



Blood on the River: James Town 1607

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Book Description

Samuel Collier, a rough and tough young orphan, becomes the page of Captain John Smith as they head for the New World. Brought up in poor conditions and street-smart, Samuel has to learn to control his anger and to use his head instead of his fists. During the journey on the ship the *Susan Constant*, Samuel begins his lessons in determining right from wrong. Through interactions with other boys his age, as well as key figures such as Captain John Smith, Reverend Hunt, and Master Wingfield, Samuel encounters conflict and discovers ways to avoid it. His first contacts with the native peoples in the Caribbean and in the New World further teach Samuel about different perspectives and about the value of culture. Survival in the new colony tests Samuel as he evaluates these life lessons and learns to make choices using his heart instead of his fists.

Thoroughly researched and historically accurate, *Blood on the River: James Town 1607* captures the time period and the landscape, along with a boy's personal struggles. The book explores the day-to-day lives of the colonists at James Town, Virginia, as well as contemporary themes such as learning how to react to anger and conflict. Further, the descriptions of the Algonquian Indians allow for discussions on perspective and respect. Readers will find that they have experienced what it must have been like to live in James Town in 1607.

About the Guide

This guide provides discussion questions and activities related to the novel and to the study of the early years of the Jamestown Colony in Virginia. It can be useful to teachers of American history and Virginia history, as well as study groups, literature circles, and book clubs. It is intended to provoke thought and discussion on such concepts as change, perspective, perseverance, courage, cooperation, and trust. Themes such as making decisions based on love and not anger, and respecting individual differences in people, are explored. The guide is also aligned with the Virginia Standards of Learning.

Discussion and Activities Guide

(Questions and activities are designed to be used following the reading of the given chapter(s).)

Chapter One

Discussion:

1. Discuss the prophecy that begins the chapter. What is a prophecy? Do you think the prophecy will turn out to be accurate?
2. Why is the locket so important to the boy?
3. Who do you think the locket belongs to? Why?

Chapter Two

Discussion:

1. Each chapter opens with a quotation from a primary source. Discuss the value of primary sources in learning about history. Discuss the fact that journals are written from the perspective of individuals. Might another person write something different about the same event? Do you think journals and diaries are important for people to keep today?
2. In this chapter Reverend Hunt speaks about making decisions based on love, not on anger. Anger is a problem for Samuel. He is angry "with the world." What do you know about him so far that would explain why he is so angry? Can someone so angry follow Reverend Hunt's message

to "make decisions based on love when there is no one left to love?" (p. 7)

Activities:

1) Make a Who, What, Where, When, Why chart or web for the settlement at Jamestown.

- Who financed it? *The Virginia Company of London financed the settlement.*
- What was Jamestown? *It became the first permanent English settlement in North America.*
- Where did they build the settlement? *A narrow peninsula by the James River. It was chosen because it could be easily defended from attack by sea, the water was deep enough for ships to dock, and the settlers thought there was a good water supply.*
- When? *May of 1607*
- Why? *As an economic venture for the Virginia Company of London. The colonists were to find silver and gold, find new resources to send back to England, locate a water route to the Orient, open new markets for trade, and convert the natives to Christianity*

2) Begin an individual, small group, or classroom list, in order, of the historical events in the novel. Keep adding to this list as students read through the book. Students may write news articles about some of these events.

Chapter Three

Discussion:

1. On page 17, Samuel reveals his philosophy: "Trust no one." What circumstances led him to have that philosophy? Why would that philosophy be important in the poorhouse, on the streets, or in an orphanage? Do you think it is a good philosophy?
2. Reread the last paragraph on page 18. How do you think "power" can be more damaging than fists?

Chapters Four and Five

Activities:

- 1) Study currents and trade winds and how the ships followed them.
- 2) The boys hear the sailors telling stories about the Indians they expect to encounter in the New World. These stories focus on the aspects of Native American culture that are very strange to the English. In small groups, have students write descriptions or stories about themselves as sailors from a foreign culture—or even another planet—might see them. Discuss whether or not these “sailor stories” give a clear picture of what a person or group of people is really like.

Chapter Six

Discussion:

1. The story of the whale is used by John Smith as a metaphor concerning Master Wingfield. Should there be “bigger fish” in the sea of people?
2. How do the students feel about discriminating between “lower born” and “higher class” people? Should people be treated as equal to one another? Do students think that distinctions like “lower born” and “higher class” still exist in our society today?

