Objectives:
This lesson will help students:
• Identify, review, and understand the five themes of geography
• Explore how the early inhabitants of Virginia interacted with their environment
• Make a visual representation of Jamestown in the 17th century

Essential Questions:
• What are the five themes of geography?
• How did the Africans, the Powhatan Indians, and the English interact with their environment?
• What did Jamestown look like in the early 17th century?

Preparation/Materials:
• Jamestown Geography — Period Images
• Essay — Who were the voyagers who sailed to Virginia?
• Essay — Who were the inhabitants of the land around Jamestown and how did they live?
• Essay — Who were the Africans who came to Jamestown?
• Teacher Background: Five Themes of Geography
• Handout: Guiding Questions for the Five Themes of Geography & Jamestown

Procedure:
• Explain to students that as they begin their study of Jamestown, they will look geographically at the site of Jamestown where all three cultures came together - the Powhatan Indians, the English, and the Africans. Students should be given access to the essays for background information on these three cultures.
• Review the Five Themes of Geography with the class, giving specific examples of each.
• Explain to the students that they will work in groups to create a class or school bulletin board about Jamestown in the 17th century, focused on the five themes of geography. Remind students that others will be learning from their work.
• Divide the class into five groups. Each group should have a leader who is responsible for organizing the material produced.
Assign each group one of the five themes of geography as a focus for the group’s work. Distribute the guiding questions to get each group started.

Groups can address their questions in a variety of ways, but they must produce visual representations such as maps, pictures, drawings, replicas, or primary sources. Students may create these themselves, find visual representations online or locate graphics and other material from additional resources, as approved by the instructor. Students are encouraged to use the Jamestown Geography — Period Images.

**Assessment:**
Have the leader of each group briefly report their findings to the rest of the class. Each group should have a clearly labeled bulletin board including a title that expresses the assigned theme.

**Extension Ideas:**
- Students could use software like Padlet, or even Powerpoint to create a digital bulletin board
- Invite the other classes in grade or school to visit the bulletin boards
Teacher Background: Five Themes of Geography

Location: Position on the Earth’s Surface

Absolute location and relative location are two ways of describing the positions of people and places on the earth’s surface. Using absolute location, one might say that the city is located at 48 degrees North latitude and 2 degrees East longitude, or the house is located at 115 Main Street. Using relative location, the school is located across the street from City Park, or it is 10 minutes from the beach.

Place: Physical and Human Characteristics

Place is a description of what a location is like. Physical characteristics include such things as landforms, bodies of water, climate, soils, natural vegetation and animal life. Human characteristics refer to human actions or ideas that shape the character of a place, such as buildings, roads, lifestyles or cultures.

Relationships within Places: Humans and Environments

Humans will modify or adapt to their environments in many ways. In what ways have the people changed their environment? Cutting down trees, polluting rivers. How have people been changed by or adapted to their environment? Types of housing built, types of clothing worn.

Movement: Humans Interacting on Earth

Movement includes the movement of people, things and ideas. People interact with each other in many different ways through communication and transportation of goods and ideas. How do people transport themselves and their goods? By foot, ship, wagon, bicycle, airplane, train, etc. How do they communicate with one another and with other groups of people? Conversation, public gatherings, letters, newspapers, music, television, etc.

Regions: How They Form and Change

Some areas on the earth’s surface have similar characteristics but differ from other areas around them. These characteristics may be human or physical. In a human region, people may have the same government, which is different from those in the areas around them. People within a region may speak the same language, but that language may be different from that spoken by the people around them. Religion may be another characteristic of a region. On the other hand, the region may be a physical region and have the same physical characteristics, such as a rainforest or desert.
Handout: Guiding Questions for the Five Themes of Geography & Jamestown

Location:

• Where are key sites related to the study of Jamestown located?
• What are some different ways you could describe these locations using absolute and relative location?
• What are some ways you could show these locations?

Place:

• What are some ways you could describe the physical characteristics of the environment around Jamestown?
• What are some ways you could describe the human characteristics of the environment around Jamestown?
• How could you show these visually?

Human Interactions with the Environment:

• What are some ways the Powhatan Indians interacted with their environment around Jamestown?
• How did the English and Africans interact with this environment?
• How did the environment change the English and Africans?
• How could you show this visually?

Movement:

• How did the Powhatans, English, and Africans at Jamestown move from place to place?
• How did they communicate?
• How did they exchange goods?
• How can you show this visually?

Region:

• What physical characteristics of Tidewater Virginia made it a region?
• How did it differ from areas around it?
• What government structures or languages influenced the region?
• How can you show this visually?
Who were the voyagers who sailed to Virginia?

