

# 3 Cultures at Jamestown Pre-Visit Activity

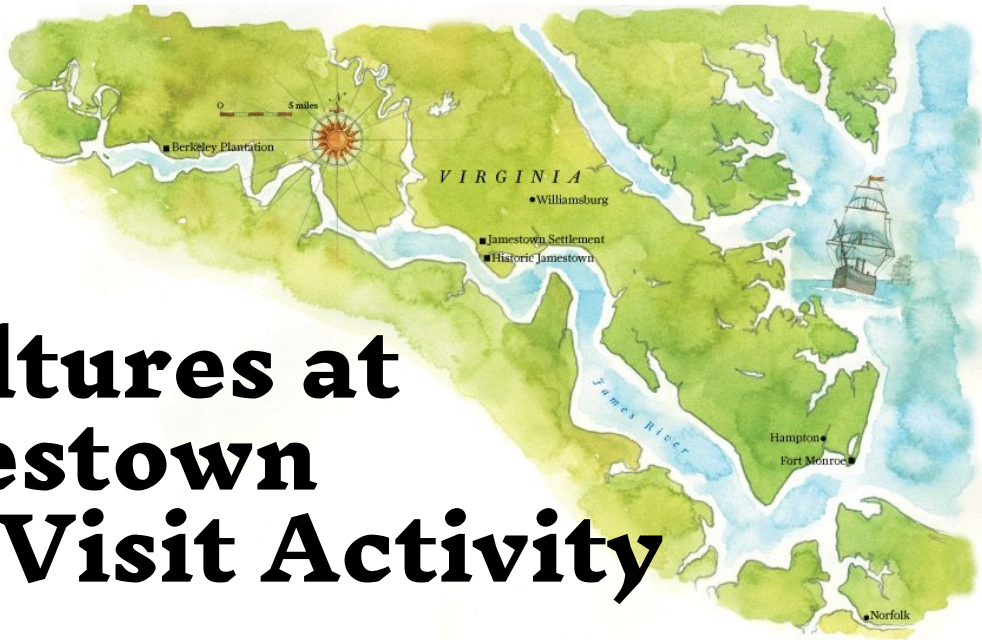


Illustration by Steve Stankiewicz

**GRADE LEVEL:** Upper Elementary

**STANDARDS AND SKILLS:** Comparing and Contrasting, Making Connections, Using Information Resources, Questioning and Inquiry Skills

**LESSON OBJECTIVE:** The story of Jamestown is the story of the interaction among three cultures – the Powhatan Indians, the English and the Africans – each of whom had their own unique way of life. The ancestors of the Powhatans had lived in eastern Virginia for thousands of years and had formed a hierarchical political structure and complex trade relationships. The English had begun to explore westward, looking for new lands and resources partly due to economic events. In 1619 Africans were transported to Virginia against their will. In Africa, they had been part of a highly developed culture in what is present-day Angola. The story of Jamestown is the meeting and interaction of these three distinct cultures.

Students will compare and contrast the parent cultures of the three groups of people who came together at Jamestown – the Powhatan Indians, the English and the Angolans – and describe similarities and differences.

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION:** How did the three cultures at Jamestown interact?

Source: <https://jyfmuseums.org/learn/learning-center/how-did-the-three-cultures-at-jamestown-interact>. Retrieved 02/02/22



## **MATERIALS (see Appendix):**

- Comparing Cultures Guiding Questions
- Comparing Cultures Graphic Organizer
- Cultures at Jamestown Quotes
- Comparing Cultures Images

## **PROCEDURE**

Step 1: Begin the lesson by asking students how we know what we know about the past. We may examine pictures (such as drawings, engravings, portraits), artifacts, documents (such as letters, diaries, journals), archaeological remains (such as building foundations, garbage) or even nature (tree rings). Ask students how they know about their families, what they did, where they lived, what they looked like. Ask how people in the future will learn about us. How will it be different from the way we are learning about the past?

