Pocahontas and the Powhatan Dilemma

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF CAMILLA TOWNSEND

Born and raised in New York, Camilla Townsend graduated from Bryn Mawr College and spent time living and working in Latin America before deciding to pursue a Ph.D. in Comparative History at Rutgers University. She taught at Colgate University in Hamilton, New York, throughout the 1990s and early 2000s; while there, she published some of her most well-known academic work, including *Tales of Two Cities: Race and Economic Culture in Early Republican North and South America* (2000) and *Pocahontas and the Powhatan Dilemma* (2005). In 2010, Townsend was awarded a prestigious grant from the Guggenheim foundation. She currently teaches at her alma mater, Rutgers, and has continued to publish widely in the fields of early Native American and Latin American history, often focusing on the minutiae of the relations between the indigenous and Europeans throughout the Americas in the early days of American history. Her work draws upon information left behind by both settlers and indigenous peoples in primary source documents such as letters, diaries, articles, and books, recontextualizing and reimagining the lives of the people behind those missives. In her own words, Townsend writes that she hopes her work allows readers to "gain insight into the ways in which indigenous people conceptualized history and imagined the future."

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The bulk of Townsend's book spans the years 1606 to roughly 1617—from the time the ship bearing John Smith and other foundational members of the Virginia Company began making its way across the sea up to the date of Pocahontas's death. Townsend, however, is careful to provide ample historical context for the years preceding and following the core events of the book, which trace the often-violent relations between the settlers at Jamestown and the Powhatan people by following the historical threads of Pocahontas's life. Townsend provides information that is likely new to many readers, contextualizing the social and political activities of the Algonkian tribes prior to colonization by comparing the tribes' precolonial lives to those of other indigenous peoples throughout the Americas. Whereas tribes like the Aztecs had been organized around agrarian economies for millennia, farming was still fairly new to the Powhatan people; their seminomadic lifestyles, to which farming had only been introduced about 300 years prior to the onset of the 17th century, hadn't yet necessitated formal calendars, written languages, or refined systems of taxation. In spite of these facts, the Powhatan people were savvy politicians and social strategists—and Townsend works to lay to rest racist and inaccurate ideals of the "noble savage" or the Powhatan people as simple, naïve, inherently peaceful individuals who were submissive or even grateful toward their colonizers.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

In the centuries since Pocahontas lived, her story has been corrupted and commodified in service of Christianity, capitalism, and the ethos of manifest destiny. From the popular 1995 Disney film to religious-themed novels about Pocahontas's acceptance of Christianity, many versions of Pocahontas's story have been stripped of the truth and repackaged as tales to justify the bloodshed of colonization. Some writers and historians, however, have sought over the years to tell the truth of Pocahontas's tale and go against the grain of cultural myth. Laguna Pueblo/Metis writer Paula Gunn Allen, widely considered the founder of the field of Native American literary studies, published *Pocahontas: Medicine Woman, Spy, Entrepreneur, Diplomat* in 2004. Gunn Allen's book also centers a Native American perspective and explores the canny, multifaceted personality Pocahontas no doubt embodied. *Pocahontas, Powhatan, Opechancanough: Three Indian Lives Changed by Jamestown* by Helen C. Rountree was published in 2006, shortly after Townsend's own book. The Rountree text seeks to contextualize the Algonkian tribes' life in an ethnohistorical, anthropological perspective, centering the ways in which Native American lives were impacted by the arrival of English settlers. Shannon Zemlicka's 2002 children's book *Pocahontas* focuses, as Townsend's book does, on the fundamental fact that Pocahontas's own voice has been all but erased from history—as such, her true feelings about John Smith, John Rolfe, and her life among the settlers can never be known, but were likely the feelings of a prisoner seeking to make the best of her circumstances.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *Pocahontas and the Powhatan Dilemma*
- **When Written:** Early 2000s
- **Where Written:** Hamilton, NY
- **When Published:** September 2005
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary
- **Genre:** Historical portrait; Biography
- **Setting:** Tsenacomoco, indigenous lands now part of the Tidewater region in the state of Virginia; the Jamestown colony; London, England
- **Climax:** Townsend writes of Pocahontas's fateful journey to

London in 1616 (as Rebecca Rolfe) and her death in England, just as she was about to return home.

- **Antagonist:** John Smith; Colonialism
- **Point of View:** Third Person

EXTRA CREDIT

What's in a Name. Though most Americans know the myth of Pocahontas, many would be surprised to find that "Pocahontas" was not even the girl's real name. According to her tribe's tradition, she was given two names as a child: Amonute, her public name, and a private name known to no one but her parents. Pocahontas was a nickname meaning "Mischief," "Little Playful One," or "Wanton One." For the people of Pocahontas's tribe, names were a fluid concept which changed with a person's life experiences. The name she eventually went by as an adult, Matoaka, may have meant "One Who Kindles"; it was likely not her secret or hidden name, but rather one she adopted after her first marriage to a man named Kocoom, a warrior possibly from the Patowomeck nation. Though Matoaka adopted the Christian name Rebecca after her baptism in 1614, when she traveled to England with her second husband John Rolfe, she introduced herself to Londoners as Matoaka, stunning those who had come to know the legend of the "princess" Pocahontas.

PLOT SUMMARY

In *Pocahontas and the Powhatan Dilemma*, historian Camilla Townsend attempts to revise the inaccurate, racist, and harmful cultural myths about Pocahontas, the Powhatan people, and the colonization of the Virginia Tidewater region—known as Tsenacomoco to the Algonkian-speaking tribes native to the area. Though the Virginia Company, chartered by King James I of England, arrived in Virginia in 1607, Townsend posits that an understanding of the complex relationship between the English and the Native Americans lies in the history both of England and of the New World. The eventual victory of the English settlers over the region's Indigenous tribes, Townsend says, was not a question of physical might or political savvy, but a fate rooted in the fact that the English had been living a sedentary, agriculturalist lifestyle for millennia. This lifestyle allowed them to focus on other areas of development including metalworking and weaponry. The Algonkian tribes, meanwhile, had only begun farming 300 years prior to the settlers' arrival. This meant that while they were powerful warriors and savvy politicians on the cusp of developing systems of taxation, a written language, a formal calendar, and metalwork for weaponry, the arrival of the settlers meant that any chance of innovation or development was lost forever. "A new nation," Townsend writes, "was going to be built on their people's destruction—a destruction that would be either partial or complete."

Pocahontas is born circa 1597 to Powhatan, the mamanitowik—or paramount chief—of a cluster of Algonkian-speaking tribes he'd brought under his command over the course of his life. Pocahontas is often erroneously described as Powhatan's favorite child. However, Townsend posits that Pocahontas is, in fact, the daughter of a commoner, and of little political value to Powhatan at all in the early years of her life.

In the spring of 1607, when Pocahontas is around nine years old, a group of Englishmen (who have either paid their way or sold their labor to travel to the New World and settle a colony at Jamestown) arrive in the *Tsenacomoco* region. Months later, in December, Captain John Smith, a naval officer who's traveled the world and written widely about his salacious (and largely fictitious) exploits, is captured by Opechankeno, the werowance (chief) of the Pamunkey tribe. Opechankeno brings the man—who he knows is the "*werowance*" of the strangers who recently arrived in the bay—before Powhatan. Townsend destroys another myth associated with this first meeting between Powhatan and Smith, stating that Powhatan never tried to kill Smith. Nor did Pocahontas—as she is often rumored to have done—throw herself over Smith's prone body to save him. Instead, Powhatan likely ritually adopts Smith in a ceremony he's performed perhaps hundreds of times—a common move meant to create an allegiance between two groups. Powhatan asks for a gift of guns in exchange for food, including corn and seeds—but having been told by the backers of the Virginia Company to never hand over weaponry to the natives, Smith instead gifts unwieldy cannons, which displeases Powhatan. Powhatan likely considers destroying Jamestown through a coordinated assault—but instead decides to try to outmaneuver the settlers into picking up and leaving Jamestown of their own accord.

In 1608, as relations between the settlers and the Powhatan people deteriorate, Powhatan sends Pocahontas to Jamestown to negotiate for the return of several hostages. Again, Townsend debunks the myth that Pocahontas was sent because she was especially beloved by either John Smith or Powhatan. Rather, she is likely sent because as a young girl of about 10, she's absorbed much more of the English language than the adults in her tribe have, and is an apt translator. Pocahontas successfully makes the negotiation with the help of two other translators. As relations ease, she begins regularly visiting the colony to instruct John Smith in Algonkian and learn English from him in return. Smith, now president of Jamestown and tasked with managing a failing colony, continues to demand corn and food from the surrounding tribes, yet still will not surrender the weapons Powhatan wants. Powhatan and his people retreat into the woods where the settlers cannot find them, and Smith begins leading raids on other villages, exasperated with his inability to bend the Algonkians to his will. Frustrated and wounded, Smith leaves Jamestown in 1609. In 1610, when two new ships of settlers arrive, they find

Jamestown with a population of less than 100 people. They rescue the colonists and begin preparing to abandon the colony. However, as they sail downriver, they find that yet another fleet of ships, settlers, and supplies (led by Lord De La Warr and his second-in-command, Captain Samuel Argall) have arrived.

Back in 1609, the Virginia Company's wealthy backers—aware the colony at Jamestown is foundering and desperate for more investors, laborers, and attention—converts the charter from a private venture into a public joint-stock company. Many new settlers, anxious about the tales of violence they've heard from the New World (and, Townsend writes, likely morally conflicted about taking land from the natives) nonetheless sign up to seek their fortunes. Among these men is John Rolfe, the son of a merchant who wants to make a name for himself in the New World. Rolfe and his wife leave England in 1609, become shipwrecked in Bermuda, and eventually make their way to Jamestown as part of the fleet that arrives just before Lord De La Warr's. They decide to stay, buoyed by the idea that new bodies and new provisions might turn the colony around yet.