A little over a third of the newly-arrived settlers were described as “gentlemen.” These men were from among the gentry in England and had been recruited by some of the financial backers of the enterprise. Many of the first colonists had military experience; several were ex-soldiers and privateers who had fought against the Spanish or in the Irish wars. The leaders of the Virginia Company sent men with military background because of the potential threat of conflict with the Spanish and the native Powhatan Indians. Among the non-gentry were a minister and a dozen skilled craftsmen and artisans – a blacksmith, a mason, two bricklayers, four Gravesend, England Employments of Englishmen, Theodor de Bry Virginia Company of London, from 1607: A Nation Takes Root. Jamestown Settlement 3 carpenters, a tailor, a barber and two surgeons. The rest of the company was made up of unskilled workers of various kinds including common seamen, laborers and four boys. Captain Christopher Newport, the expedition’s most experienced mariner, commanded the largest of the three ships, the Susan Constant. Bartholomew Gosnold commanded the Godspeed, and John Ratcliffe captained the smallest ship, the Discovery. Also among the crew was another man who would acquire his own recognition in this new land, Captain John Smith. Smith had earned fame on the battlefields of Europe but feuded constantly with those who were in command on this voyage and arrived at Jamestown having been restrained as a prisoner while on board the Susan Constant. In addition to strong disagreements which bordered on mutiny, the men aboard the three small ships suffered through a terrible storm which caused the mariners to lose their bearings for a few days. On the morning of April 26, they spotted the capes around the entrance to the Chesapeake Bay, a body of salt water fed by the Atlantic Ocean that meets fresh water from four rivers. The English named these rivers the Potomac, Rappahannock, York and James. These tributaries are tidal estuaries with tides being felt 75-100 miles upstream. Before heading to the interior, and ultimately finding the marshrimmed peninsula where they would dock their ships, Captain Newport placed a cross at the entrance of the Bay, establishing Protestant Christianity in the New World, and gave the cape its name, Cape Henry, after the king’s eldest son, Prince Henry. Upon arriving at the Bay, Captain Newport opened the sealed orders from the Virginia Company and read the names of those who would run the colony. The names had been kept secret throughout the voyage, perhaps to reduce strife and jealousy. Edward Maria Wingfield, one of the company’s earliest investors and one of the few investors to make the voyage himself, was elected president. Captain Bartholomew Gosnold and John Ratcliffe were also named to the council, as were George Kendall and John Martin. The earlier imprisoned Captain John Smith was included on the list of councilors. Captain Newport was a councilor for about six weeks which was as long as he stayed in Virginia. These were the men who were to take charge of beginning the formidable task of settlement on the land they were to name “Jamestown” in honor of their king, James I. Because one of the goals of the English voyage was to find a Northwest Passage to Asia, a week after their arrival, several men, including John Smith and Christopher Newport, continued sailing up the James River. They discovered they could not go further when they encountered the fall line where the area we know as the Piedmont begins. Here, the rapids flow over the hard rocks of the Piedmont region, marking the natural end of navigation in the rivers. Though the river did not lead to a great lake as the explorers had hoped, they considered the voyage a great success. They erected a cross carrying the inscription “Jacobus Rex,” which was intended to show that the English now claimed ownership of all the lands along the James River. It was also on this voyage that Newport learned of the existence of the great king, Wahunsonacock, who ruled over the Indians in this area.
Who were the inhabitants of the land around Jamestown and how did they live?

