



Day 2-3 Colonization Unit
80-120 Minutes

The Lost Colony

The Lost Colony— LESSON PLAN (120 MINUTES)

Adaptable for Grades 3–9

TITLE:

The Lost Colony

OBJECTIVE:

Students will explore the historical events surrounding the Lost Colony of Roanoke, analyze the mystery of the colony's disappearance, understand the challenges faced by early English settlers, and demonstrate comprehension through discussion, written analysis, and creative tasks.

GRADE LEVEL:

Grades 3–9 (Differentiation included)

MATERIALS:

Roanoke article

- Roanoke PowerPoint presentation
- Literacy and comprehension activities
- Writing Prompt A: “Analyze the Mystery of the Lost Colony”
- Writing Prompt B: “Warp to the Future: Bring Three Items Back to Save Roanoke”

INTRODUCTION (10 MINUTES)

Teacher leads discussion:

Ask: "What makes something a mystery?"

Students share examples from books, history, video games, movies, or everyday life.

Grades 3–5: Brainstorm aloud; record examples on board.

Grades 6–9: Write a short definition of "historical mystery" and give one example.

Transition:

"Today we are studying one of America's oldest unsolved mysteries: the Lost Colony of Roanoke."

ARTICLE READING (15 MINUTES)

Students read through the Roanoke article.

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/13-colonies/events-of-the-13-colonies/the-lost-colony-of-roanoke-island>

Differentiation:

- Grades 3–5: Teacher reads aloud selected sections. Students highlight who, what, where, when.
- Grades 6–9: Independent reading with annotations. Students identify:
 - Why the colony was founded
 - What problems the settlers faced
 - Why John White could not return
 - Evidence surrounding the disappearance

Quick Check Questions (from article):

1. Why was the colony started?
2. What problems did the settlers face?
3. Why couldn't John White return quickly?
4. What do YOU think happened?

POWERPOINT PRESENTATION (15 MINUTES)

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/explorers/plans/roanoke.pptx>

Teacher presents the Roanoke slides covering:

- Sir Walter Raleigh's plans
- Dual-purpose mission of the colony
- John White's role
- The mysterious disappearance
- Theories and evidence

Grades 3–5: Students draw or list three important facts they learned.

Grades 6–9: Students take structured notes.

OPTIONAL (15 minutes) - “The Ghost of Virginia Dare” Choose Your Own Adventure Comprehension Story

This interactive “choose your own adventure” story invites students to explore the mystery of the Lost Colony through eerie encounters with the ghost of Virginia Dare during a nighttime campout at Roanoke. As readers make choices, they uncover historical clues, answer comprehension questions, and decide whether to pursue the unknown or play it safe by the fire.

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/13-colonies/13-colonies-choose-your-own-adventures/the-ghost-of-virginia-dare-choose-your-own-adventure>

WRITING PROMPT A — ANALYZE THE MYSTERY (20 MINUTES)

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/13-colonies/13-colonies-writing-activities/the-anatomy-of-a-mystery-roanoke-island>

Students respond to the prompt:

“This writing prompt asks you to analyze the mystery of the Lost Colony. Describe what happened at Roanoke, what evidence was left behind, and what you think became of the settlers. Then write about a mystery in your own life OR a mystery from history, literature, movies, video games, or current events.”

This is a fun writing prompt that most students will quickly relate to. Allow them to share when they are done.

WRITING PROMPT B — TIME-WARP SURVIVAL CHALLENGE (20 MINUTES)

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/13-colonies/13-colonies-fun-activities/supplies-for-survival-roanoke-island>

Students role-play as a Roanoke settler who magically travels to the future to collect supplies—but can only bring back three items.

Rules:

- Each item must be realistic and helpful for survival.
- Students must explain why each item would help the colony succeed.

Grades 3–5:

- Draw each item and write 1–2 sentences about its usefulness.

Grades 6–9:

- Write a structured paragraph or mini-essay explaining their choices.
- Encourage historically grounded reasoning (food supply, tools, medicine, communication).

Optional Extension:

Students present their survival plans to the class.

LITERACY and COMPREHENSION (20 minutes)

LearnAboutAmerica.com offers several differentiated options for comprehension and literacy activities related to the Lost Colony. Use your discretion when choosing the best option for your students.

- Sir Walter Raleigh Reading Comprehension (Lexile 980): [Online](#) | [Printable](#)
- [Virginia Dare Online/Printable Reading Comprehension](#): (Lexile 700 - 850)
- Lost Colony of Roanoke Reading Comprehension (Lexile 900) : [Online](#) | [Printable](#)
- [Lost Colony Super Paralaugh \(Mad Lib\)](#)

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Teacher reviews:

- Why Roanoke was founded.
- The challenges the settlers faced.
- The continuing mystery and possible explanations.
- The legacy of Roanoke leading to Jamestown in 1607.

OPTIONAL: Allow students to color the Virginia Dare Commemorative United States postage stamp issued in 1937 on the 350th anniversary of the landing on Roanoke Island.

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/13-colonies/13-colonies-fun-activities/virginia-dare-postage-stamp-printable-coloring-page>