

Literature Circle Questions

Use the questions and activities that follow to get more out of the experience of reading *Pocahontas* by Joseph Bruchac.

1. List five of the challenges the colonists faced on their voyage and settlement of Jamestown.
2. Historians have long wondered what happened to the “lost colony” of Roanoke, Virginia. What is Pocahontas’s explanation of what became of the Roanoke survivors (page 5)?
3. Pocahontas’s father is the Mamanatowic, the Great Chief of the Powhatan villages. Describe his position and the role he plays in the lives of the Powhatan people.
4. How does John Smith explain the false accusations made against him by Master Wingfield?
5. Frequently Pocahontas makes reference to Okeus. Who is Okeus, and what do the Powhatans believe about him?
6. Why is John Smith critical of the “gentlemen planters” who are a part of the Virginia colony?
7. How does John Smith feel that his background as a soldier helps him in his new life as a colonist?
8. In describing his thoughts about dealing with the colonists, Pocahontas’s father tells her, “When you grasp a snake, you have to make sure you hold it firmly and in the right place. Otherwise it will twist around and bite you” (page 74). Explain in your own words what the Great Chief means with this snake metaphor.
9. Rawhunt and Amocis describe to Pocahontas the many mistakes made by the “Coatmen,” as they call the English settlers. What are these mistakes?
10. In the final chapters of the book, John Smith is brought before Pocahontas’s father, and he feels sure that he is about to be killed (page 143). Instead, the Mamanatowic makes a solemn promise to John Smith (page 145). What is the Great Chief’s promise to John Smith, and why does he make this promise?
11. As the colonists interact with the Powhatan people, many misunderstandings result due to differences in language and culture. Can you find an example of a serious misunderstanding between the colonists and the Powhatan people? What is the result of the misunderstanding?

12. This story is told in the alternating voices of John Smith and Pocahontas. Explain how this storytelling technique affects your reading of *Pocahontas*.
13. How does this version of the story of Pocahontas and John Smith differ from other versions you have seen or read? Were there parts of this story that surprised you?
14. In Chapter 17, Pocahontas describes the ways that her people punish the wrongdoers in their community. For example, she explains that if someone is caught stealing three times, that person is punished by death. What can we learn here about the Powhatan ideas about justice?
15. If you could give some words of advice to John Smith about how to live peacefully alongside the Powhatan people, what would you tell him?

Note: These literature circle questions are keyed to Bloom's Taxonomy as follows: Knowledge: 1-3; Comprehension: 4-6; Application: 7-8; Analysis: 9-11; Synthesis: 12-13; Evaluation: 14-15.

Activities:

1. Each of the chapters written from the perspective of Pocahontas begins with a short legend, often explaining the origin of an aspect of nature or a Powhatan belief. Experiment with writing your own legend in this style.
2. To learn more about the settlement at Jamestown and to see photos of archaeological excavations, use the Internet to visit the historic Jamestown Web site (<http://www.apva.org/jr.html>). After exploring this Web site, be ready to report what you learned to your class.
3. Create a reader's theater for two people, using passages from the book that represent both Pocahontas and John Smith. Choose passages that highlight the differences in perspective of these two characters, and practice your reader's theater with another student to present to your class.

Other Books by Joseph Bruchac

Code Talker
Geronimo
Sacajawea
The Warriors