Step 2: Remind students that all cultures at all times share basic human needs. How each culture meets its needs may vary based on geography, available resources, and its technology. It is because of these differences that cultures may clash when they come into contact with each other. This is what happened when the three cultures – the English, the Powhatans, and the Angolans met each other in Virginia in the 17th century. Provide students with a copy of the Cultures at Jamestown – Comparison Chart. Discuss with students the six human or cultural activities that are included on the chart. Explain to students that they will examine pictures of the three cultures and words of people from the 17th century to complete the chart. Their goal is to be able to describe the lifestyles of each of the cultural groups and to find where they were similar and where they were different. They may also determine areas where they were able to cooperate and what ultimately led them to conflict.

Step 3: Model the activity by completing one of the cultural comparisons – clothing – with the class. Distribute copies of pictures 1 – 3. Ask students to first study the picture of the two Powhatan Indians. What is their first impression of the picture? Is it an action picture or are they posing? Have them describe what they see including the clothing, jewelry, and other objects in the picture.

Step 4: Now have them look closely at the details of the picture. Use the Comparing Cultures – Guiding Questions to guide the students' observations. Have students write their observations in the "clothing" section of the Comparison Chart under "Powhatans."

Step 5: After completing this part of the chart, have students look at the picture of the Englishman. Ask students the same guiding questions. Discuss and then have them complete the chart under "English." Once they have completed this, have students observe the images of the Angolan and respond to the same questions. Have students complete the chart under "Africans." Explain they will be using these and other pictures to answer questions about the other cultural activities of each of the three groups.

Step 6: Break students into 5 groups with no more than 4 – 5 students in each group. Assign each group a specific cultural activity to analyze – food, housing, technology, transportation or communication. Provide each group with a set of pictures 1 – 11 and the Comparing Cultures – Guiding Questions. Groups should focus on one picture at a time, using the questions to guide their observations. Once all groups have completed their work, have each group discuss their observations with the class. Record the consensus on an overhead chart for all to see. Have students complete their own charts.

Step 7: Explain to students that another way to learn more about these cultures is through written descriptions of people from the past. Distribute copies of the Comparing Cultures – Period Quotes. Ask each group to read the quotes, looking for additional information about their assigned activity. When the groups have finished, again have each group report their findings. Fill in additional information on the overhead chart.

Step 8: Remind students that all cultures have similarities and differences and that sometimes these lead to cooperation and other times, to conflict. Ask students to refer to their Comparison Charts and find at least two ways all three cultures were similar. How were they different? Discuss as a class.

Step 9: Next ask students to imagine they were members of the Powhatan culture when the English arrived. Remembering or referring to their charts, ask them how and why they think they would cooperate with the English. What did the English have that they wanted? Iron tools, weapons, copper. Ask if they were English, what did the Powhatans have that the English needed? Food, furs, knowledge of the land, hunting knowledge. Finally, ask students to imagine they were Angolans. How is their situation different? The Angolans came against their will, and they did not bring their material culture with them. The English needed their labor, and they had little choice but to work and adapt. What did the Angolans bring with

them from Africa? Knowledge and memories of their homeland including their culture, technology, etc. How might conflict result when these cultures interacted? The English needed land for their population to grow and to grow their cash crop, tobacco. Indians wanted to protect their land to use as they always had – hunt freely, move when necessary. Angolans worked and adopted the material culture of the English, but they also brought knowledge of their homeland and memories of their culture and traditions to Virginia. Discuss as a group.

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## *Cultures at Jamestown – Comparing Cultures*

### *Guiding Questions*

**The following are suggested questions for students to use when analyzing pictures.**

#### **Clothing:**

What kinds of clothing are they wearing?  
What do you think the clothes are made from?  
How are they wearing the clothing?  
What other things are they wearing? (Decorative items, tattoos, etc.)

#### **Food:**

What kinds of food do you recognize in the picture?  
What are they doing with the food?  
How did they get the food?  
Who is eating, preparing the food?

#### **Housing**

What kinds of housing do you see in the picture?  
What do you think it is made from?  
How is it arranged?  
Who uses it?

#### **Transportation:**

What kind of transportation do you see in the picture?  
What do you think it is made from?  
Who used it?  
Why did they use this kind of transportation?

#### **Technology (tools)**

What kinds of technology do you see in the picture?  
What do you think it is made from?  
How are they using it?  
Who is using it?

#### **Communication:**

What kind of communication do you think is taking place in the picture? Can you tell what they might be communicating about?  
Who would use this form of communication?

