

The “Lost Colony at Roanoke” was a settlement of 117 men, women and children that landed on Roanoke Island in 1587. It was the first English colony in the New World. The colony was funded by Sir Walter Raleigh and led by his friend John White. Raleigh had received a charter from Queen Elizabeth I. The main purpose of the expedition was to find riches in the New World. A secondary purpose of the colony was to establish a base for which the queen’s privateers could attack Spanish treasure galleons. The colonists who settled Roanoke may have first believed their settlement was to be established on the Chesapeake Bay to the north.

Soon after arrival, the first English child in the New World was born, White’s granddaughter, Virginia Dare. It quickly became apparent, however, that the colony needed additional supplies to survive. The settlers convinced John White to return to England to garner the necessary supplies. White, however, was unable to return to the island because of the onset of the Anglo-Spanish War in 1588. Because of the war, White could not procure a ship as all were being used in the war.

White was finally able to return to the colony on August 18, 1590, aboard a privateering vessel. This date also happened to be the third birthday of his granddaughter, Virginia Dare. White was astonished to find the island completely deserted. There was no sign of any of the settlers, nor was there evidence of any fight or struggle. The only clue was the word “Croatoan” carved into a nearby post. All fortifications were dismantled, rather than destroyed, which suggested a departure may have been planned by the settlers.

There are several theories regarding the disappearance of the settlers. One of the leading theories is that the Roanoke settlers integrated with one of the local native groups to ensure their survival. We do know that the colonists arrived at Roanoke Island during one of the greatest droughts the region had ever experienced. This would have made it very difficult to grow crops or find drinking water. Others believe the colonists may have been killed by the Spanish, or, by other native groups. The Algonquin chief Powhatan, father of Pocahontas, claimed to have killed the Roanoke settlers.

The mystery of the Roanoke Island settlement lives on today. Scientists will probably never know what fate befell those settlers, but do know the failure of the colony led the English to establish the Jamestown Colony, the first permanent, successful English settlement in the New World, in 1607.

- 1. Which of the following could describe the purpose of the Roanoke Colony?**
 - A. Primarily to find riches but also to spread religion

- B. Primarily to set up a base for privateering but also to find riches
- C. Primarily to spread religion but also to find riches
- D. Primarily to find riches but also to set up a base for privateering

2. Who was Sir Walter Raleigh?

- A. The man who paid for the Roanoke settlement
- B. The man who led the Roanoke settlement
- C. One of the settlers of Roanoke
- D. The man who gave the charter to the settlers of Roanoke

3. Why did John White leave the Roanoke Colony?

- A. He was sick and needed to get back to England
- B. There was a war going on between England and France
- C. He needed to pick up more settlers to bring to Roanoke
- D. He needed to pick up more supplies from England

4. What was the effect of the Anglo-Spanish war on the Roanoke settlers?

- A. Life became very dangerous at Roanoke
- B. Roanoke settlers could not get supplies they needed
- C. The colony fell apart and the settlers integrated with native groups
- D. John White left for England in 1587

5. Which is NOT true about the settlement at Roanoke?

- A. It was the site of the first English child born in the New World
- B. The region was enduring one of the worst droughts in its history
- C. The colonists believed they would be landing near the Chesapeake Bay
- D. When John White returned, he saw the fortifications were destroyed

6. What could be a synonym for “procure” in the following sentence?

Because of the war, White could not procure a ship as all were being used in the war.

- A. Obtain
- B. Sell
- C. Require
- D. Barter

7. Which of the following is a theory?

- A. The word Croatoan was carved into a nearby post on Roanoke Island
- B. The fortifications at Roanoke were dismantled rather than destroyed
- C. John White returned to Roanoke on his granddaughter’s third birthday
- D. The Colonists integrated with local native groups to ensure their survival