However, throughout 1610, relations between the Powhatan and the settlers deteriorate even further, with massacres becoming commonplace. Argall, less hotheaded than other commanders, begins using hostage-taking strategically rather than punitively in hopes of brokering peace with the Powhatan. In 1613, Argall hears of a valuable hostage who is staying at a nearby Patowomeck village as the guest of the tribe's *werowance*, Yapassus. This person is Pocahontas, who is on a political visit to her deceased husband, Kocoom's, people. At this time, she is 15 or 16 at the most. Argall coerces the chief into tricking Pocahontas to come aboard an English ship, where Argall promptly declares her his prisoner and brings her back to Jamestown.

Powhatan begs the English to return Pocahontas to him, claiming they can have anything they want in exchange—but Argall knows the value of the "princess," and hastens her to Henrico, a new outpost up the river. Here, she is installed in the home of Reverend Alexander Whitaker, a man determined to prove that he has the power to convert large swaths of the native population to Christianity. Whitaker begins instructing Pocahontas in the English language and the King James Bible, and brings her to his weekly sermons at Jamestown. There, Pocahontas meets John Rolfe—who, mourning his recently-deceased wife, falls in passionate love with the young woman. Pocahontas, Townsend writes, communicates with her father through messengers during this time, and likely hatches a plan with him to stay in the company of the English in hopes of easing relations from the inside out. In April of 1614, Pocahontas agrees to convert to Christianity, assume the Christian **name** Rebecca, and marry John Rolfe. Pocahontas goes to live with Rolfe on his tobacco plantation, where she helps him cultivate new methods of planting, farming, and drying the crop.

In 1616, Pocahontas and John Rolfe, along with their young son Thomas, Captain Argall, an adviser to Powhatan named Uttamatomakin, and several other native attendants (some of them Pocahontas's relatives) are invited to travel to London to be hosted at court and to meet the wealthy backers of the Virginia Company. The Virginia Company hopes to drum up gossip, press, and political favor by bringing a converted Indian and her husband to be shown off around town. In London, Sir Edwin Sandys, a member of Parliament and prominent investor in the Company, takes John Rolfe and Pocahontas under his wing, giving them funds to use on their trip. Pocahontas and her fellow kinsmen are, Townsend writes, likely demoralized by what they find in London: a bustling city of 200,000 people, endless streams of whom will, no doubt, soon begin making their way to the New World. Pocahontas, overwhelmed and sick from foreign microbes to which she has no immunity, nonetheless attended events at the court of King James I, sits for a portrait by the prominent Dutch-German artist Simon Van de Passe, and even finds herself face-to-face once again with John Smith. In a lengthy tirade, she accuses Smith of betraying her father, massacring her people, and treating those he should have respected as "strangers."

In March of 1617, Rolfe, Pocahontas, and their group prepared to sail back to Virginia. Pocahontas, however, succumbs to her illness during a stop in Gravesend—and many of her fellow people are too sick to make their journey back home, either. Rolfe buries Pocahontas, leaves their young son in the care of a vice-admiral, and returns to Virginia, where he finds Jamestown in a "pitiful state." Rolfe is nonetheless prepared to do the bidding of his patron, Sandys, and begins attempting to negotiate the creation of a school for native children, where they will be instructed in English and converted to Christianity. Rolfe oversells the tribes' willingness to surrender their children in his letters to Sandys—in reality, relations between settlers and natives are worse than ever, and Uttamatomakin's woeful report to Opechankeno (now Powhatan's chief military man) leads the Indians to believe that they are running out of time to drive the settlers off their land.

In 1622, just after Rolfe's death, the Powhatan people launch an organized assault on Jamestown, killing a quarter of the colony's population on the anniversary of Powhatan's death and Pocahontas's funeral—a date, Townsend suggests, that is likely coincidental but nonetheless symbolic. The Virginia Company, upon hearing of the assault, gives the settlers carte-blanche to abandon any efforts at peace with the surrounding tribes and to slaughter them outright. The colonists wage all-out war on the Powhatan—bringing to an end any question of who will control the *Tsenacomoco*. Though *werowances* and leaders, such as Queen Cockacoeske of the Pamunkey, continue to fight against the colonists, by 1677 the leaders of all the major local tribes are forced to sign away their lands in

peace treaties. Individuals like Pocahontas and Cockacoeske, Townsend states, are done a disservice by the myths that have sprung up around their legacies: their bravery, she says, is a kind of real-world heroism not found in "epic tales."

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Pocahontas/Amonute/Matoaka/Rebecca – The historical figure most people know as Pocahontas was born Amonute circa 1597. Her **name**, Townsend shows, is not the only thing that many individuals get wrong about the young Powhatan woman whose story has held people in its thrall for centuries. This is through no fault of their own, Townsend suggest, but instead because the dominant narrative about Pocahontas tends to prioritize cultural myth in place of historical fact. Throughout *Pocahontas and the Powhatan Dilemma*, Townsend provides a revision of what most people know (or think they know) about the life of Pocahontas. The daughter of the powerful mamanitowik (highest chief) of the Tsenacomoco, or Virginia Tidewater region, Pocahontas was not, as myth has suggested, the chief's favorite—instead, she was the daughter of a commoner, and had to prove her worth to her father and to invading colonists by developing skills as a translator. Pocahontas was never in love with John Smith, nor did she save him from being killed at her father's hands. She was not a devoted friend of the colonists, but rather a captive. And she did not convert enthusiastically to Christianity in order to marry her second love, John Rolfe, but rather found herself making strategic moves that would allow her to hold sway over both the colonists at Jamestown and her own tribe. Townsend shows how Pocahontas was used throughout her life—and even in death—as a tool of imperialism and white supremacy, her political savvy misinterpreted as love for her captors. Her people's lack of a written language was the unfortunate reason as to why her voice has been all but stricken from the historical record. Throughout the book, Townsend attempts to do justice to Pocahontas's true story, painting a picture of her as a young woman who persevered in the face of unimaginable circumstances. Pocahontas always made the decisions she believed would be best for the future of her people—even though, Townsend points out, a new world was already fated to be built upon the destruction of her tribe and their traditions.

Camilla Townsend – Camilla Townsend is an academic and historian whose work focuses on the study of Indigenous North and Latin American tribes. In 2005's *Pocahontas and the Powhatan Dilemma*, one of her best-known books, Townsend endeavors to tell the true story of Pocahontas, dispelling the harmful, widely-believed myths about one of history's most fascinating and mysterious figures. Townsend's narrative voice is sharp and omnipresent—she lays bare historical records, anthropological theories, and cultural knowledge which help clarify the full context behind the clashes between the native Algonkian tribes of the Virginia Tidewater (Tsenacomoco) region and the English settlers who came to claim their lands in the early 17th century. Townsend believes that Pocahontas, Powhatan, and their kinsmen throughout the vast Powhatan nation "deserve better" than what history has dealt them. As such, she attempts to do justice to the stories not just of the major players in the conflicts between the Virginia Company and the Powhatan people, but to those individuals whom history has overlooked, written off, or remained uninterested in. Townsend does her best to reconstruct the social, political, and emotional factors which might have served as motivation in decisions that impacted the future of American history forever. She remains faithful to the insights that letters and diaries from the early days of colonization of the New World provide as she posits what voiceless historical players might have been thinking, feeling, scheming, or imagining. Townsend's wry, plain voice expresses contempt for the tradition of mythologizing Native American history and the erasure of Indigenous voices which marks so much of modern history. And yet, throughout the book, Townsend maintains an undertone of resilient faith in the idea that the wrongs of history might still be corrected.

Powhatan/Wahunsenacaw – Pocahontas's father, Powhatan—who was born Wahunsenacaw but adopted the **name** of his tribe as he consolidated power—was a politically savvy and powerful man who brought 30 tribes and over 20,000 people under his command throughout his lifetime. Powhatan was the mamanitowik, or paramount chief, of the Algonkian tribes of the Tsenacomoco (now known as the Virginia Tidewater region). In this role, he used violence and cunning strategy in equal measure to secure control, respect, and fealty. With the arrival of the Virginia Company in 1607, Powhatan's stronghold over the region faced its first serious outside threat—and as the English colonized the Algonkian tribes' homeland, Powhatan did his best to employ peaceful negotiation tactics in the face of violence, extortion, and senseless cruelty. Whereas cultural myths about Powhatan suggest he felt reverence toward or fear of the English, Townsend attempts to set the record straight. She portrays Powhatan as a singular and unmatched political mind who struggled for much of his adult life to keep the massive confederation of tribes he'd created afloat, in spite of the fact that (for reasons beyond his control) he and his people had already lost to the "strangers" who came to invade their lands.

John Rolfe – Pocahontas's second husband, John Rolfe, traveled to the New World in 1609, dreaming of making his fortune as a merchant by farming tobacco. After being shipwrecked on Bermuda for several months—during which time Rolfe's pregnant wife gave birth to a baby girl who died soon after—Rolfe and the other shipwrecked colonists built two new ships and sailed up to Virginia. In Jamestown, Rolfe lived with his wife until her death. Then, while Pocahontas was

held captive at the Jamestown outpost Henrico, Rolfe met and fell in love with the young woman. After securing permission from the governor to marry her, and wrestling with his own qualms about taking a "strange" (non-white) wife, Rolfe and Pocahontas were wed. Pocahontas taught John Rolfe methods of farming and harvesting tobacco, and soon Rolfe was a successful merchant. He and Pocahontas were invited to London together, as honored guests of the Virginia Company. The subjects of high society gossip and intrigue at court, Rolfe and Pocahontas represented to Londoners the possibilities of the New World and its bounties. As they prepared to leave England, however, Pocahontas fell gravely ill and died. After burying her, Rolfe left their young son, Thomas, in the care of a prominent vice admiral and returned to Jamestown. Back in the colony, he remarried, continued farming tobacco, and worked to raise his social status among the colonists and his reputation back in London. He died in 1622 and left his lands to Thomas. Townsend renders Rolfe as somewhat self-involved, socially cunning, and astute. She admits that he likely harbored a passionate love for Pocahontas, but complicates that love by suggesting he saw her, like so many others did, as a tool to be used in pursuit of his own dreams.

