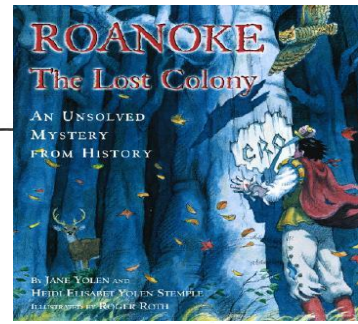


LESSON 7 What Happened to Roanoke?



Q This problem is about the lost colony of Roanoke. Your job is to figure out, like a historical detective, what might have happened to the lost colony. Begin by listing reasons that a colony in America in the 1500s might fail and disappear.

CROATOAN



CRO

Background Information

More than twenty years before the first Englishmen landed in Jamestown—and more than thirty years before the Pilgrims settled in Plymouth—groups of colonists tried three times to found a permanent English colony at Roanoke Island, off the coast of present-day North Carolina (see the map on page 31).

In 1585 the first colony on Roanoke was established by 108 men, but many died and the rest were taken back to England by Sir Francis Drake in 1586.

The month after these colonists had left, a relief ship filled with supplies for Roanoke arrived at the island. The ship returned to England, but left seventeen men on the island to protect England's claim to North America.

In July of 1587 John White led 117 colonists in the third attempt to establish a permanent colony. When these colonists landed at Roanoke, they found no trace of the seventeen men who had been left there the previous year.

These colonists soon realized that they would need more supplies, and it was too late in the year to plant crops. They voted to send their governor, John White, to England to get supplies. White sailed to England but could not return

to the colony because England was in a naval war with Spain at the time. (The Spanish Armada fought the British in 1588.) He did not return to Roanoke until August 1590—three years after he had left. White found no colonists on the island, although he did find the remains of houses, broken pieces of armor, iron bars, and some heavier things, along with some grasses and rotten trees burning in a fire pit.

Before the governor left Roanoke in 1587, he and the colonists had agreed on a way to leave messages. If the colonists had to leave the island, they would carve on a tree the name of the place they had gone. If there was danger, they would carve a cross above the name. In 1590 White found CROATOAN carved on one tree and CRO on another. No cross was carved on either tree. Croatoan was the name of a nearby island (see map) and also of a group of Indians.

Unfortunately, the anchors on Governor White's ship had been lost during a storm, and he could not stop at Croatoan Island before returning to England. He was never to return to Croatoan or Roanoke to find his family or the rest of the colonists.

[Continued on next page.]

[Continued from previous page.]

Relevant Information About Roanoke

1. Croatoan Indians were friendly with the Roanoke colonists when John White was there in 1587.
2. William Strachey, secretary of the Jamestown colony, wrote in *Historie of Travell into Virginia Britania* (around 1608–1609) that the King of England knew “that the men, women and children of the first plantation [colony] at Roanoke were by practice and commandment of Powhatan [chief of the Powhatan Indians of the Chesapeake Bay area, about 80 miles north of Roanoke] miserably slaughtered without any offence given him.”
3. The Spanish have no record of attacking Roanoke Island before 1590. Spanish soldiers did land at Roanoke Island sometime in late 1590, after John White had returned to England for the second time, and found no colonists there.
4. In 1605 a group of English ships was captured by the Spanish off the coast of South Carolina. Instructions for the voyage, written in England in 1604, directed the ships to stop at Croatoan Island, where Englishmen were supposedly settled.
5. Samuel Purchas wrote in 1625 in *Hakluytus Posthumus*, “Powhatan confessed that he had been at the murder of that colony and showed to Captain Smith a musket barrel and a bronze mortar and certain pieces of iron which had been theirs.”
6. In 1603 Sir Walter Raleigh employed men in two ships to sail to the Chesapeake Bay to look for the Lost Colony of Roanoke.
7. In 1719 white hunters said they found Indians called the Croatoan tribe in Robeson County, North Carolina, about 200 miles from Roanoke Island. These Indians were light skinned, had blue eyes, spoke the type of English that had been spoken in England in the late 1500s, and had some of the same family names as those of the Roanoke colonists.
8. The area around Roanoke Island is very dangerous for sailing. It is known as “the graveyard of the Atlantic.”
9. When exploring the area in 1585, some Roanoke colonists met Chesapeake Indians. These colonists reported that they stayed at the Skicoac Village and that the Indians were friendly with them.
10. The Roanoke colonists discussed with John White the possibility of moving inland while he was gone. They said they would divide, leaving a person (or a group, it is unclear which) on Roanoke Island to meet him upon his return.
11. The Roanoke colonists had one regular-sized ship, called a *pinnace*, with them. A ship of this type could not have held all the colonists with their supplies and equipment.