*Cultures at Jamestown – Comparing Cultures  
Comparison Chart – Page 1*

	Powhatans	English	Africans
<b>Clothing</b>			
<b>Food</b>			
<b>Housing</b>			

*Cultures at Jamestown – Comparing Cultures  
Comparison Chart – Page 2*

	Powhatans	English	Africans
<b>Technology</b>			
<b>Transportation</b>			
<b>Communication</b>			

## *Cultures at Jamestown – Comparing Cultures Period Quotes*

### *Powhatan Indians*

For their apparel, they are some time couered with the skinnes of wilde beasts, which in winter are dressed with the haire, but in sommer without. The better sort vse large mantels of deare skins not much differing in fashion from the Irish mantels. Some imbrodered with white beads, some with copper, other painted after their manner.

*John Smith*

But the women are always couered about their middles with skin and [are] very shamefast to be seene bare. They adorne themselues most with copper beads and paintings.

*John Smith*

They make most commonly a place about ther howses to sett ther corne,...and in this place they dig many holes which before the English brought them scavels and spades they used to make with a crooked peece of woode beinge scraped on both sides in fashion of a gardeners paring Iron. They put into thes holes ordinarily 4 or 5 kernels of ther wheat and 2 beanes like French beanes,...

*Henry Spelman*

Their buildings and habitations are for the most part by the rivers, or not farre distant from some fresh spring. Their houses are built like our Arbors, of small young springs bowed and tyed, and so close covered with Mats, or the barkes of trees very handsomely, that not-withstanding either winde, raine, or weather, they are as warme as stoves, but very smoky, yet at the toppe of the house there is a hole made for the smoake to goe into right over the fire.

*John Smith*

Their fishing is much in Boats. These they make of one tree by burning and scratching away the coales with stones and shells, till they have made it in forme of a Trough. Some of them are an elne deepe, and fortie or fiftie foote in length, and some will beare 40 men, but the most ordinary are smaller, and will beare 10, 20 or 30. according to their bignesse. In stead of Oares, they use Paddles and stickes, with which they will row faster then our Barges.

*John Smith*

For fishing, hunting , and warres they use much their bow and arrows. They bring their bowes to the forme of ours by the scraping of a shell. Their arrows are made some of straight young sprigs, which they head with bone, some 2 or 3 inches long. These they use to shoot at Squirrels on trees. Another sort of arrows they use made of Reeds. These are peeceed with wood, headed with splinters of christall, or some sharpe stone, the spurres of a Turkey, or the bill of some bird.

*John Smith*



## *Africans*

They (the canoes) are generally 16 foot long and one and a half or two foot wide. They also have others which they use for warfare or for taking Oxen from other places, and these are bigger. I have seen one that was as big as a Sloop...It was 35 foot long, 5 foot wide and three foot high...the whole made and cut out of one trunk.

*Pieter de Marees*

In general the houses of these kingdoms...have only one story. They are round, made of stakes driven into the ground and on the outside...(covered) with a coat of clay mixed with straw. The roof is formed with pieces of palm or with other fine stalks that resist water.

*Cavazzi de Montecuccolo*

Fathers teach their sons to spin yarn from the bark of trees and to make nets; and once they know how to make Nets, they go with their Fathers to the sea to Fish.

*Pieter de Marees*

Regarding the Girls,...they learn how to make Baskets, Hampers, Mats and straw Hats made of green Rushes, which they make with their own hands. They also learn to make Caps, Purses and cloth from the bark of trees, dyed in all sorts of colours and very artfully made, as if made with a Loom, to the wonder of many people;...Thirdly, they learn to grind Millie and to make bread.

*Pieter de Marees*

Their spears are very beautifully and cleverly made, for they are wonderfully skilled in iron work.

*Pieter de Marees*

They use the Iron to make their weapons, namely Assegais, Machetes, Daggers, etc...The Machetes they use in Agriculture to dig the earth with, instead of spades; on the other hand, they also use them to cut wood in the Forest and for carpentry.

*Pieter de Marees*

...the commodities which are most popular there and are used and traded in great quantities are Linen, wollen Cloth, Copperware such as Basins and Caldrons, Knives and Beads.

*Pieter de Marees*

There are many types of meat, such as domestic cattle that they raise as well as wild game that they take. There are an infinite number of cattle that are so large and fat they are surprising.