John Smith – A naval captain and explorer who had already lived a well-traveled—and, by his own account, quite sensational—life by the time he sailed to the New World with the fledgling Virginia Company in 1606. Smith was president of the English colony at Jamestown and as such often tasked with begging for food, help, and mercy from the surrounding Algonkian tribes. Townsend portrays him as something of a self-absorbed charlatan who has benefited from history in unfair ways. Much of what the world has come to know about Pocahontas and the Powhatan people, Townsend shows, comes from Smith's own books and diaries, which were published to great sensationalism in the years after Pocahontas's death—when she was not alive to refute Smith's stories about her. Smith exaggerated his own bravery, intrepidness, and attractiveness to women in every tale he ever wrote, Townsend argues—and yet because his words confirmed the racist prejudices of white people and satisfied a cultural curiosity for details about the New World, they were believed and persisted throughout the centuries. One of the only truths Smith ever really told about Pocahontas, Townsend suggests, is an account of their final meeting in England, when Pocahontas and her second husband, John Rolfe, traveled to London in 1616. Pocahontas, upon seeing Smith for the first time in nearly 10 years, disparaged him as a traitor to her father in front of a small audience of people. Pocahontas's excoriation of Smith characterized him as a man who lied, cheated, deceived, and treated those he should have respected as "stranger[s]." This ultimately mirrors Townsend's own estimation of the man behind the legend of Captain John Smith.

Opechankeno – A kinsman of Powhatan who was werowance (chief) of the Pamunkey tribe. Opechankeno was the one to first capture John Smith and bring him to Powhatan. As the years went by, Opechankeno remained an important military strategist and ally to Powhatan. In the years following Powhatan's death, Opechankeno struggled to keep a hold on his people's land in the face of escalating violence from the Jamestown colonists. In 1644, well into his 80s, Opechankeno was executed at Jamestown after leading one final rebellion against the colonists.

Uttamatomakin – An adviser and son-in-law to Powhatan who likely held a position of spiritual and political authority within the Powhatan tribe. As a trusted adviser and kinsman, Uttamatomakin was bade to accompany Pocahontas on her journey to England in 1616. Uttamatomakin was ostensibly sent to protect Pocahontas, but also to gather information on the English and to make reports back to Powhatan about the size and organization of their land. Uttamatomakin found himself utterly overwhelmed by the enormous population of England and disgusted by the English's indifferent treatment and lack of respect for him. When he returned to Tsenacomoco, he warned Powhatan and his other kinsmen of the English's undeniable might—a warning that may have inspired a brutal attack on Jamestown in 1622.

Captain Samuel Argall – A military veteran and naval captain who was a favorite of Lord De La Warr and who served as deputy governor of Virginia under him, having been brought over from England in 1610 to try to find a way to stop relations between the Jamestown colonists and the surrounding tribes from deteriorating further than they already had. Argall secured the favor of the Virginia Company's wealthy backers by employing the trade of hostages and captives as a method of negotiating with the Powhatan tribes. Argall also played an instrumental role in capturing Pocahontas and bringing her to Jamestown as a valuable hostage. After Pocahontas's conversion to Christianity and her marriage to John Rolfe, Argall accompanied John Rolfe and Pocahontas to England. After using the trip to spread the word about the Virginia Company's "success" in the New World, Argall was appointed Governor of Virginia. As governor, he was tasked with managing a floundering colony as relations with the surrounding tribes deteriorated.

Reverend Alexander Whitaker – A reverend from a well-to-do scholarly family in England who traveled to Jamestown in hopes of converting as many members of the surrounding tribes as he could to Christianity. While captive in Jamestown and nearby Henrico, Pocahontas lived in Whitaker's, taking daily classes in language and religion at his behest and accompanying him to his weekly Sunday services. Whitaker, Townsend posits, showed Pocahontas a measure of kindness—but fundamentally viewed her more as an experiment for his conversion tactics than an autonomous human being. Whitaker bestowed the **name** Rebecca on

Pocahontas, hoping that she would, like the biblical Rebekah who favored her pale son Jacob over her darker son Esau, come to favor the white colonizers over her own darker-skinned people.

Thomas Rolfe – The son of John Rolfe and Pocahontas. Thomas Rolfe was a young boy when his mother died. John, rather than bringing Thomas back overseas to Virginia, left his son in England, in the care of a series of wards. As a young man, Thomas Rolfe returned to the New World to claim the lands his father left him when he, too, died. Thomas found himself drawn into conflicts with the tribes surrounding his father's lands in Jamestown—and in these conflicts, fought against his mother's people in exchange for more land and higher social status.

Captain Christopher Newport – The English captain of the Virginia Company's maiden voyage in 1606. He sailed back to England to gather supplies and make a report just months after helping to establish Jamestown, and returned with gifts from King James I of England to give to Powhatan. Among these was a crown, which Newport symbolically placed on Powhatan's head in a gesture of giving the mamanitowik even more "power" while reminding him that in the eyes of the English, only the English crown's power was of any significance.

Kocoom – Pocahontas's first husband and a warrior of the Patowomeck tribe. Townsend states that though there is little information about Kocoom and his marriage to Pocahontas, it is likely that the two of them married due to mutual interest and perhaps even love, since Pocahontas (as a person of little political significance) would have been free to marry whomever she chose.

Thomas Savage – A young Englishman who was traded to the Powhatan as a hostage or ward in exchange for Namontack, a "son" of Powhatan. The English claimed that Thomas Savage was the son of the English captain (and leader of the Virginia Company's maiden voyage) Christopher Newport—but in all likelihood, Savage was merely a lowly apprentice.

Namontack – A young Powhatan man who was traded to the English as a hostage or ward in exchange for a young Englishman, Thomas Savage. Though Powhatan claimed Namontack was one of his sons—and thus "royal" and a valuable trade—it is unlikely, Townsend posits, that Namontack had any political significance at all.

Lord De La Warr – The official title of a man named Thomas West who served as "governor-for-life" and general of Virginia beginning in 1610, stepping in after John Smith left the position. His arrival came at a crucial moment—his flotilla of ships showed up just as many disheartened, sick, exhausted colonists were preparing to leave Jamestown behind. His method of rulership was fairly cruel, he increased hostilities between the settlers and the surrounding tribes through antagonism, assaults, and hostage-takings. In 1612, after just a couple of years in Jamestown, he, too, gave up the post to return to England.

Sir Thomas Dale – A tough and cruel English military commander who served as marshal and later governor of Jamestown. Dale established a smaller colony upriver from Jamestown at Henrico. After giving John Rolfe permission to marry the captive Pocahontas, Dale essentially served as the couple's patron and even accompanied them on their journey to England in 1616.

Sir Edwin Sandys – A member of Parliament and a wealthy backer of the Virginia Company. Hoping to raise the company's esteem in the eyes of potential investors (and potential colonists), he took special interest in John Rolfe and Pocahontas when they visited London. Sandys gave the couple money and made introductions for them, in exchange for a promise from Rolfe that he would, upon returning to Virginia, establish a school meant to educate Indian children and convert them to Christianity.

Simon Van de Passe – A Dutch-German engraver of some renown who was commissioned to sketch Pocahontas for an engraving. The portrait was used to create a collectible piece of memorabilia—essentially propaganda and recruiting material for the Virginia Company. Townsend alleges that Van de Passe worked with Pocahontas to create a portrait of herself that she felt reflected who she was and what she valued rather than paint her as an inhuman object or marvel to gawk at—or worse, erase the truth of who she was by Anglicizing her features or dressing her in ridiculous outfits.

King James I – The king of England and Scotland from 1603 until his death in 1625. King James provided the charter for the Virginia Company and was invested in the colonization of Virginia, hoping that England would be able to compete with Spain for spatial and religious conquest over the largest swath of the New World.

MINOR CHARACTERS

"Rawhunt" – A Powhatan translator who accompanied Pocahontas on her first visit to Jamestown. His **name** was described as "Rawhunt" by colonists who wrote about him, but Townsend posits this name is inaccurate and based on a phonetic spelling of the man's true name.

Yapassus – A Patowomeck werowance (chief) whom the English coerced into betraying Pocahontas and delivering her into captivity.

Luis – The Algonkian subject of an anecdote which Townsend offers early on in the book in order to illustrate the ways in which the Indigenous tribes of the New World had been struggling against attempts at colonization by the Spanish and English alike for years before the establishment of Jamestown.

Sir Thomas Gates – A military veteran who served as the deputy governor of Virginia from 1611-1614.

George Villiers – A favorite (and possibly a lover) of King James I. Villiers was the guest of honor at a Twelfth Night masque, or elaborate performance, attended by Pocahontas and John Rolfe in 1617.

Queen Cockacoeske – The leader of the Pamunkey tribe in the 1640s. Though she and her people fought against the Jamestown colonists, she was eventually forced to sign a peace treaty and give away many of her people's lands.

Sir Louis Stukely A vice admiral in England. After the death of Pocahontas, John Rolfe decides to leave his and Pocahontas's son, Thomas Rolfe, under Stukely's care. John Rolfe soon came to regret this choice, but he and Thomas never saw each other again.

TERMS

The Virginia Company – A private company (later a public joint-stock venture) chartered in 1606 under **King James I** of England and assigned to settle colonies in the land now known as Virginia and to bring the "salvages in those parts […] and heathen people…to the true service and knowledge of God." The company's wealthy merchant backers, inspired by Spain's success in colonizing the lands of Mexico and Peru, hoped the venture would be a financially successful one, and that colonists might even discover gold and silver in the region. Though the company's council had many members, several of them quite wealthy, only seven of these council members traveled to the New World in 1606: one of them was **John Smith**, an experienced explorer. The company established the Jamestown colony in 1607, and in 1609, expanded into a joint-stock company whose shares were open for purchase by any who could afford them. From then on, each share cost upwards of 12 pounds—the equivalent of $2,500 today—or an agreement of seven years' labor in exchange for free passage to the New World. The Virginia Company's goals were to settle land in Virginia, find trade routes throughout the New World, and convert the native populations surrounding their settlements to Christianity in the name of King James I.

Tsenacomoco – The name given by the Powhatan people to their homeland, the region now known as the Virginia Tidewater.

