

**America's Early Colonies**  
**John Smith & Jamestown, Va.**

*Grade 7*

In this lesson, students will read a letter that Captain John Smith of the English Army wrote to Queen Anne in 1616. He wrote this letter about his encounters with the Algonquin Indians of Virginia.

The featured activity focuses on academic vocabulary from the second paragraph, highlighted in the student glossary below.

**STANDARDS AND OBJECTIVES**

This list highlights the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts featured in this lesson, as well as a lesson objective and a version of the objective written in student-friendly language.

**Reading (Literature)**

**Standard:** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text. (RL.7.2)

**Lesson Objective:** Students will determine the central theme of the excerpts and will be able to provide supporting details from the text.

**Student Objective:** I will determine, or find out the central idea of the text. I will find details (pieces of information) in the text that support the central idea.

**Speaking & Listening**

**Standard:** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly. (SL.7.1)

**Lesson Objective:** Students will discuss the text in pairs, and with the whole class, building on others' ideas.

**Student Objective:** I will be able to discuss the text with a partner, with a small group, and with the whole class. I will express my own ideas clearly, I will listen to what others say, and I will build on their ideas.

**Language**

**Standard:** Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases. (L.7.6)

**Lesson Objective:** Students will acquire and use accurately words that are key to understanding the text.

**Student Objective:** I will acquire, or learn and use new words from the text.

## COMPLETE TEXT

### *Letter to Queen Anne by John Smith (1616)*

Most admired Queen,

The love I bear my God, my King and country, hath so oft emboldened me in the worst of extreme dangers, that now honesty doth constrain me to presume thus far beyond myself, to present your Majesty this short discourse...

So it is, that some ten years ago being in Virginia, and taken prisoner by the power of Powhatan their chief King, I received from this great Salvage exceeding great courtesy, I being the first Christian this proud King and his grim attendants ever saw. Especially from his son Nantaquaus, the most manliest, boldest spirit I ever saw in a Salvage, and his sister Pocahontas, the Kings most dear and well-beloved daughter, being but a child of twelve or thirteen years of age, whose compassionate pitiful heart gave me much cause to respect her. Thus enthralled in their barbarous power, I cannot say I felt the least occasion of want that was in the power of those my mortal foes to prevent, notwithstanding all their threats.

After some six weeks fattening amongst those Salvage courtiers, at the minute of my execution, she hazarded the beating out of her own brains to save mine; and not only that, but so prevailed with her father, that I was safely conducted to Jamestown. I found about eight and thirty miserable poor and sick creatures, to keep possession of all those large territories of Virginia; such was the weakness of this poor commonwealth, had the salvages not fed us, we directly would have starved. And this relief, most gracious Queen, was commonly brought us by this Lady Pocahontas.

When inconstant fortune turned our peace to war, this tender virgin would still not spare to dare to visit us, and by her our jars have been oft appeased, and our wants still supplied. Were it the policy of her father thus to employ her, or the ordinance of God thus to make her his instrument, or her extraordinary affection to our nation, I know not. But of this I am sure; when her father with the utmost of his policy and power, sought to surprise me, having but eighteen with me, the dark night could not affright her from coming through the irksome woods, and with watered eyes gave me intelligence, with her best advice to escape his fury. Had he known, he had surely slain her...

At last rejecting her barbarous condition, she was married to an English Gentleman, with whom at this present she is in England; the first Christian ever of that Nation, the first Virginian ever spoke English, or had a child in marriage by an Englishman...

And so I humbly kiss your gracious hands,  
Captain John Smith, 1616

## TEXT EXCERPT: PARAGRAPH 2

So it is, that some ten years ago being in Virginia, and taken **prisoner** by the power of Powhatan their chief King, I **received** from this great **Salvage exceeding** great **courtesy**, I being the first Christian this proud King and his **grim attendants** ever saw. Especially from his son Nantaquaus, the most manliest, boldest spirit I ever saw in a Savage, and his sister Pocahontas, the Kings most dear and well-beloved daughter, being but a child of twelve or thirteen years of age, whose **compassionate pitiful** heart gave me much cause to respect her. Thus **enthralled** in their **barbarous** power, I cannot say I felt the least **occasion** of want that was in the power of those my **mortal foes** to prevent, **notwithstanding** all their threats.

prisoner- someone held in prison

received- to get or be awarded

salvage- a beastly creature

exceeding- more than adequate/enough

courtesy- a nice gesture

grim- not looking good, a small chance that things will go well

attendants- people whom show up for an event

compassionate- nice, caring, etc.

pitiful- pathetic, sad, etc.

enthralled- excited, elated, etc.

barbarous- beastly, animal-like

occasion- an event

mortal- deadly

foes- an enemy

notwithstanding- not lasting

## ACQUIRING AND USING VOCABULARY

The following student glossary featuring words from the above paragraph can be used to help preview, teach, and review vocabulary words. In addition, students can write their own sample sentences using these words to check comprehension.

Word	Definition	Example from Text	Picture or Phrase
<i>exceeding</i>	more than adequate/enough		
<i>courtesy</i>	a nice gesture		
<i>grim</i>	not looking good, a small chance that things will go well		
<i>attendants</i>	people whom show up for an event		
<i>compassionate</i>	nice, caring, etc.		
<i>pitiful</i>	pathetic, sad, etc.		
<i>enthralled</i>	excited, elated, etc.		
<i>barbarous</i>	beastly, animal-like		
<i>occasion</i>	an event		
<i>mortal foes</i>	an enemy		
<i>notwithstanding</i>	not lasting		