*A European Description of Angola, 1590*

## *English*

The greatest part of our building in the cities and good towns of England consisteth only of timber, for as yet few of the houses of the commonalty... are made of stone...

*William Harrison*

Their food also consisteth principally in beef and such meat as the butcher selleth, that is to say, mutton, veal, lamb, pork, ...bacon, fruit pies, fruit, fowls of sundry sorts, cheese, butter, eggs, etc....

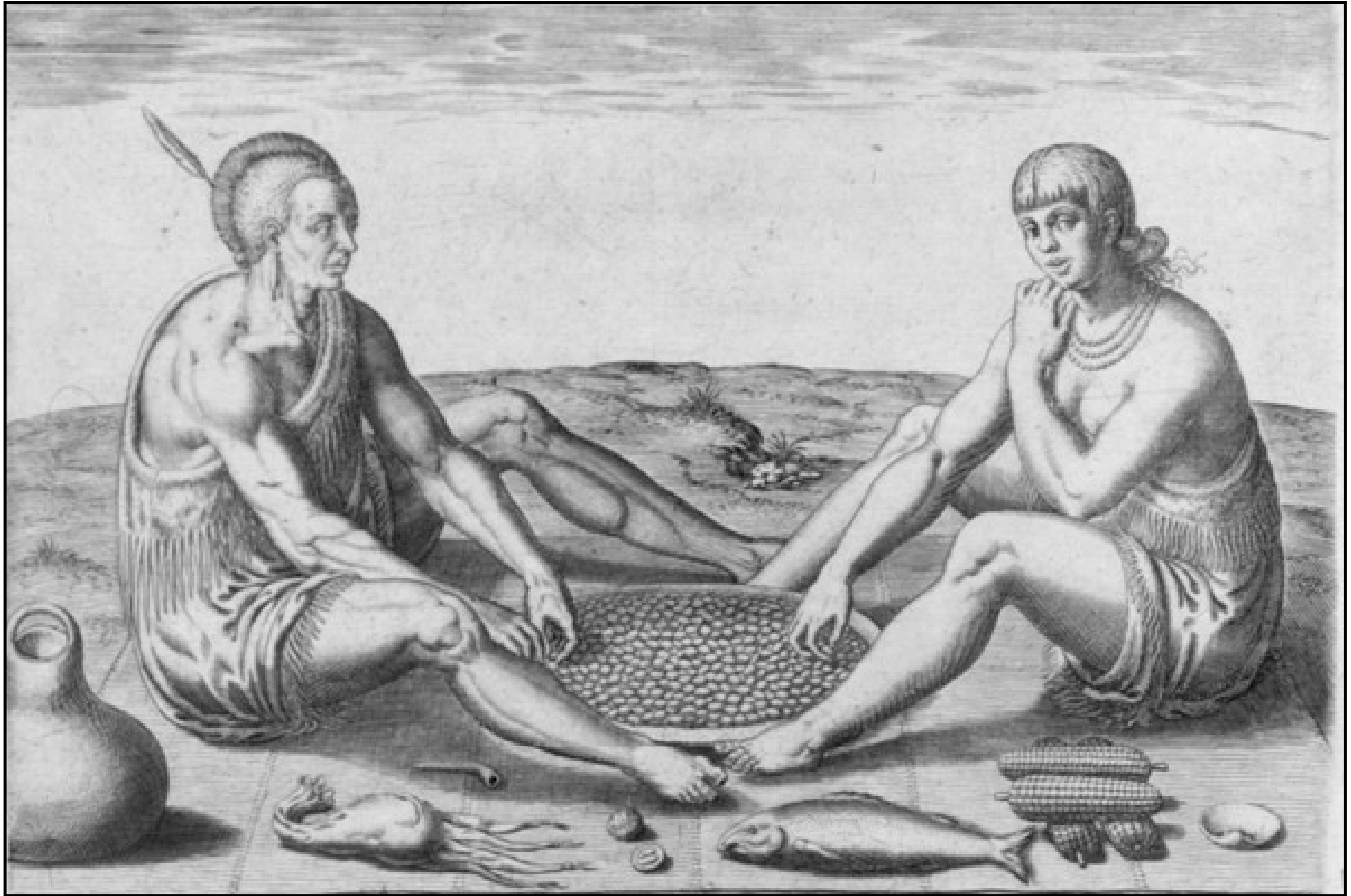
*William Harrison*

The number of cars, drays, carts, coaches, more than hath been accustomed, the streets and lanes being straitened, must needs be dangerous, as daily experience shows. The coachman rides behind the horses' tails, lashes them, and looks not behind him...