Algonkian – Also occasionally spelled "Algonquin," a linguistic group spoken by the natives of Tsenacomoco. The Algonkian tribes are the group of linguistically-linked native inhabitants of the *Tsenacomoco*—the area now known as the Virginia Tidewater region. Some of the Algonkian tribes Townsend mentions throughout the book include the Powhatan, the Rappahannock, the Paspahegh, the Appomattock, the Weyanock, the Quioccohannock, and the Chiskiak, though there are many others.

Werowance – The Algonkian word for chief.

Werowocomoco – **Powhatan**'s village—literally, "King's House."

Mamanitowik – Literally "paramount chief"—the title **Powhatan** gave himself after bringing over thirty Algonkian tribes under his command.

Jamestown – The first permanent English settlement in the Americas. Established in Virginia in May of 1607, Jamestown nearly failed countless times in the first half of the 17th century due to disease, starvation, and repeated, intense conflicts with the surrounding Algonkian tribes.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

CULTURAL MYTH VS. HISTORICAL FACT

Camilla Townsend is a renowned historian whose work relies heavily on the contextualization and interpretation of primary resources—firsthand documents such as letters, diaries, books, and articles. As such, *Pocahontas and the Powhatan Dilemma* bridges the gap between fact and fiction surrounding the settling of the Jamestown Colony and the Virginia Tidewater area, known to the native tribes of the region as Tsenacomoco. As Townsend sifts through the historical record, she seeks to annihilate the myths about Native Americans—specifically the Algonkian tribes united under the powerful chief Powhatan—that are commonly circulated in present-day America. The book aims to secure a kind of justice for the Indigenous individuals—namely, Pocahontas—whose stories have been inaccurately transformed over time. Townsend ultimately argues that historical facts about Native Americans have been obscured by myths that unfortunately try to justify or even celebrate the widespread violence that was inflicted upon the Indigenous peoples of the land now called the United States.

As a whole, Townsend seeks to correct the dominant myths about early relations between the Powhatan people and the white settlers who razed their lands and decimated their populations. "Storytellers subverted [Pocahontas's] life to satisfy their own need to believe that the Indians loved and admired them (or their cultural forbears) without resentments […] She deserves better," writes Townsend in the book's preface. Throughout the book, she goes on to outline the ways in which "storytellers" throughout history have used myths of their own creation to, in Townsend's words, "satisfy their own need[s]"—often in service of justifying ongoing colonization of the world or to excuse the evils of earlier colonial efforts. One of the major examples Townsend uses to illustrate this pattern

of myth-making as political strategy concerns John Smith's famed account of Pocahontas rescuing him from certain death by flinging herself on his prone body just as her father, widely known as Powhatan (so called for the group of tribes he conquered and brought together under his leadership), was about to strike and kill Smith with a club. This story, Townsend states, never took place. In fact, though Smith published two books about his exploits in Virginia in 1612, he did not mention the incident in either—he did not tell this story until 17 years later, in 1624, "in the wake of an Indian rebellion, at which point Powhatan's kindred were viewed as the devil incarnate, and Pocahontas was suddenly being interpreted as exceptional among all her people." Though Smith embellished and outright manufactured other parts of his tales of life among the Powhatan, Townsend points to this incident in particular as a crucial example of the ways in which destructive myths are perpetuated for political gain. Smith's story about Pocahontas saving him from her brutal, backwards father gained traction because it allowed the English to continue envisioning the tribes of the New World as savages, among whom only a select few genuinely supported English colonists in America. According to Townsend, Smith created a story about Pocahontas in attempts to signal that there was virtue in the English people's continued presence in America. In particular, this narrative justified English people's continued destruction of the majority of the tribes living there—given Smith's story's "truth," Native Americans would seek only to brutally kill settlers seeking to colonize the New World.

Townsend continues to deconstruct other myths about Pocahontas throughout the novel, and shows how each story has been used to construct a version of a person who was politically useful in propaganda and rhetoric about the English being justified in—or even deserving of—their ruthless dominion over the *Tsenacomoco* tribes. One of the most profound of these myths concerns Pocahontas's status as a beloved princess with great power and social capital. Pocahontas is commonly described in the cultural imagination as the favorite daughter of Powhatan—the one who had been "closest to [his] heart" from her very birth. Historical record, however, suggests that Pocahontas likely had no special favor with her father. As a man with many wives (often taken for political gain) and the father of many children, Powhatan used his offspring in pursuit of political strategy between tribes. Sending Pocahontas to Jamestown on several occasions to communicate and negotiate with the Jamestown settlers was, in all likelihood, a "shrewd" move: Pocahontas's mother was likely a commoner, and thus it would not have been a major loss had the colonists killed Pocahontas herself; it's also possible that Pocahontas may simply have been the most adept at translating between English and her tribe's Algonkian language. Again, Townsend shows how the English created a myth about Pocahontas as a special favorite of the Powhatan "king." This myth has pervaded throughout history because it allows the English—and generations of individuals around the world who have benefited (and continue to benefit) from the ravages of colonialism—to see Pocahontas as having chosen the English people as her favorites, just as her father chose her as his. In light of this myth, Pocahontas's political congress with the English could have been interpreted as some kind of mystical divine selection. If the favorite daughter of the most powerful king in the region was indeed repeatedly visiting Jamestown to communicate with the settlers, they may have seen themselves as being somehow willed to prosper and therefore justified in using violent force to achieve this success.

Pocahontas and the Powhatan people all "deserve better"—about this fact there is no doubt. However, throughout history, cultural and political leaders have done their true stories a great disservice by purposefully corrupting and commodifying them in service of what amounts to propaganda. According to Townsend, the idea that the Virginia Algonkian tribes welcomed white colonizers and even loved them has proliferated throughout American culture because of the majority-white U.S. population's need to justify the evils upon which the country was founded. In *Pocahontas and the Powhatan Dilemma*, Townsend attempts to secure some measure of justice for the individuals whose stories and very lives were stripped from them, and to right the historical record by turning to facts—not stories.

COLONIALISM AS ERASURE

In *Pocahontas and the Powhatan Dilemma*, the ravages of colonialism in the New World have only recently begun—but the violence and genocide to come haunt even the early meetings between the Algonkian tribes of the Tsenacomoco (now known as the Virginia Tidewater region) and the English settlers who arrive on their land in 1607. When the Virginia Company—the private company chartered by King James I of England to establish a colony in Virginia—arrived, the Algonkian tribes were on the verge of major sociological, political, and cultural leaps—but faced with the colonizers' superior weaponry and determination to claim the land of the river basin as their own, the tribes were forced to focus solely on survival. Over the course of the book, Townsend outlines the relations between the settlers and the *Tsenacomoco* tribes, ultimately arguing that the forces of colonialism derailed centuries of the Algonkian tribes' culture, politics, and technological advancements. As such, Townsend suggests that the forces of colonialism often effectively erase the culture and progress of the people they colonize.

Over the course of the book, Townsend turns to the historical record in order to outline the ways in which the arrival of white settlers from England forever derailed, depleted, and indeed erased the social, cultural, and technological progress of the Powhatan people—implying that other colonization efforts

throughout history have had a similar effect. In the days of the legendary Pocahontas's youth, Townsend writes, her people were on the cusp of major social and technological change. The historical record indicates that they were "beginning to feel the want of iron that might eventually have driven them to mine it." Their farming practices (though begun only 300 years earlier after centuries of a nomadic hunter-gatherer lifestyle) had advanced to a point at which iron tools were becoming necessary to keep up with the increasingly bountiful harvests of difficult-to-salvage root plants. The tribes, too, had begun to organize and streamline tribute payments which flowed to Powhatan, Pocahontas's father and the mamanitowik (paramount chief) of the region, from the tribes he'd brought under his command—these tribute payments had begun to resemble a kind of taxation which would likely have soon begun to necessitate a calendar and writing system. While a written language or collective calendar had not yet emerged, the fact that Powhatan's people did, according to Townsend, keep "pictoglyphic maps and [...] noted quantities on notched sticks" suggests that they were prepared to take up tangible forms of record-keeping. The natives of the New World and their English colonizers, Townsend writes, had unknowingly been in "something like a technological race" for many centuries. Whereas the ancestors of the Virginia Company had been organized around an agriculturalist society for 11,000 years, however, the Algonkian tribes had only been farming for 300. The English, Townsend writes, had already won—and with the winds of chance on their side, they began to decimate the Powhatan people's way of life and effectively bar them from ever making the advances on which their society had begun to verge. Townsend goes deeper and deeper into this example, noting later in the text that for centuries, many people—the English settlers themselves surely included—have seen the English's comparative "technological power" as a code for their being "superior" in refinement or intelligence to the tribes they sought to conquer. Townsend clarifies that this racist line of thought, in addition to comprising the very myth-making which justifies and excuses the ravages of colonialism, ignores the fact that the English's technological superiority stems from a twist of fate—"the presence or absence of suitable plant species thousands of years ago." In other words, because the English's long legacy of agriculturalism was largely due to the happenstance of living in a fertile region, this efficient system of growing food—and the stability it provided—allowed them to focus on developing other technologies. Townsend uses this instance of happenstance to argue that had the Powhatan tribes been given time and continued freedom, their own "technological power" would have made itself evident; it is the forces of colonialism which halted their progress as an agricultural society and erased their potential for the practical development and growth that surely would have come.

Throughout *Pocahontas and the Powhatan Dilemma*, Townsend outlines the ways in which English colonization of the so-called New World erased the long, complex, and beautiful histories of that world's native population. She laments the fact that the colonization of a place always necessitates the dominion over and erasure of all that came before. Townsend writes that it is "unfair to imply" that Pocahontas or any lone individual could have stopped "a new nation [from being] built on their people's destruction," cementing her argument that colonization demands the obliteration of the colonized land's people, history, and very soul.