Chapters Seven and Eight

Discussion:

1. On pages 54-56, Samuel gets into a fight and Captain Smith disciplines him. Explain the discipline and discuss whether or not you think it was effective.
2. Cooperation is something Samuel needs to learn about. What happened after the fight to make Samuel realize that cooperation is needed in order to survive?
3. A major theme in the novel is presented on page 58 when Captain Smith says, “Don’t let your anger get the best of you, Samuel. . . . Learn to channel it, and it will become your strength rather than your weakness.” Have the students look for examples of how this lesson worked or could have worked as you continue to read the book.

Activities:

1) Begin a character web of Samuel that follows the book chapter by chapter, to show changes in him.

Chapter Nine**Discussion:**

1. On pages 71 and 72, the colonists trade glass beads and copper for food. Discuss how different people's perspective—their worldview, shaped by their upbringing, culture, etc.—affects the value of different things to them. How does where we come from and who we are affect the value we place on things and/or people and relationships?

Chapters Ten and Eleven**Discussion:**

1. Why do you think the Indians attacked the colonists at this time? Are the colonists invading the Powhatans' land? (You may use a Cause and Effect chain if desired.) What effect did the Indians' raid have on the colonists?
2. On pages 81 and 82, Samuel is very upset and feels guilty over James's death. Could he have done anything differently?
3. How has Samuel changed since the beginning of the book?

Activities:

1) Construct a model of the fort described on page 84. This can be done in small groups or as a class project. Students should brainstorm about what materials to use (Popsicle sticks? Clay? Cardboard? Twigs?) and work together to build it. Emphasize how it is important for *all* people to participate in the building. See chapter fourteen activities for Part 2 of this activity.

Chapter Twelve**Discussion:**

1. Captain Smith recommends that Samuel learn the Algonquian language. He explains that, "I want you to learn these words. They will be better protection than any weapon." (p. 89) Explain how it is that words for communication can be better protection than weapons.
2. Reverend Hunt continues to implore Samuel to use his heart in making decisions. On page 96, he advises Samuel that if he makes a choice out of love, then it will be the right choice. What is the choice that Samuel has to make? How can his decision be made out of love?
3. What would you do in Samuel's predicament?

Chapter Thirteen

Discussion:

1. It turns out that not all of the Powhatan Indian tribes were involved in the large-scale attack that occurred in chapter ten. Some of the tribes were friendly to the colonists, and others were hostile. Who were the friendly tribes, and why were they friendly? Who were the hostile tribes, and why were they hostile?

Activities:

- 1) Research the Indian tribes listed on page 103. Place them on a map.
- 2) Have a barter day. Have student groups decide what to bring to trade with other students. Discuss or write about the results. Who traded for and got what they wanted? What persuasive skills are needed to trade like this?

Chapter Fourteen

Discussion:

1. Discuss attributes that make John Smith a good leader. Discuss his negative characteristics as well. List other "leaders" the students know and analyze good/bad attributes of each.

Activities:

- 1) Using reference materials, show the route from England to China and India and where the Ottoman Turks were located on a map. Captain Smith thought that by starting at the Chickahominy River, he might discover a

water route to India and China from Jamestown, traveling west. Locate the Chickahominy River on a map and decide if Captain Smith's idea was valid or not.

2) Part 2 of fort activity from chapters ten and eleven: Make houses for your model fort out of wattle and daub. Some suggested materials for students to use: Popsicle sticks, twigs, clay, straw. Information on old-fashioned wattle and daub follows:

"Daub and wattle are building materials used in constructing houses. A woven latticework of wooden stakes called wattles is daubed with a mixture of mud and clay, animal dung and straw to create a structure. It is normally whitewashed to increase its resistance to rain. Examples of buildings which use wattle and daub can still be found in many parts of the world. In half-timbered buildings, the wattle and daub is contained between wooden beams. This usually gives the building a black and white appearance when the daub is whitewashed, or black and brown if it is not."



Exposed wattles

From:

Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, "Wattle and daub,"

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/wattle_and_daub (accessed February 26, 2006).



"Inside the triangular wooden palisade of James Fort, wattle-and-daub structures topped with thatched roofs depict dwellings and a church, guardhouse, storehouse and governor's house during the period 1610-1614."

From:

Jamestown Settlement and Yorktown Victory Center, "James Fort,"

<http://www.historyisfun.org/jamestown/jamestownfort.cfm> (accessed February 26, 2006).

