Exploration of Virginia Primary Sources

Standards: 4.7, 8.1

**Richard Hakluyt to Sir Walter Raleigh, 1584**

*[Note: Richard Hakluyt the Younger, a Protestant minister, published several books to*

*encourage the establishment of English colonies in America. He collected different eyewitness accounts of explorations to America for his book, Voyages to the New World. The book became so popular that it has been said that no English ship traveled to America in the 1600s without a copy of Hakluyt’s Voyages. The following report from Voyages tells of the riches to be had in America and the friendly people who lived there (in and around Roanoke).]*

“The Indians entertained us with love and kindness. They gave us many gifts which is their custom. We found the people to be most gentle, loving, and faithful. They were not sneaky or in any way disloyal to us. The land is rich and produces an abundance of crops without any work like the Garden of Eden. The people are only interested in defending themselves from the cold during their short winter and to feed themselves. . .”

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Richard Hakluyt, “A Discourse on Western Planting,” 1584**

“All the commodities of all our old decayed and dangerous trades in all Europe, Africa, and Asia . . .may in short space [count] for little or nothing [compared with]...that part of America which lieth between 30 and 60 degrees of northerly latitude, if by our slackness we suffer not the French or others to prevent us. . . .

For all the statutes that hitherto can be devised, and the sharp execution of the same in punishing idle and lazy persons, for want of sufficient occasion of honest employments, cannot deliver our commonwealth from multitudes of loiterers and idle vagabonds. Truth it is that through our long peace and seldom sickness (two singular blessings of Almighty God) we are grown more populous than ever heretofore; so that now there are...so many, that they can hardly live one by another, nay rather they are ready to eat up one another; yea many thousands of idle persons are within this realm, which having no way to be set on work, be either mutinous and seek alteration in the state, or at least very burdensome to the commonwealth and often fall to pilfering and thieving and other lewdness, whereby all the prisons of the land are daily pestered and stuffed full of them, where either they pitifully pine away or else at length are miserably hanged, even 20 at a clap out of some jail. Whereas if this voyage [to the New World] were put in execution, these petty thieves might be condemned for certain years in the western parts, especially in Newfoundland, in sawing and felling of timber and masts of ships, and deal boards; in burning of the firs and pine trees to make pitch, tar, rosin, and soap ashes; in beating and working of hemp for cordage; and, in the more southern parts, in setting them to work in mines of gold, silver, copper, lead, and iron; in dragging for pearls and coral; in planting of sugar canes, as the Portingales [Portuguese] have done in Madeira; in maintenance and increasing of silk worms for silk, and in dressing the same; in gathering of cotton whereof there is plenty; in tilling of the soil there for grain; in dressing of vines whereof there is great abundance for wine; olives, whereof the soil is capable, for oil; trees for oranges, lemons, almonds, figs, and other fruits, all which are found to grow there already;...in building of forts, towns, churches; in powdering and barrelling of fish, fowls, and flesh, which will be notable provision for sea and land; in drying, sorting, and packing of features, where of may be had there marvelous great quantity. . . .

In sum, this enterprise will minister matter for all sorts and states of men to work upon; namely, all several kinds of artificers, husbandmen, seamen, merchants, soldiers, captains, physicians, lawyers, divines, cosmographers, hydrographers, astronomers, historiographers; yea, old folks, lame persons, women, and young children, by many means...shall be kept from idleness, and be made able by their own honest and easy labour to find themselves without surcharging others.”

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Ralph Lane to Richard Hakluyt, 1585**

*[Note: The following is from a letter from Ralph Lane of the Roanoke colony to Richard Hakluyt. The letter was written in September 1585 shortly after the colony was first settled.]*

“…it is the best and most pleasing territory of the world; for the continent is so large that it is of unknown greatness. It is very well populated and has towns. The climate so good that not one person became sick since we landed here. To conclude, if Virginia only had horses and a reasonable supply of cattle, and was settled by the English there would be no country in the Christian world that could compare to it.”

Questions

1. If you were aware of these reports from the exploration of Virginia, would you be willing to settle there? Why or why not?

2. How fertile is the land? Could you grow enough food to feed people who would settle there?

3. What do the reports tell about the Indians who live in the area?

4. Could you depend on the Indians for help if you settled at Roanoke?