LANGUAGE, COMMUNICATION, AND POWER

Throughout *Pocahontas and the Powhatan Dilemma*, Townsend seeks to show her readers how communication between the Algonkian tribes of the Tsenacomoco region and the English settlers who arrived on their lands in the early 1600s functioned—and failed. In addition to examining the practical challenges of communication and language, Townsend also dives into the power imbalances which result from the fact that the Algonkian tribes had not yet developed a formal written language when the English arrived. Because the records of this time period that still exist today are largely composed by the colonizers themselves, Townsend suggests that only one side of the story has been preserved. Power, she argues, is granted to those whose voices are most greatly amplified.

"History is written by the victors," goes the popular aphorism. In *Pocahontas and the Powhatan Dilemma*, Townsend shows how the white colonizers who ventured to the New World razed the Powhatan people's lands and annihilated their culture using language and communication (or lack thereof) to establish power over them. Over the years, this power imbalance enabled the English to tell the story of colonizing the *Tsenacomoco* tribes from their own perspective in a way that further solidified their disproportionate power. In one example of the ways in which language and communication can confer—or strip—power from a group, Townsend relays an anecdote about Thomas Harriot. Harriot was a mathematician and linguist who traveled to the English colony at Roanoke in 1590 and, upon his return to England, published a book about his travels. Townsend writes that though Harriot took care to learn some of the local tribes' languages, take detailed notes about their ways of life, and "clearly respected many of the people he met and understood that a lack of technology did not imply shortcomings in intelligence," his report ultimately encouraged "enthusiastic backers of colonization." Harriot's published work described the Algonkian tribes as "a people poore, and for want of skill and judgement." He categorized the tribes he met as desirous of the "friendship and love" of the English—a submissive people who took joy in "pleasing and obeying" their colonizers. The example of Harriot's early travelogue shows how language and communication effectively

equate with—and even create—power. Though Harriot may have known that the things he was writing were false, he wrote them anyway, and his words were used as justification to continue colonizing the region. By categorizing the tribes he met as submissive, "poore," and sycophantic groups who loved the English and hoped only to please them, he stripped them of their voices, erased their actual wants and needs, and fueled the fervor for colonialism.

Yet another example Townsend cites in her exploration of the ways in which language and communication are intermixed with power concerns Pocahontas herself. In May of 1608, the English settlers at Jamestown seized several Indian hostages, likely from the Paspahegh tribe. Three days into the men's captivity, Powhatan sent his daughter Pocahontas—then only 10 years old—along with an advisor of Powhatan's whose **name** may have been "Rawhunt," or something phonetically similar. The historical record implies that Rawhunt spoke to the settlers in Algonkian while Pocahontas translated with the help of Thomas Savage, a young Englishman and ward of Powhatan. The negotiation was successful, and according to reports, Pocahontas spent time visiting and speaking with colonists and prisoners alike. The visit was her first of many to the colony, and Pocahontas's language skills grew over the years. As they did, Townsend writes, she became "every more powerful" and important not only to the colonists, but to her father as well. Pocahontas has been regarded throughout the years as a pivotal figure in early relations between the Powhatan and the English. While claims of her specialness to Powhatan, her love of the English people, her desire to convert to Christianity, and her love of English men have all been greatly exaggerated, this anecdote represents a seed of truth as to why Pocahontas has become such an iconic and indeed powerful figure of history. Pocahontas's youth and ability to absorb a new language made her a vital political tool for both her own people and the English—as a translator and an arbiter of language, she grew in power and status. Townsend uses this anecdote to further her argument about the rewards—and demands—of using language and communication as an inroads to power, however wittingly or unconsciously one may so do. Though Townsend later complicates and interrogates how much "power" and agency Pocahontas actually had in her lifetime (and has now in the contemporary cultural imagination), she uses this example to hammer home just how valued and indeed revered the ability to possess and harness language truly was in the tenuous early days of colonization in the New World.

Throughout the book, Townsend attempts to give voice to the voiceless. By recognizing the advantage the Virginia Company (the company chartered by King James I to establish a colony in Virginia) had over the Algonkian tribes, who had no written language, Townsend dissects the ways in which the colonizers themselves—and their compatriots back in England—used language and communication to broadcast to the world (and to future generations) their side of the story. Townsend knows that because "history is written by the victors," it is the responsibility of historians and academics to challenge the received facts of human history and discover the truth behind the language used to disseminate them throughout the world.

WOMEN, AGENCY, AND HISTORY

In *Pocahontas and the Powhatan Dilemma*, Townsend creates a new portrait of the woman most people know as Pocahontas—a widely-known historical figure whose agency, feelings, personality, and very words have been lost to history while other people's accounts of and assumptions about her have proliferated through the ages. In telling Pocahontas's story, Townsend seeks to restore justice and indeed agency to the Algonkian "princess." Throughout the book, Townsend uses the story of Pocahontas to more broadly argue that for untold scores of women throughout history—especially women of color and women from oppressed cultural groups—the fact that agency was denied to them in their lifetimes unfortunately means that their stories will be posthumously corrupted and coopted.

Throughout the book, Townsend shows how Pocahontas struggled throughout her lifetime—in spite of her relatively privileged status as the daughter of the powerful paramount chief (or mamanitowik) Powhatan—to secure agency over her own choices in the face of colonialism. As Townsend shows in the book's early chapters, many of the "facts" that exist in the collective cultural consciousness about Pocahontas are, in fact, myths. As Townsend explores the roots of these myths, she establishes how the falsehoods about Pocahontas that many people accept as truth in the modern day were actually sources of Pocahontas's struggle for agency during her lifetime. For instance, though Pocahontas is widely believed to have been the favorite daughter of her powerful father, Powhatan, Townsend asserts that this favoritism did not exist—in fact, Pocahontas was the daughter of a common woman and thus likely quite expendable to her father for much of her life. Pocahontas had to strive, as her father before her did, for agency and power—she used her communication and language skills to secure her importance both to her own tribe and to the colonists. Colonial power over her people was becoming clearer by the day, and Pocahontas, in spite of her youth, no doubt understood that this meant a significant change to the landscape of her world.

Townsend examines how Pocahontas, during moments in which her power and agency were stripped from her completely, did all she could to retain some measure of control over her own fate. When Pocahontas was taken captive by the English when she was 15 or 16, Townsend describes how her captors later wrote that the young woman used silence as a tactic to get them to "wait upon her words" and heed her more carefully, even in spite of her disadvantaged position. Upon her arrival in

Jamestown as a prisoner, Pocahontas attracted much attention from the colonists, who realized they had a "royal hostage." She complied with their ideals of her, converting to Christianity at their behest and even marrying a relatively wealthy tobacco planter, a widower named John Rolfe. Pocahontas, Townsend suggests, strategized throughout her captivity not just to keep herself alive, but to actively advance her social position among the colonists. By appearing to eagerly adopt their language, religion, and customs—and by using her father's own political strategy in marrying someone from another "tribe" and begetting a child, Thomas Rolfe, who might hold allegiance to both parents' peoples—Pocahontas did manage to wrestle a measure of agency for herself out of a terrible situation.

Townsend also goes on to show how Pocahontas, stripped of her agency while alive and forced to wrest back what little power over herself she could, has also been denied agency in death through the corruption and commodification of her life story. As uncountable individuals from historians to Hollywood executives bastardize Pocahontas's biography, each falsehood told about her life, her choices, and the reasons behind her actions further robs Pocahontas's legacy of humanity and agency. Pocahontas's story, Townsend asserts, is "a story of heroism as it exists in the real world, not in epic tales." Yet over the years, the corruption of Pocahontas's life story and what it says about colonialism, power, agency, and the struggle of women of color to survive in a world (which was, in Pocahontas's time, quite literally ruled by white men) has resulted in a kind of retroactive loss. Pocahontas was not a naïve girl who fell in love with members of the company that killed and colonized her own people, nor was she a devout convert who eschewed her past in the name of accepting the Christian God into her life. Narratives that categorize Pocahontas as such, Townsend warns, continue to deny the truth of her life and disrespect the very real difficulties Pocahontas endured in order to do the best with the hand she was dealt. Pocahontas died in England after having been brought to London to be shown off at court as Rebecca Rolfe—a "princess" who chose an English man and a Christian life over her own people. Townsend argues that it is wrong to assert that Pocahontas willingly chose such circumstances out of anything other than an iron-willed desire to, in whatever way she could, broadcast her people's humanity to a racist and uncaring group of colonizers. Perpetuating anything to the contrary means retroactively continuing to strip Pocahontas of her agency in death by willfully misinterpreting the reasoning behind her complicated, calculated choices in life.

Even though one may be denied agency in life, Townsend suggests, there is still a glimmer of hope that the truth of one's stories, choices, and actions may be restored. When this fails to happen—as it did for centuries and still often does in Pocahontas's case—Townsend argues that this failure comes to represent a continued theft of agency.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

NAMES

As a work of history and anthropology, *Pocahontas and the Powhatan Dilemma* is not a particularly symbolic text. However, throughout Camilla Townsend's reconstruction of life for both the Powhatan people and the English settlers who colonized their lands beginning in the 1600s, one symbol does emerge. Throughout the text, names (and the ways in which others bestow nicknames, baptismal names, and married names upon Pocahontas in particular) symbolize the many unpredictable—and occasionally unwelcome—changes which transpire throughout one's life. Pocahontas's life, in particular, was marked by many names: Amonute, her childhood name, and Pocahontas, her nickname meaning "mischief" or "little wanton one"; Matoaka, her adult name taken during her first marriage to a warrior named Kocoom; and at last Rebecca, the biblical name assigned to her by Reverend Alexander Whitaker. The name Rebecca was given to Pocahontas during her baptism in hopes that she would favor white colonists over her own people—just as the Rebekah of the Bible favored her pale son, Jacob, over her ruddy son, Esau.

Though the many names Pocahontas had throughout her life symbolize her uniquely chaotic and unstable circumstances, Townsend also suggests that there is a lighter symbolism behind the use of ever-changing names in the tradition of the Algonkian tribes. Pocahontas would have grown up expecting her name to change over the course of her life. In this way, Townsend suggests that names—so central to Western ideals of identity—may have allowed Pocahontas to gather strength from the unfair and often unwelcome changes in her life, dictated by those who sought to use her as a political pawn from her early childhood. While the English and Spanish colonists who arrived in the New World attempted to control their captives by bestowing new names upon them, Townsend suggests that for a member of the Powhatan tribes, being stripped of his or her name would not have been traumatic or dehumanizing, though that was certainly the goal of renaming. Instead, to an individual who expected to go through life with several names, it would merely have marked a new phase of life to be moved through.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Hill and Wang edition of *Pocahontas and the Powhatan Dilemma* published in 2005.