*John Stow*

...the most beautiful frame of fair houses and shops that be within the walls of London....it containeth ten fair dwellings and fourteen shops, all within one frame.

*John Stow*



Picture 1 – Indians  
Engraving by Theodor de Bry after drawing by John White  
Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation

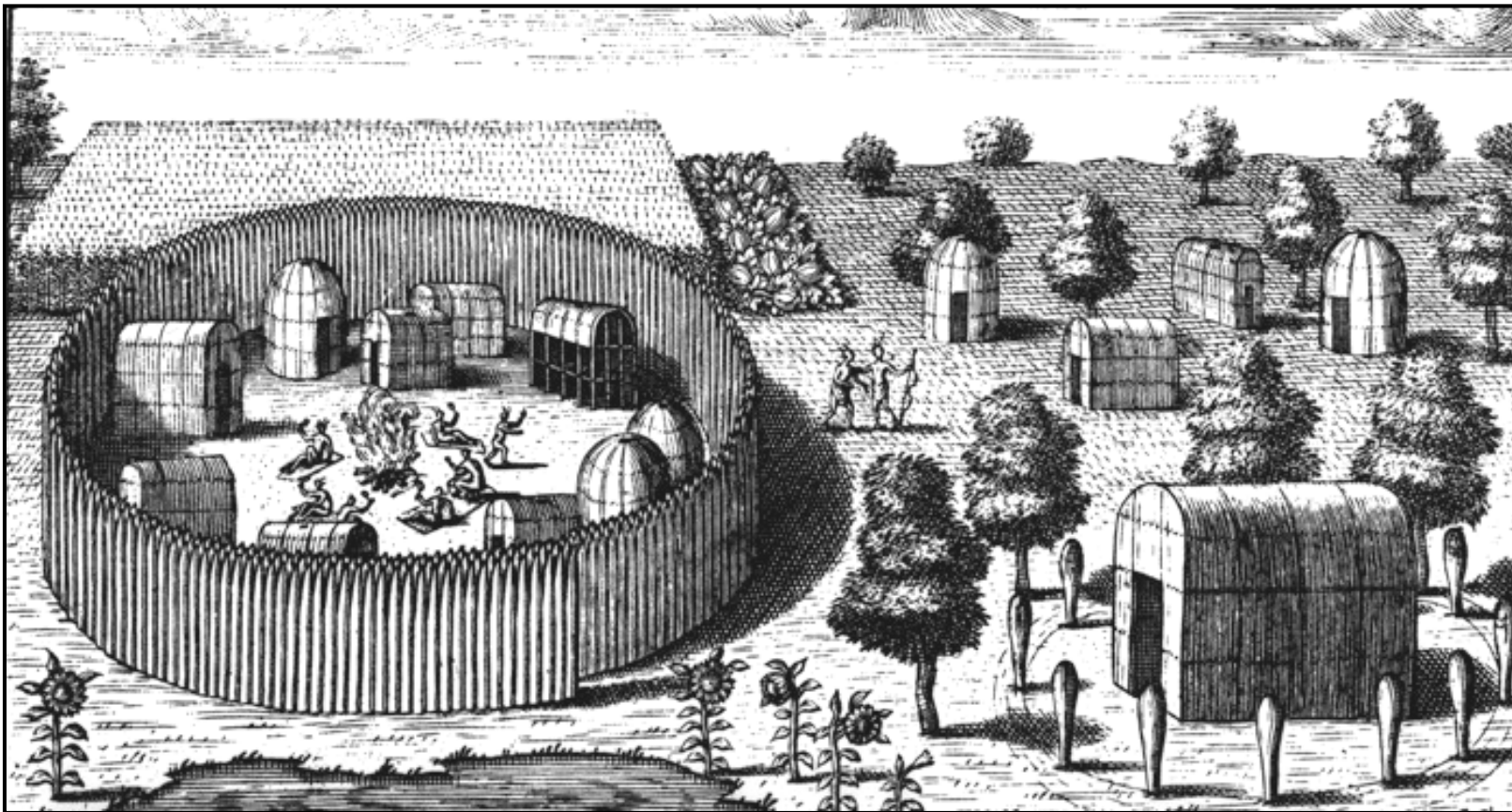


Picture 2 - English  
Jacques de Gheyn  
Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation



Picture 3 – Africans  
Cavazzi ki Montecucculo  
Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation



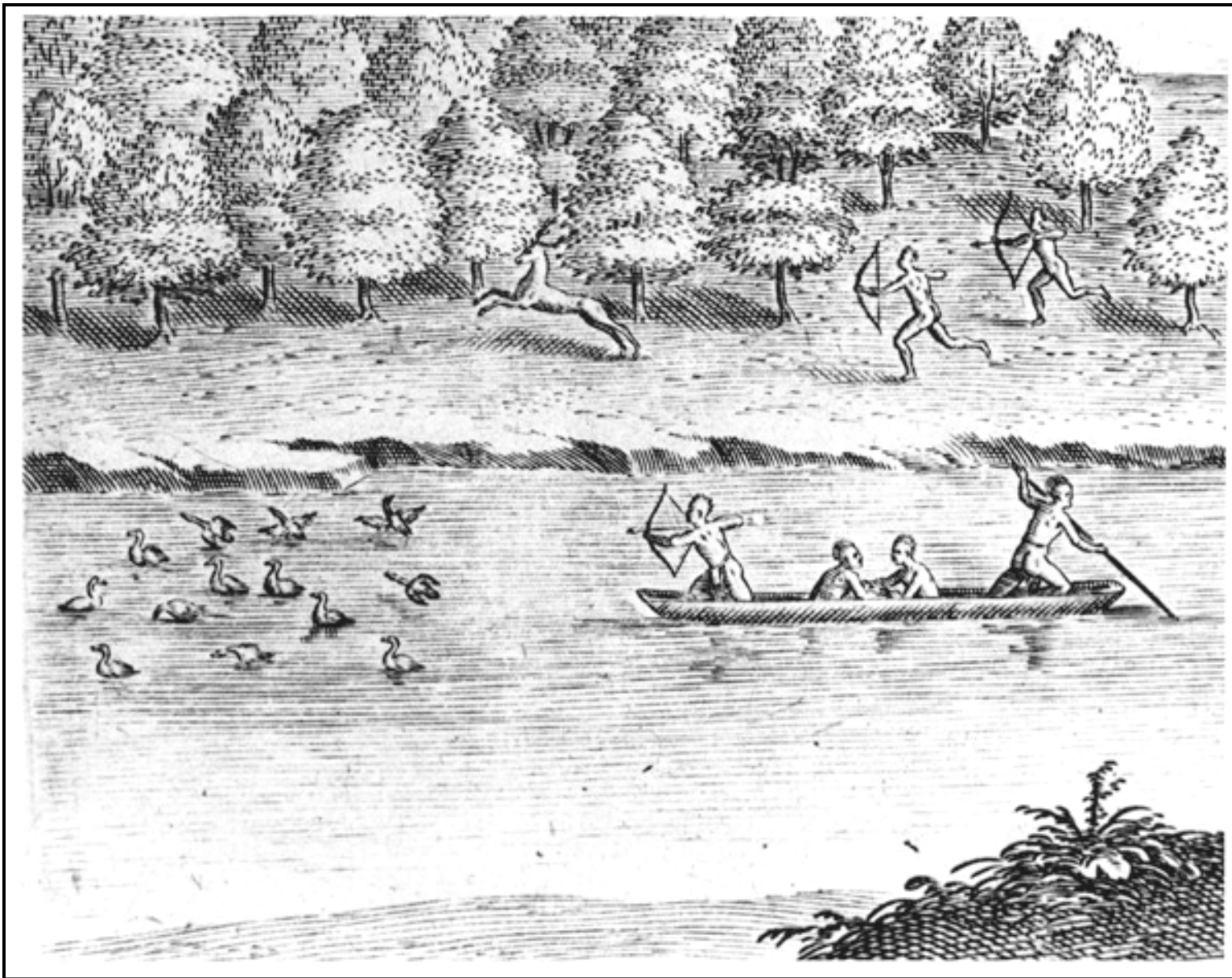


Picture 4 - Indians  
From The History and Present State of Virginia by Robert Beverley  
Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation



