

Name _____

Date _____

Founding Jamestown

Life was very hard in early Jamestown. John Smith, one of the town's settlers, described it as a "miserie, a ruin, a death, a hell."

Some of the problems they faced were natural, some were caused by their own inexperience, and some were caused by the poor relations with the local Indians.

Very few people survived its hardships. By the spring of 1610, just three years after Jamestown had been founded, only sixty people remained alive of the 574 settlers that had come there. These sixty people nearly abandoned the colony.

Why did Jamestown nearly fail? Many theories have been advanced as to the causes of the Failure. These theories have been based on eyewitness statements. Read the statements below, then answer the questions that follow.



In Their Words

"The colonists found fair meadows and goodly tall trees with . . . fresh waters running through the woods."

"Much of the land was swampy, and there were swarms of mosquitos . . . that carried deadly malaria."

"The ships sailed from London on December 20, 1606 . . . contrary winds slowed their progress. . . . The voyage took three months."

"As at this time were most of our chief men either sick or discontented, the rest being in such despair, as they would rather starve and rot with idleness, than be persuaded to do any thing in their own relief. . . ."

" . . . Our drink was cold water taken out of the River, which was very salty, and at a low tide full of slime and filth, which was the destruction of many of our men."

"The Virginia Charter declared that colonists would have the same rights and privileges that English people had in England."

"The Jamestown settlers ignored the basic rules for survival: they did not plan, plough or build." ■

Distinguishing Relevant Information

1. According to the statements given, which best explains why Jamestown nearly failed?

2. What were some of the attitudes of the Jamestown settlers that made it particularly difficult for them to survive?

3. How does John Smith describe the conditions of early Jamestown?

4. What conditions in early Jamestown led to the colonists becoming sick?

Developing a Hypothesis

5. Based upon your knowledge of the Jamestown settlers' difficulties, what would be your most pressing priorities in order to succeed in establishing a new colony?