Preface Quotes

Myths can lend meaning to our days, and they can inspire wonderful movies. They are also deadly to our understanding. They diminish the influence of facts, and a historical figure's ability to make us think; they diminish our ability to see with fresh eyes.

Related Characters: Camilla Townsend (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: ix-x

Explanation and Analysis

In the preface to *Pocahontas and the Powhatan Dilemma*, historian Camilla Townsend sets out the endeavor of the text: to clarify and correct the myths about Pocahontas, the Powhatan people, and the colonization of the Virginia Tidewater (*Tsenacomoco*) region by English settlers. Townsend lets her readers know that many of the myths and anecdotes they've accepted as factual will soon be dismantled, but that such work is necessary—myth is "deadly" to understanding the past and to reckoning with the present (and growth toward a new and better future). Townsend wants to right the wrongs of the myths about Pocahontas that are now so intrinsic to American culture, and reorient cultural understand of Pocahontas so that she becomes a historical figure who "make[s] us think" critically about the U.S.'s cultural inheritance and the fundamental fact that America has been built on the physical and cultural destruction of Indigenous people.

The mythical Pocahontas who loved John Smith, the English, the Christian faith, and London more than she loved her own father or people or faith or village deeply appealed to the settlers of Jamestown and the court of King James. That Pocahontas also inspired the romantic poets and patriotic myth-makers of the nineteenth century, as well as many twentieth-century producers of toys, films, and books. With one accord, all these storytellers subverted her life to satisfy their own need to believe that the Indians loved and admired them (or their cultural forebears) without resentments, without guile. She deserves better.

Related Characters: Camilla Townsend (speaker), King James I, Powhatan/Wahunsenacaw , John Smith, Pocahontas/Amonute/Matoaka/Rebecca

Related Themes:

Page Number: xi

Explanation and Analysis

Townsend includes this passage in the preface to her book about the true story of Pocahontas. In doing so, she hammers home to her readers the fact that "myth-makers," who have created a version of Pocahontas's life which ideologically supports the process of colonization in its aftereffects, are in the wrong. They have effectively denied Pocahontas and her people agency even in death. Townsend's primary concern throughout the book is the obfuscation of fact by myth, and the ways in which colonialism erases all that came before it, further muddying the facts of history. She is also interested in the ways in which women's agency over their own lives—or lack thereof—ties in with language, communication, and how the ability to tell one's own story and have it be heard empowers a person. In this passage, Townsend makes clear all of those intellectual and cultural questions—while plainly making her point that Pocahontas "deserves better" than the way history has treated her by making her a tool of white colonialist oppressors' handy narratives about the righteousness of their purpose.

Chapter 1 Quotes

Many people in the modern world like to imagine that Native Americans were inexplicably and inherently different from Europeans—kinder, gentler, more spiritual—and that they instinctively chose not to deploy power in the same way. It is wishful thinking. The Indians were not essentially different from Europeans. Powhatan, who showed a sense of humor in his dealings with the newcomers, might well have laughed at our modern notions—if he did not use them to his advantage first.

Related Characters: Camilla Townsend (speaker), Powhatan/Wahunsenacaw

Related Themes:

Page Number: 14

Explanation and Analysis

In the first chapter of *Pocahontas and the Powhatan Dilemma*, Townsend wastes no time in deconstructing historical and cultural mythmaking. Here, she plainly debunks the pervasive idea that Native Americans were somehow "kinder, gentler, [or] more spiritual" than their European counterparts—that is to say, that they were fundamentally

naïve. Townsend outlines the mission of this first chapter, which is to help her readers see through fresh eyes the truth about the complex lives of the Powhatan people, their political savvy, and their carefully considered social, cultural, and political lives. Townsend laments that "many people in the modern world" have been fed a myth all their lives as a result of the forces of colonialism. She also decries the fact that the self-serving narrative about the Algonkian tribes proliferated by their colonizers has replaced the richer, far more interesting historical record in the dominant cultural imagination.

❝ When the two cultures met and entered a power struggle over land and resources, it would turn out that, unbeknownst to either side, they had been in something like a technological race for centuries. And the cultural heirs of people who had been full-time agriculturalists for eleven thousand years rather than a few hundred had already won.

None of this made an individual white man one whit more intelligent or more perceptive than an individual Indian—just better informed and better armed.

Related Characters: Camilla Townsend (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 24

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Townsend makes it clear that just because the English settlers from the Virginia Company eventually managed to colonize, subdue, and control the Indigenous population of the Virginia Tidewater (*Tsenacomoco*) region over the course of the first half of the 17th century, they were not "more intelligent or more perceptive" than the tribes they brutalized and massacred. The English's ability to dominate the Algonkian tribes, Townsend asserts, stems from a happenstance of fate: the English, having lived for millennia in a more fertile and easily farmable territory, had developed a sedentary and agriculturalist lifestyle which subsequently allowed them to focus on innovation in arenas such as metalworking and weapons technology. The technological race, Townsend says, had already been won before the English arrived in the New World. Though the Algonkians' defeat was all but assured before they even had a chance to fight for their land, this fact doesn't stem from any fundamental difference in intelligence, perceptiveness, or (as the English would later assert) divine right to the lands of New World.

Chapter 2 Quotes

❝ There is no question that John Smith and his peers— those who wrote such books, and those who read them— embraced a notion of an explorer as a conqueror who strode with manly steps through lands of admirers, particularly admiring women. […] The colonizers of the imagination were men—men imbued with almost mystical powers. The foreign women and the foreign lands wanted, even needed, these men, for such men were more than desirable. They were deeply good, right in all they did, blessed by God.

Related Characters: Camilla Townsend (speaker), John Smith

Related Themes:

Page Number: 29

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Townsend describes the kinds of books John Smith might have read as he prepared to journey to the New World with the Virginia Company in 1606. The accounts Smith read and enjoyed, Townsend asserts, were highly-sensationalized travelogues written by Spanish settlers. The translated versions of these accounts were devoured by English readers hungry for stories of lusty foreign women and sordid, dangerous adventures in foreign lands. Townsend argues that these accounts influenced not only the desires of Smith and men like him to go to the New World, but also shaped the accounts that the Jamestown settlers themselves would later compose and disseminate. Townsend suggests these accounts and travelogues functioned as a kind of propaganda, convincing down-on-their-luck men that in the New World they'd be worshipped by women; given a divine right to the bounties of the land; and hailed as righteous, powerful, and strong. Townsend's assertions tie in thematically with the book's exploration of cultural myth and the ways in which it obscures fact. It also speaks to the corrosive powers of colonialism and the ways in which language and communication influence or confer power.

"The first objection [to colonization] is, by what right or warrant we can enter in the land of these Savages, take away their rightfull inheritance from them, and plant ourselves in their places..." [...]

These words may startle people who assume [...] it never occurred to anyone that taking Indian land raised a moral issue. It is rare, though, that a great wrong is committed by one people against another without some among the perpetrators protesting the deed. Colonists made moral decisions, too. And some were adept at convincing themselves that whatever they wanted to do was indeed the right thing to do, whatever others might say.

Related Characters: Camilla Townsend (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 35

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Townsend reproduces a written sermon by an English pastor who, in the early days of the Virginia Company's existence, questioned "by what right or warrant" Englishmen assumed they could strip land from the native populations of the New World and install themselves in their places. Townsend's suggestion that the colonists who were traveling to the New World with the Virginia Company were not ignorant of the moral wrongs that they as individuals (and their country as a colonial institution) were committing ties in with the idea of cultural myth versus historical fact. Because the English triumphed in the end, the narrative was rewritten in the cultural imagination, creating the idea that they'd always known they belonged in the New World. In fact, Townsend suggests, colonialism and its propaganda have erased the fact that there were serious questions in the cultural discourse of the time about the moral consequences of colonizing the New World—questions which the men of the Virginia Company might have forced themselves to push aside or dismiss as they chased their own fortunes across the sea.

Chapter 3 Quotes

It must be asked if anything remotely resembling what John Smith described could have occurred that December day in 1607. Unfortunately, the issue was thoroughly clouded by academics before it was eventually clarified by them. In the nineteenth century it became fashionable, amidst a certain circle of dignified white gentlemen scholars [...] to denounce Smith as a braggart and a fraud. This caused those who loved him and his legend [...] to rally to his cause and insist on his absolute veracity in every particular.

Related Characters: Camilla Townsend (speaker), Pocahontas/Amonute/Matoaka/Rebecca , Powhatan/Wahunsenacaw , John Smith

Related Themes:

Page Number: 55

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Townsend thoroughly debunks the myths surrounding the first meeting between John Smith (a high-ranking member of the Virginia Company expedition to establish a colony at Jamestown) and Powhatan (the *mamanitowik*, or paramount chief, of the Powhatan people). Whereas Smith famously wrote of the meeting in sensationalist terms, describing Pocahontas flinging herself upon Smith's prone body to prevent her father, the chief, from clubbing Smith's brains out, Townsend argues that such a dramatic event never happened. Smith didn't begin writing about the meeting in such terms until after Pocahontas and her father were both dead. What's more, Townsend states, clubbing was not a punishment meted out to captured enemies or prisoners of war, which Smith decidedly was. Instead, Powhatan likely ritually adopted Smith at their first meeting in order to secure a peaceful alliance between their peoples. This anecdote, in Townsend's estimation, represents the ways in which myth obscures fact—and how the language and texts of the powerful can become more influential than the truth.

One element is beyond debate: at no point did Powhatan, Pocahontas, or any of their people look on the strangers with wide-mouthed awe or consider them gods. Hernando Cortés never claimed that the Aztecs thought he was a god— as they almost certainly did not—yet the flattering notion became wildly popular in the after-the-fact accounts that appeared later in the century, several of which were widely available in England.

