number of cattle that are so large and fat they are surprising.

A European Description of Angola, 1590

English

The greatest part of our building in the cities and good towns of England consisteth only of timber, for as yet few of the houses of the commonalty... are made of stone...

William Harrison

Their food also consisteth principally in beef and such meat as the butcher selleth, that is to say, mutton, veal, lamb, pork, ...bacon, fruit pies, fruit, fowls of sundry sorts, cheese, butter, eggs, etc....

William Harrison

The number of cars, drays, carts, coaches, more than hathe been accustomed, the streets and lanes being straitened, must needs be dangerous, as daily experience shows. The coachman rides behind the horses' tails, lashes them, and looks not behind him...

John Stow

...the most beautiful frame of fair houses and shops that be within the walls of London...it containeth ten fair dwellings and fourteen shops, all within one frame.

John Stow