Chapters Fifteen and Sixteen

Discussion:

1. These chapters are full of historical information. We learn of the gentlemen's plan to leave the colony, John Smith's experience with the Powhatans, the offer of cannons to the Indians, the arrest of John Smith, and the arrival of a new ship. Discuss each of these events. Be sure to include them in the students' list of historical events.
2. At the end of chapter fifteen, Samuel can no longer contain his anger. Do you think Samuel was right or wrong to throw the rock at Master Archer? How did you feel when he hurled the rock?

Chapter Seventeen

Discussion:

1. In this chapter the boys meet Pocahontas. Many of the students have probably seen movies about Pocahontas before. Make a list of characteristics of the historical Pocahontas, as depicted in this chapter, taken from the original records: How old is she? What is her real name? How does she wear her hair? What clothing does she wear? What is her relationship to Captain Smith? How does this compare to the fictional Pocahontas of the movies?

Chapter Eighteen

Discussion:

1. Discuss some of the new things Samuel is experiencing as a result of having Namontack coming to live with the colonists.
2. Samuel is shocked to discover that Captain Smith's brush with death at the hands of the Powhatans was actually just a dramatic ritual. In the Author's Note, the author explains that historians still debate about whether or not Pocahontas saved Captain Smith's life, or if the event happened at all (pages 229-230). What is the difference between a historical myth and a historical fact? Can students think of other examples of myths in American history? What does this example demonstrate about history's ability to change based on newly discovered knowledge?
3. The Powhatans look at Captain Smith as being one of them now. This has caused Chief Powhatan to take care of the colonists because he considers them one of his tribes. Samuel believes this is a good thing but is worried about what the gentlemen will think if they find out that Chief Powhatan is treating them as one of his tribes. Why is Samuel concerned about this?
4. Namontack sails with those returning to England. Discuss the new things he will see. Coming from a different cultural perspective, what might he think of England?
5. The colonists decide to make John Smith the new president. What qualifications for the job did Captain Smith have?

Activities:

- 1) On page 137, the colonists begin construction of the new fort. Locate pictures of this new, five-sided fort by using the Jamestown Web sites included in the references.
- 2) What diseases could the "summer sickness" have been? Research possible "summer sicknesses" such as diseases borne by different insects (mosquitoes, flies, ticks, etc.).

3) Have the students write a want ad or a job description for either the job as president of James Town, or president of the class.

Chapter Nineteen

Discussion:

1. What do you think of the decree, "He that will not work shall not eat"? What if this was the law in our classroom?
2. Discuss Smith's leadership style of not asking others to do what he is not willing to do himself. Is this good or bad?
3. Two women arrive in the colony. What year is this? Discuss the pros and cons of having women in the colony.
4. Excited that Namontack now speaks English, Reverend Hunt begins to teach him about Christianity. Namontack then shares information about his faith. Make a Venn diagram comparing the two faiths.
5. How is the colony planning to try to make a profit now for the Virginia Company?
6. How do you think Powhatan will feel about being a prince under King James?
7. Discuss the idea of perspective here, based on page 150: "If the thought of being Chief Powhatan's subjects would be distasteful to the gentlemen, then I imagine that becoming subjects of King James would be just as distasteful to the Powhatan people."

Activities:

- 1) Find maps online that Smith drew and compare them with current maps of the area.
- 2) Research glassmaking and/or research tar and pitch. Create a poster of your findings.

Chapter Twenty

Discussion:

1. Compare and contrast housing at the fort and at Werowocomoco. (The Jamestown Settlement Web site has pictures of both.)
2. Do you think King James was honoring Powhatan by making him a prince, or was he trying to gain power over him?
3. Describe the "New World masquerade" that Samuel witnessed.
4. Which place would you rather live, in Namontack's village or James Town? Discuss the positives and negatives of each.
5. How has Samuel changed his mind about how he feels about the natives? Why has he changed? How have the natives treated him?

Chapter Twenty-One

Discussion:

1. Reverend Hunt has another conversation with Samuel about making right decisions. Do you believe it is true that you will always know the right decision when you choose from love? Give examples of how this may or may not be true.
2. On pages 171-172, Samuel says to Reverend Hunt, "Thank you for treating me like I was worth something." What does Samuel mean by this? What difference did Reverend Hunt make in Samuel's life? How might Samuel have been different without his influence?

Chapter Twenty-Two

Discussion:

1. Life in the Warraskoyack village is very different from life in James Town, and yet in some ways they are similar. Compare and contrast the different parts of each culture (for example: government, economics, recreation, specialization (jobs), customs, religion, etc.)
2. How has Samuel changed by the time Richard, Nathaniel, Henry, Abram, and the others come to the Warraskoyack village?