Related Characters: Camilla Townsend (speaker), Pocahontas/Amonute/Matoaka/Rebecca , Powhatan/Wahunsenacaw

Related Themes:

Page Number: 63

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Townsend dispels yet another widely-held cultural myth about early relations between the Powhatan people and the English settlers of the Virginia Company. Whereas many modern thinkers might imagine that the Indigenous people of the Americas were naïve, easily-awed, or in search of new gods or saviors, Townsend states that such thinking is categorically false. The reason these myths pervade, however, is because they are "flattering" to the very people who sought power—the English colonizers—and dehumanizing to conquered peoples. Townsend supports this assertion with the fact that many settlers and regular English people were conflicted about the moral right to colonization. Myths about being revered as gods by several groups of simple, backwards people allowed colonizers to reassure themselves and assert to the world that they were morally (and even divinely) in the right. Thus, Townsend demonstrates that when myth obscures fact—and renders an entire group of people voiceless—dangerous perversions of history and morality can emerge and indeed persist.

Chapter 4 Quotes

❝ Was she really the one then closest to Powhatan's heart, and did he believe that Smith would know this from his days of captivity and thus recognize her presence as a white flag? Or was she, as the daughter of a commoner and without claims to political power, among the children he could most afford to lose, and thus the one whose safety he chose to risk? Or did he as a shrewd statesmen simply choose the daughter in whose abilities he had most confidence?

Related Characters: Camilla Townsend (speaker), Powhatan/Wahunsenacaw , Pocahontas/Amonute/Matoaka/Rebecca

Related Themes:

Page Number: 70

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Townsend, who has just described Pocahontas's first visit to Jamestown to negotiate the release of several Indian hostages, questions why Pocahontas was sent to the colony. Though cultural myth asserts that Pocahontas was Powhatan's favorite and most special daughter, historical fact suggests that Pocahontas's mother was a commoner, and that Pocahontas's great number of brothers and sisters meant that her father likely had other favorites. Pocahontas, Townsend suggests, might have been sent to make the negotiation because she was one of the children Powhatan could most afford to lose. This reading of the incident suggests that Pocahontas had to create her own significance, both politically and socially—and that she used her skills as a translator, having been instructed in English by John Smith, to create power and agency for herself. Townsend is interested in examining the ways in which myths about Pocahontas have presented her as inaccurately powerful, special, or significant to both her own people and the Jamestown settlers while simultaneously stripping her of agency by denying the historical facts of her life and choices.

❝ Namontack convinced Powhatan to accept the gifts… […] "But a fowle trouble there was to make him kneele to receave his crowne." Smith asserted that this was because the Indian did not know the "meaning of a Crowne," but in fact he probably understood only too well the gesture of kneeling to receive a crown at the hands of another. He himself, after all, liked the practice of anointing tributary werowances who were bound to do his bidding. "At last by leaning hard on his shoulders, he a little stooped, and Newport put the Crowne on his head."

Related Characters: Camilla Townsend (speaker), Captain Christopher Newport, John Smith, Powhatan/Wahunsenacaw , Namontack

Related Themes:

Page Number: 78

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Camilla Townsend describes a politically significant—and darkly foreboding—interaction between Captain Christopher Newport of the Virginia Company and chief Powhatan. After a supply trip to London, Newport returned to Jamestown and visited Powhatan in his village, accompanied by Namontack—a young Powhatan man who was given to the English as a hostage ward in exchange for the custody of an English boy, Thomas Savage. Though

Powhatan knew that to accept gifts from Newport (other than the guns and weapons he wanted) meant tacitly admitting that Newport had a kind of power over him, Namontack convinced him to do so anyway. When Newport showed Powhatan a crown he hoped to bestow upon him, though, Powhatan balked, until Newport "lean[ed] hard on his shoulders" and made him bend to be crowned. This instance, Townsend writes, is significant because it shows the complicated political strategy used by both the English and the Powhatan. In such a tense situation, any small power play read as enormous—and the sly act of presenting an English crown to a man who was the indisputable leader of his people foreshadowed the ways in which the England would continue to assault Powhatan's claim of authority in his own homeland over the years.

Chapter 5 Quotes

❝ Did [John Rolfe] and his wife look at the promised violence from the Indians' point of view? Possibly. Did they believe they were fulfilling God's will? Probably. Did they hope to become great merchant traders? Most certainly.

Related Characters: Camilla Townsend (speaker), John Rolfe

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 93

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Townsend imagines what John Rolfe—and his first wife, whose name is lost to history—might have been thinking as they prepared to sail for the New World to seek their fortunes. Rolfe dreamed of being a successful merchant trader, and hoped to cultivate tobacco in Virginia. He was so determined to make something of himself, Townsend suggests here, that he overlooked his concerns about violence against or from the Powhatan people. Instead, he convinced himself—and likely his wife—that they were "fulfilling God's will" by going to the New World. Townsend suggests that the rhetoric at the time—diaries, books, and sermons written by powerful people—encouraged colonialism and argued that to colonize the New World was actually for the good of the "savage" tribes who lived there. All of this was done, of course, in the name of making money for the wealthy backers of the Virginia Company expedition. Townsend thus condemns the complex religious, social, and political machinery which fueled colonialism and effectively erased whole swaths of people, languages, and cultures from the face of the earth.

❝ "They concluded," said Argall, "rather to deliver her into my hands, than lose my friendship."

Related Characters: Captain Samuel Argall (speaker), Yapassus, Pocahontas/Amonute/Matoaka/Rebecca

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 103

Explanation and Analysis

In this brief quotation, Townsend reproduces a primary source document in order to show the ways in which colonists thought about Native American lives. The quote, from Captain Samuel Argall's writings concerning the capture of Pocahontas at the Patowomeck village of Pasptanzie, demonstrates a cool, removed, simplistic report. According to Argall, the Indians decided of their own volition to hand over Pocahontas to the English rather than "lose [their] friendship." In reality, the historical record indicates that Argall threatened and extorted the Patowomeck chief, Yapassus, by preying upon the fact that Yapassus's tribe was the farthest geographically from the Powhatan chieftainship and thus the most politically and socially estranged from Pocahontas's father and people.

This quotation has deep thematic undertones: it shows how colonialism functions as a method of erasure, eroding not only intertribal relations in the moment but erasing truth, nuance, and cultural information from the collective consciousness. Through Argall's written work about the incident, he was able to advertise his own power in the situation and suggest that he was cunning and likable enough to get the Patowomeck to hand Pocahontas over—he does not provide the full truth of the situation nor reveal the low methods he used to secure the desired outcome. This quotation also demonstrates how Pocahontas, as a woman of color, was denied agency as she was traded for her ostensible political value without any consideration for her own comfort or happiness.

Chapter 6 Quotes

❝ [Pocahontas] had been living with the English long enough to have begun to grasp the resources they had at their disposal. If her people were to survive, they needed the English as allies, not as enemies. How did an Algonkian noblewoman build an alliance? In a time-honored custom, she married with the enemy and bore children who owed allegiance to both sides. […] At home she was not truly royal: her mother had been no one important, so […] normally [Pocahontas] would not have been considered eligible for a politically significant match… […] These English people, though, thought she was a princess and were willing to treat her accordingly, thus raising her status in her own people's eyes as well.

Related Characters: Camilla Townsend (speaker), John Rolfe, Pocahontas/Amonute/Matoaka/Rebecca

Related Themes:

Page Number: 119-120

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Townsend considers the potential emotional and political reasons behind Pocahontas's choice to accept John Rolfe's marriage proposal in 1614. She suggests that Pocahontas sought to raise her "status" and make herself politically significant to both her own people and the English settlers. As such, Townsend debunks modern thinking about Pocahontas's decision to embark on a second marriage. While cultural myth often states that Pocahontas fell in love with John Rolfe, the reality of the historical record seems to indicate that her decision to marry him was strategic rather than emotional, though she may have liked him well enough. As the forces of colonization threatened to erase Pocahontas's people, she saw a rare opportunity to do something that might win more respect, agency, and power for both herself and her tribe. The book debunks modern Western myths about Pocahontas's emotionality, naïveté, or simplicity, replacing them with evidence from the historical record indicating that Pocahontas was (like her father before her) a skilled political strategist in her own right.

Chapter 7 Quotes

❝ The [Biblical] name Rebecca was almost certainly Whitaker's choice. […] By Isaac, Rebekah conceived twins […] Rebekah favored [Jacob] the pale son over [Esau] the red one [and] it is more than likely that Whitaker thought the parallel perfect. Pocahontas's children would be by nature both Indian and Christian, both red and pale. […] If Whitaker read the story this way, however, Pocahontas likely did not. She could easily have focused her attention on the passages narrated from the perspective of Rebekah's people, in which […] her siblings bless her for being willing to go and bear children among the enemy.

Related Characters: Camilla Townsend (speaker), Reverend Alexander Whitaker, Pocahontas/Amonute/Matoaka/Rebecca

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 126-127

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Townsend describes the reasoning behind the baptismal name of Rebecca that Reverent Whitaker chose to give Pocahontas when she converted to Christianity. As Townsend describes the symbolic meaning behind the name—and Whitaker's hope that he could impart the biblical Rebekah's values onto Pocahontas—she also takes care to mention the way Pocahontas might have read the name's meaning or symbolism. Whitaker likely thought that in giving Pocahontas a name he hoped would be prophetic, he could control her destiny. However, Pocahontas's tribe had a much more casual and fluid understanding of names, and so taking on the name of Rebecca likely did not hold much significance for Pocahontas. Whitaker tried to control Pocahontas's power and agency over her own life—and erase her previous identity and allegiances—by using language to assign her a new name. But Townsend suggests that he likely didn't anticipate Pocahontas's ability to reclaim that agency by interpreting the name's meaning for herself.

❝ Pocahontas became Rebecca. She would not have found the idea of a renaming traumatic: it was in keeping with her culture for her to change her name as she proceeded through her life and had new experiences. Men, in fact, said that they aspired to earning many names, and women may well have, too.