[Continued on next page.]

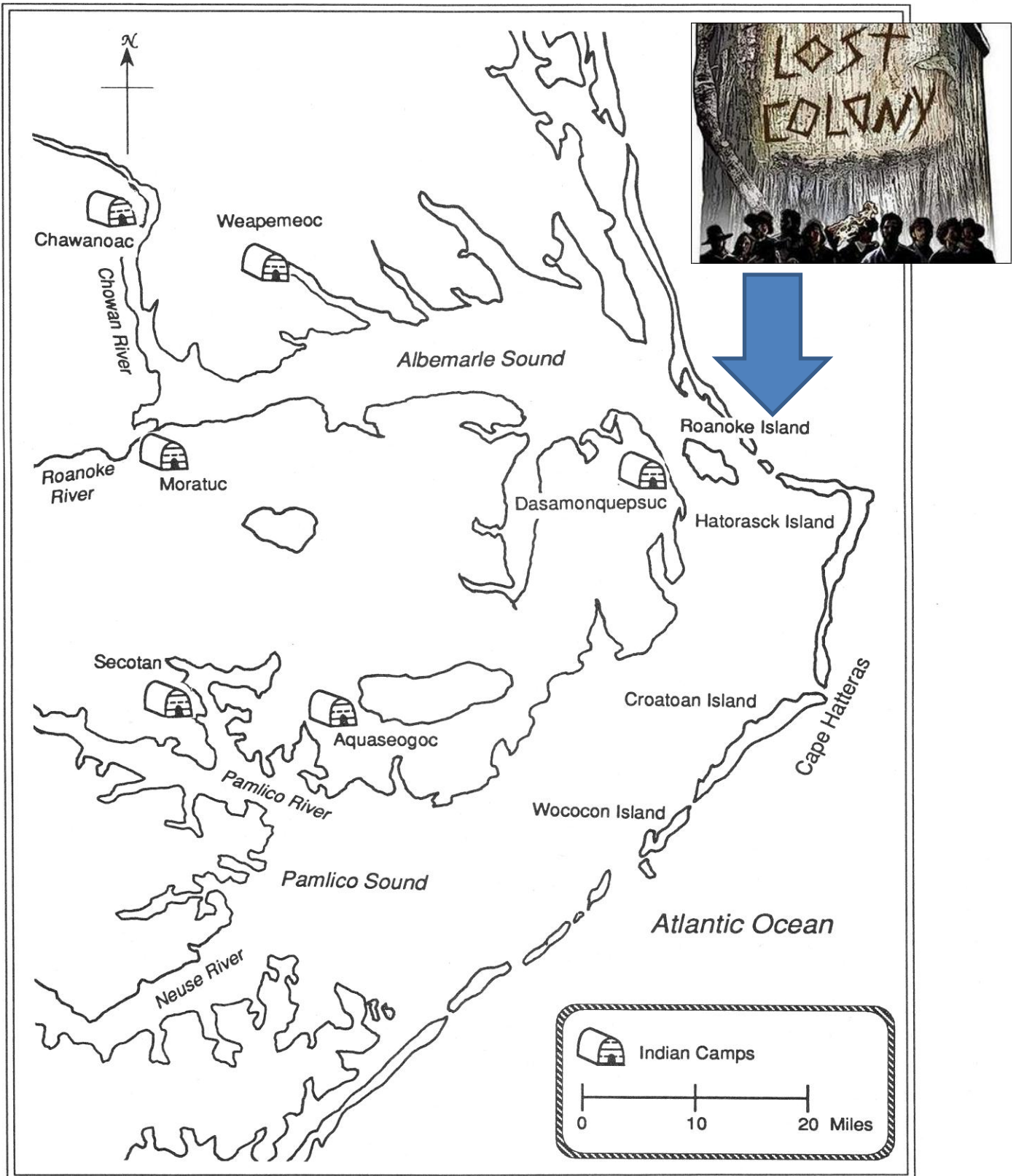


Figure 1, Map of Roanoke Region in the 1500s

[Continued on next page.]

[Continued on next page.]