Chapter Twenty-Three

Discussion:

1. On p. 189, Samuel understands what Captain Smith meant by "power is like weights in a balance, and when someone gains power someone else loses power." Ask the students for examples of this in their lives—in their friendships, in the world, etc.
2. After reading chapter 23, return to Chief Powhatan's words, as quoted at the top of page 186. Discuss the elements of this rich quotation, i.e., taking by force what "you may quickly have by love," destroying people who provide you with food, wronging your friends, etc.

Chapter Twenty-Four

Discussion:

1. When Captain Smith leaves, Samuel recalls another lesson he learned from Reverend Hunt: "When I lose someone, I should not close my heart to everyone, but should find someone else to fill the empty place." Ask the students if they have ever lost a pet or someone close to them. Could Reverend Hunt's words help?

Activities:

Choose one of the following persuasive writing exercises:

- 1) Pretend you are Chief Powhatan. Write a paragraph persuading John Smith to abandon James Town and take the colonists back to England.
- 2) Pretend you are John Smith. Write a paragraph persuading Chief Powhatan to help the colonists survive while you are away seeking medical attention in England.

Chapter Twenty-Five

Discussion:

1. Captain Smith gives Samuel several gifts before he leaves. Discuss the tangible gift of the beads as well as the intangible gifts of the things that Samuel has learned from Captain Smith.
2. Should Samuel take baby Virginia? Do you think this is a good idea or a bad idea? Would it be an action taken out of love?

Activities:

- 1) On a map, find Point Comfort, which is where Fort Algernon was located.

Chapter Twenty-Six through the Afterword**Discussion:**

1. When the new settlers arrived, what did some of them do to the Indians? How did this cause problems for the whole colony over the next several months? What could the colonists have done differently that might have saved them from the "Starving Time"?

Activities:

- 1) We know that Samuel Collier lived, but there are missing years in his life that this book does not cover. Write about him to continue his story, imagining what might have happened to him.
- 2) Complete the list of historical events that was begun earlier, bringing it up to date through the events covered in the Afterword.

After the Book**Discussion:**

1. See how many examples you can come up with of things that are part of our American culture today that originated in ancient Powhatan culture (examples: moccasins, the word "raccoon," hominy grits, etc.). As a class, make a list of as many examples as you can think of.

Activities:

- 1) Jamestown Journals—Have the students create Jamestown Journals using the following assignment:

Imagine that you are either one of the James Town settlers or one of the Powhatan Indians. Using the list of historical events, which the class has generated (see Activities, #2, Chapter 2), choose at least ten of these significant events and write your own account of what happened. Write in the first person as if you were keeping a journal.

- 2) The Powhatan Indians—Research and writing activity:

The Powhatan Indians inhabited a large portion of the Tidewater Region. Throughout the many years of living near the coast, these Native Americans

managed to be successful hunters and farmers. Men, women, and children each played important roles in their tribe. Their culture is one of great importance. Have students choose one aspect of Powhatan daily life to research, including (but not limited to) transportation, food, language, clothing, hairstyles, and recreation. Have students create reports, acrostic poems, or another type of writing to share what they have discovered in their research. The assignment could include illustrating their work with pictures—hand-drawn, printed from the Internet, or photocopied from a book or article.

3) Debate

Divide students into two groups: Captain Smith's supporters and Captain Smith's enemies. Have each group prepare arguments defending or challenging Captain Smith's ideas and practices to be used in the debate.

Web sites of interest:

<http://www.apva.org/jr.html> Jamestown Rediscovery

<http://www.historyisfun.org/> Jamestown Settlement and Yorktown Victory Center

<http://virginiaindians.pwnet.org/> Virginia's First People

<http://www.virtualjamestown.org/page2.html> Virtual Jamestown

<http://www.historyglobe.com/jamestown/> The Jamestown Online Adventure

To find out more about *Blood on the River: James Town 1607*, or the book's author, Elisa Carbone, visit the author's Web site at www.elisacarbhone.com

About the author of this study guide:

Jan Jones grew up in Alexandria, Virginia. Being a native Virginian, Mrs. Jones spent her school years learning about the Commonwealth's history. She received a degree in Early Childhood Education from George Mason University and a Master's in Gifted Education from the University of Virginia. Mrs. Jones has been a teacher in schools throughout Virginia,

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