The Powhatan people were tribes or nations of Eastern Woodland Indians who occupied the Coastal Plain or Tidewater region of Virginia, which includes the area east of the fall line and the area we know today as the Eastern Shore. They were sometimes referred to as Algonquians because of the Algonquian language they spoke and because of their common culture. At the time the English arrived in 1607, ancestors of the Powhatan people had been living in eastern Virginia for as long as 16,000 years. The paramount chief of the Powhatan Indians was Wahunsonacock, who ruled over a loose chiefdom of approximately 32 tribes. The English called him “Powhatan.” The tribes had their own chiefs called werowances (male) and werowansquas (female) who lived in separate towns but shared many things in common, such as religious beliefs and cultural traditions. Everyone paid tribute taxes, such as deerskins, shell beads, copper or corn to the local ruler. The local chiefs paid tribute to Powhatan, and they received Powhatan’s protection in return. Succession of political positions was matrilineal, with kinship and inheritance passing through the mother or female line. This was how Powhatan came to his position as paramount chief. The Powhatan people lived on the high ground overlooking the many waterways, their main form of transportation. A Powhatan house was called a yehakin and was made from natural materials found in the surrounding environment. Its framework was made from saplings of native trees such as red maples, locusts and red cedar. Houses were located near the planting fields. The mixed forests provided an abundance of plant and animal life. The Indians hunted and fished, with fish and shellfish in plentiful supply in the local waters. The soil beneath the forest was rich and appealing to those who wished to farm. The climate encountered by the English differed slightly from the climate we know in Virginia today, because in 1607 the northern hemisphere was experiencing a slightly cooler period known as the “Little Ice Age.” Winters were more severe and had fewer frost-free days per year in which to cultivate crops. Even so, there were many plants and roots available for gathering, and rich soil made cultivation of crops possible. The Powhatan lifestyle was heavily dependent upon a seasonal cycle. Their planting, hunting, fishing and gathering followed the rhythm of the seasons. They raised vegetables, such as corn, beans and squash, with corn being the most important. They ate fresh vegetables in the summer and fall, and fish, berries, and stored nuts in the spring. Fishing was a spring and summer activity. When other food resources became low, they could gather oysters and clams. Food was most scarce during late winter through early spring when the stores of dried corn and beans from fall were nearly gone, and berries had not yet ripened. During the winter season when brush cover was sparse, the Powhatan Indians hunted and ate game. There was a lot of game in the area including raccoon, deer, opossum, turkey, squirrel and rabbit, among others. Some of these, such as the opossum and raccoon, were strange and unfamiliar to the English, so they adopted the Powhatan names for them. Of all the game hunted, deer was the most important because it was used for food, clothing and tools. Through the centuries, the Powhatan people had learned to understand their environment and to adapt to it in a way which afforded them the necessities of life. In spite of George Percy’s description of the land during the first few days of exploration as a “veritable paradise on earth,” the English found it difficult to interact with the environment in a productive way.
Who were the Africans who came to Jamestown?

In August 1619, a group of West Central Africans arrived in Virginia aboard White Lion, a privateer vessel. While raiding in the Caribbean the White Lion, along with privateers on another ship, Treasurer, had seized part of a cargo of Africans from a Portuguese slave ship named Sao Jao Bautista bound from the African city of Luanda to Veracruz, Mexico. A short time later the White Lion stopped at Point Comfort, the site of modern-day Hampton, Virginia. Here at least 20 of the captured Africans were sold to officials of the Virginia Company. Treasurer arrived shortly thereafter with more Africans. Who were these Africans? While some probably came from Kongo, most were likely Kimbundu-speaking people from the kingdom of Ndongo in Angola, a heavily-populated area in West Central Africa which included the royal capital, Kabasa. They were likely captives from the 1618-1620 war when Portugal tried to gain complete control of Angola. These first Africans could have been from an urban area and may have been familiar with European languages, trade items, clothing and customs. They may also have been introduced to Christianity, because the Kingdom of Ndongo began to convert to Christianity around 1490, and Portuguese law required all slaves to be baptized before arriving in America. There were many similarities between the societies of Kongo / Angolan and the Powhatan. Women were in charge of raising crops, and men were hunters. Unlike the Powhatan Indians, some men in Kongo/Angola may have had experience tending cattle, goats, chickens and guinea fowl. They also produced iron tools and weapons. The people of Kongo/Angola wove cloth from materials such as tree bark, palm and cotton. This cloth was used for decorative purposes, as well as for clothing. Like English and Powhatan fashions, dress was one way that Africans could communicate status and social role to one another. Whatever similarities may have been found between the cultures, it mattered little to the West Central Africans who found themselves in an unfamiliar country, isolated from their families and friends, forced to work in difficult conditions. They brought with them no more than the clothes they wore and their knowledge, skills and customs. They were probably expected to adopt the English manner of dress to suit their roles and, in all likelihood, had their own traditions ignored or discouraged by those around them. At Point Comfort, these men and women were traded for provisions and became part of the work force at Jamestown. Because tobacco agriculture in Virginia required much labor, the West Central Africans were a useful addition to the colony as they made possible the expansion of the tobacco economy. Though Portuguese slavers had initially taken the Africans from Kongo/Angola, it is not clear whether they were treated as servants or slaves upon their arrival at Jamestown. Whatever their status, it is clear, according to a Virginia Company report in 1620, that they were not completely free. They were in a condition of forced servitude in which the English extracted their labor and demanded their absolute obedience.
Jamestown Geography — Period Images

Engraving by Theodor De Bry
Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation
Jamestown Geography — Period Images

John Smith
Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation
Jamestown Geography — Period Images

Engraving by Theodor De Bry after John White drawing
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