Picture 5 – Indians  
Engraving by Theodor de Bry after drawing by John White  
Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation





Picture 6 – Indians  
Engraving by Theodor de Bry after drawing by John White  
Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation

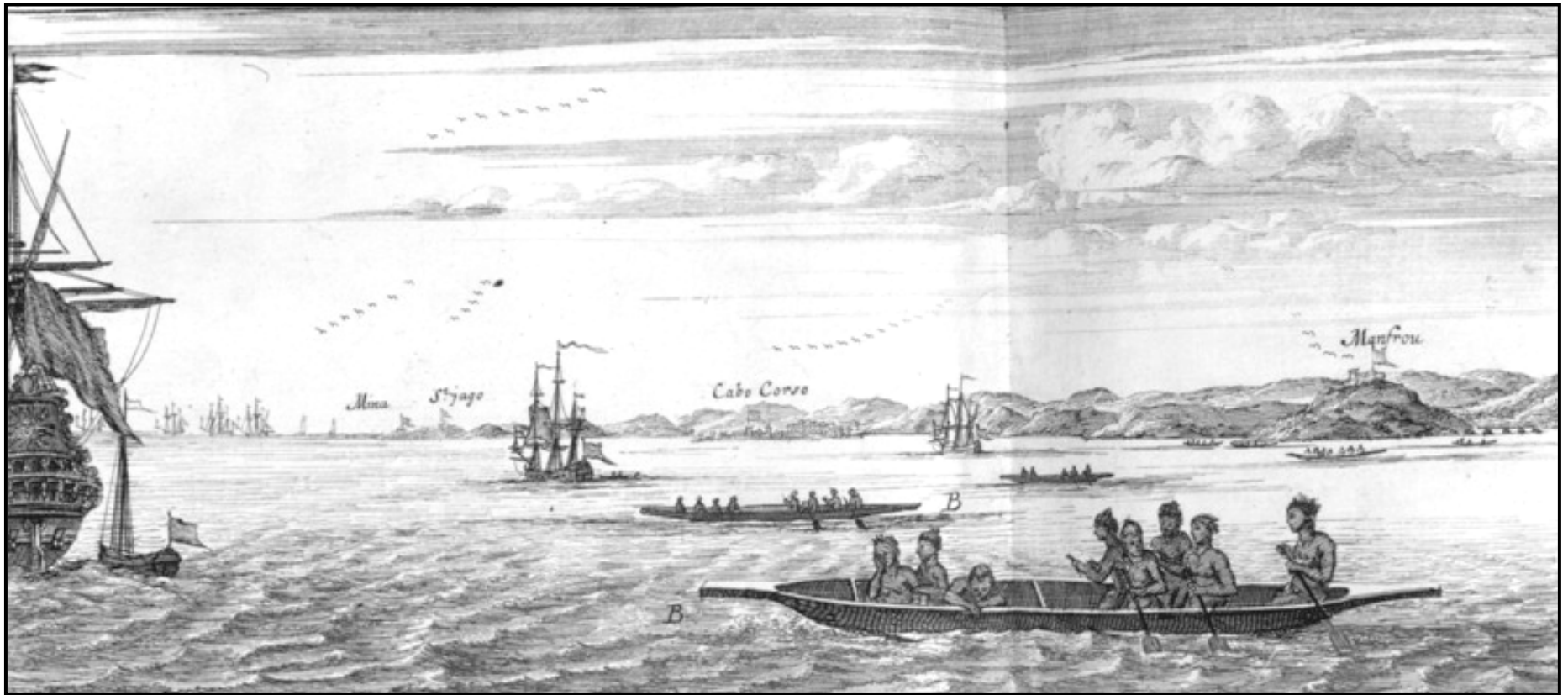




Picture 7 - Africans  
Cavazzi ki Montecucculo  
Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation



Picture 8 – Africans  
Cavazzi ki Montecucculo  
Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation



Picture 9 - Africans  
Jean Barbot  
Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation





Picture 10 – English  
Engraving by Theodor de Bry after drawing by John White  
Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation



Picture 11 – English  
Unknown Artist  
Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation