

Colonization and the Revolutionary War Roanoke: The Lost Colony

During the 1580s, the English made several unsuccessful attempts to establish a colony in America. Then, in July 1587, a group of English men and women landed on Roanoke Island off the coast of what is now North Carolina. Their leader was John White. Later that year, White sailed back to England for supplies. But John White was delayed in England. He could not return until 1590. He came back with five ships and more English men and women who wanted to live in the colony.

By the time John White's ships returned, the colony had **vanished**.¹ All of the houses were taken down. The settlers left no trace of their **whereabouts**² – except for one small clue. The word “CROATOAN” was carved into a post of the fort.

John White walked around the **ruins**³, trying to figure it all out. Before he left for England, his daughter had given birth to a baby named Virginia – the first European baby in the New World. What had happened to his daughter and grandchild? He walked **pensively**⁴ along the shore. Before he left he had buried some personal items in a chest in the dirt. Someone had found the chest and taken all of its contents. John White noticed that the colonists' little boats, once used for fishing and exploring, were also gone.

What could Croatoan possibly mean? Croatoan was a nearby island with its own group of Native Americans. What could have happened? Even today, no one knows the answers to these questions. The colony was abandoned and no more English settlers arrived until 1607, when Jamestown was established.

¹ **vanished** – suddenly disappeared

² **whereabouts** – the place where a person or thing is

³ **ruins** – something left after destruction, decay, or downfall

⁴ **pensively** – thoughtfully

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Why did John White leave the colony at Roanoke in 1587?
 - a. He went to investigate Croatoan.
 - b. He returned to England for supplies.
 - c. He left to look for his daughter and granddaughter.
 - d. He went to go found the Jamestown Colony.

2. Why does the author describe things that White found missing at Roanoke?
 - a. to argue that John White had landed in the wrong place
 - b. to describe how terrible the weather was at Roanoke
 - c. to warn the reader against trying to start a colony
 - d. to show how mysteriously the colonists had disappeared

3. Why is Roanoke called the Lost Colony?
 - a. England lost the colony when the settlers declared their independence.
 - b. When John White returned from England, he was unable to find any of the colonists.
 - c. The colonists had suffered a tough winter and had lost many people to disease.
 - d. When John White returned, he found the colonists wandering around lost.

4. Read the following sentences: "But John White was delayed in England. He could not return until 1590."

The word **delayed** means

 - a. arrested and put on trial for a crime
 - b. lost and disappeared without a trace
 - c. forced to do something later than planned
 - d. had a job taken away from him

5. This passage is mostly about
 - a. how Roanoke colonists got along with native people.
 - b. how the colony of Roanoke disappeared.
 - c. why European colonies were started in the Americas.
 - d. the first war between Europeans and Native Americans.

6. What items did John White find missing at Roanoke?

7. The author states that the Roanoke colony was abandoned and no more English settlers arrived until 1607 when the Jamestown colony was established. Why might have English settlers waited a number of years to return to the colony?

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

When John White returned to Roanoke, no trace of the settlement remained, _____ the word “CROATOAN” was carved into a tree.

- a. because
- b. above all
- c. for example
- d. although

9. Read the following sentence.

In July 1587, a group of English people landed on Roanoke Island to try to start a colony.

Answer the questions below based on the information provided in the sentence you just read. One of the questions has already been answered for you.

1. Who? a group of English people
2. What did a group of English people do? _____
3. Where? _____
4. Why? _____

10. **Vocabulary Word:** abandoned: left empty because of not being used or lived in anymore.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: _____

Teacher Guide and Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 740

Featured Text Structure: Descriptive – the writer explains, defines or illustrates a concept or topic

Passage Summary: The passage describes the mystery of Roanoke Island, an English colony in America that vanished. When John White, the leader of the colony, returned after a 3-year absence, he found no trace of the settlement, only the word “Croatoan” carved into a tree.

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6. What items did John White find missing at Roanoke?

Suggested answer: Things that John White found missing at Roanoke were the houses, the boats, and a chest he had buried.

7. The author states that the Roanoke colony was abandoned and no more English settlers arrived until 1607 when the Jamestown colony was established. Why might have English settlers waited a number of years to return to the colony?

Suggested answer: Since the Roanoke colony disappeared mysteriously, the English people might have been scared to try to settle there again soon thereafter.

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Answer the questions below based on the information provided in the sentence you just read. One of the questions has already been answered for you.

1. Who? a group of English people
2. What did a group of English people do? **landed**
3. Where? **on Roanoke Island**
4. Why? **to try to start a colony**

10. **Vocabulary Word:** abandoned: left empty because of not being used or lived in anymore.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.