Related Characters: Camilla Townsend (speaker),

Reverend Alexander Whitaker, Pocahontas/Amonute/Matoaka/Rebecca

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 127

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Townsend describes Pocahontas's name change after converting to Christianity at the behest of Reverend Alexander Whitaker, her jailer during her time in captivity at the English colony of Henrico. As Townsend attempts to reconstruct what the change might have meant to Pocahontas, she's careful to provide historical and cultural context for the young woman's potential perspective. This is one of the major passages in the novel which explores the symbolism of names in Pocahontas's world, versus the symbolism of names in modern-day thought. Though names generally hold great individual meaning and significance in the modern Western world, for Pocahontas and her people, names were things meant to be as fluid as one's circumstances throughout life. While Reverend Whitaker likely thought of Pocahontas's willingness to take on a new name as monumental, for Pocahontas, the choice was likely much less powerful: she was merely entering a new stage of life.

Chapter 8 Quotes

"The Virginia Company's standing was precarious. Even as Sandys prepared the Lady Rebecca to meet London society, the company was involved in several lawsuits. [...] The organization's financial situation would remain shaky until the general public became convinced that Virginia was truly a land of promise. Naturally, tobacco shipments would be critical, but to raise a significant crop the company first needed to convince potential settlers and investors that the Indians were not bloodthirsty savages.

Related Characters: Camilla Townsend (speaker), Sir Edwin Sandys, Pocahontas/Amonute/Matoaka/Rebecca

Related Themes:

Page Number: 140

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Townsend describes the political and financial standing of the Virginia Company in the months before Pocahontas and John Rolfe's arrival on their tour. Townsend posits that the Virginia Company wanted to bring Pocahontas and Rolfe to England in order to show them off, raise money for and interest in the company, and pull the joint-stock venture up out of its sticky financial situation. This passage is thematically significant because it shows how, throughout Pocahontas's lifetime, she was used as a prop, symbol, or even walking advertisement—often meant to showcase the benefits of colonization. Edwin Sandys and the rest of the Virginia Company no doubt wanted to present Pocahontas as a metaphor for the possibilities of continuing to colonize the New World: as a "royal" Powhatan woman who'd converted to Christianity and married a settler, Pocahontas likely signaled the triumphs of whiteness and Protestantism in a foreign territory. The men presenting Pocahontas this way didn't know—or didn't care—about the complex personal and political motivations that actually led her to accept Christianity, take an English husband, or choose to venture to London of her own accord.

"It would not have taken [Pocahontas] long to realize that friend and foe alike held at least one notion in common: she was to them a model, a stick figure, representing a race that was either barbaric or charming, or both, depending on their perspective, but never simply human.

It would be too simple to say that she faced hatred. The British were fascinated by her, adored her exoticism. At first it probably seemed flattering. Only later would she have begun to experience the psychological costs of being a symbol rather than a person.

Related Characters: Camilla Townsend (speaker), Pocahontas/Amonute/Matoaka/Rebecca

Related Themes:

Page Number: 143-144

Explanation and Analysis

As Pocahontas adjusted to life in London—a life that involved, more often than not, being gawked at by members of London's high society and gossiped about behind her back—she no doubt felt herself the subject of constant scrutiny, and those feelings took a toll on her. Even those complimentary toward her, Townsend posits, must have made Pocahontas feel like "a symbol rather than a person." The way Pocahontas was treated in life, Townsend suggests,

stripped her not only of her agency but of her personhood. As she traveled to London, the myths about her created by accounts from John Smith and the wealthy backers and propagandists of the Virginia Company would no doubt have given Londoners preconceived notions about who Pocahontas was and what she represented. Pocahontas, then, would've had a hard time overturning those notions—and Townsend suggests that to this very day, Pocahontas's legacy is still tainted by the factually-inaccurate myths and legends that were designed to disempower her.

❝ Attanoughskomouck? It was always a struggle to capture an Indian word phonetically, but the word that the English represented elsewhere as "Tsenacomoc(o)"—that is, the Indians' name for their own country—clearly peeps out of the confusion. […] This rendition was obviously the result of Matoaka's sounding it out for a Dutchman, just as it was undoubtedly the woman herself who insisted on using the name Matoaka rather than her more famous and attention-grabbing nickname, which everyone else was using. She knew Pocahontas was a name for a child; they did not.

Related Characters: Camilla Townsend (speaker), Simon Van de Passe, Pocahontas/Amonute/Matoaka/Rebecca

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 154

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Townsend calls attention to the significance of several themes and symbols: names, language, communication, and women's agency. While in London in 1617, Pocahontas—or Matoaka, the name she clearly wanted to be referred to as—sat for a portrait by the famed Dutch-German artist Simon Van de Passe. Townsend writes that both the artist and the subject worked together to create a rendering that would demonstrate Pocahontas's humanity, preferences, and authentic self. Not only was the portrait faithful to Pocahontas's image, but in writing beneath the portrait itself, Van de Passe inscribed several words—one of which is a badly-misspelled (but well-intentioned) rendering of *Tsenacomoco*, the Algonkian word for Pocahontas's homeland. This passage is significant because it represents the first time in Pocahontas's adult life that another person represented her as she wished to be seen, and took her own image of herself into account rather than assigning her an identity or a personality. So many people contributed to Pocahontas's loss of agency and self-determination over the course of her lifetime—but in this portrait session, she was able to clearly declare who she was, and be heard.

Chapter 9 Quotes

❝ Indeed, the initial report written in the colony about the "barbarous massacre" made the claim that in the long run, the event was a net positive: at last the colonists were free to remove the Indians and take the country for themselves… […] In words reminiscent of a modern-day killer who claims he would never have hurt his victim […] if she had not been foolish enough to struggle, the colonial chronicler continued to insist it had never been his choice to fight, even as he loaded his gun and drew on his armor. The policy of extermination had been born.

Related Characters: Camilla Townsend (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 173

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Townsend has just described an organized and bloody assault against Jamestown by the Powhatan Indians in the spring of 1622. The attack decimated the colony's population, claiming the lives of about a quarter of the settlers living there. Townsend then writes that when the colonists made reports about the "barbarous massacre," the Virginia Company essentially gave them permission to exterminate the Indians outright once and for all, rather than work at peace and communion. The colonists truly believed—or conned themselves into believing—from the outset of their journey to the New World that they had a moral (or even divine) right to take land and resources from the natives, and to kill or forcibly convert the tribes to Christianity as they wished. The status quo and the fear that harming the natives would lead to retribution and more violence kept the settlers from adopting a "policy of extermination" outright—but now, in the face of the Powhatan people's last-ditch effort to get the colonists to leave, the settlers instead doubled down, cast their morals aside, and began killing with indifference and impunity. Townsend suggests that the "policy of extermination" born at this time is the root of colonialism as a force of cultural erasure.

> The destruction of Virginia's Indian tribes was not a question of miscommunication and missed opportunities. […] It is unfair to imply that somehow Pocahontas, or Queen Cockacoeske, or others like them could have [singlehandedly] saved their people. […] There is nothing they could have done that would have dramatically changed the outcome: a new nation was going to be built on their people's destruction. […] They did not fail. On the contrary, theirs is a story of heroism as it exists in the real world, not in epic tales.

Related Characters: Camilla Townsend (speaker), Queen Cockacoeske, Pocahontas/Amonute/Matoaka/Rebecca

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 178

Explanation and Analysis

In the final pages of *Pocahontas and the Powhatan Dilemma*, Townsend offers up this conclusion in order to summarize her opinion on the ways in which cultural mythology has tarnished the "real world" heroism of resilient women such as Pocahontas and Queen Cockacoeske. Townsend uses a tongue-in-cheek tone to chastise those who might lament the early death of Pocahontas and believe that had she lived, she might have turned the tides of settler-native relations and saved her people. Townsend's entire argument is that before the colonists even touched the shores of Virginia, the technological race that would allow them to dominate the Algonkian tribes had already been won. Instead of lamenting that a single woman could not save her people, Townsend suggests, historians and modern thinkers should ruminate on the singular bravery of women like Pocahontas and Cockacoeske. Incorporating the vast historical context behind these women's decisions allows one to see that there is enough awe and inspiration to be found in the bare facts of their lives. The myths that have transformed their legacies in the collective cultural imagination, Townsend suggests, do them a disservice and strip them of agency rather than illuminate anything new or real about their lives.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

PREFACE

Camilla Townsend imagines what Pocahontas, upon arriving in England toward the end of her life, might have felt upon spying the grey country for the first time. Townsend implores her readers to recognize that Pocahontas "was a real person" long before she was a "myth" and "icon." Myth, Townsend warns, is "deadly to our understanding" of truth.

In the early pages of the book, Townsend sets up its central thematic concern: the wide gulf between cultural myth and historical fact, and how the latter might be used to dismiss and accurately reconstruct the former.

Townsend writes that while popular culture has emphasized Pocahontas's love of the English and the friendly relations between the English settlers who established Jamestown, the first British colony in the Americas to survive, the truth is something much darker: the settlers blackmailed, tortured, and killed the Algonkian-speaking tribes who surrounded their settlement, and seven took Pocahontas prisoner in hopes of bending her father, Powhatan's, will. Pocahontas, Townsend says, "deserves better" than the fanciful myths that have sprung up around her. Pocahontas was brave, intrepid, and self-sacrificing in the face of racism, imprisonment, and the ravages of colonialism. In studying the true facts of her remarkable life, Townsend asserts, she hopes readers will learn not only about Pocahontas's life, but about the realities of America's past.

Townsend has a clear personal investment in securing a kind of retroactive justice for Pocahontas. She intends to do so by deconstructing the myths that have made Pocahontas a tool of mythmaking in white Christian culture for centuries. Not only was Pocahontas denied agency while she lived, Townsend suggests, but the ways history has obscured the truth of Pocahontas's life has continued to disempower her even in death.

CHAPTER 1: AMONUTE'S PEOPLE

Camilla Townsend imagines a clear day in the spring of 1607. A canoe, paddled by messengers bearing news, heads down a tributary among the rivers of the Tsenacomoco—the region known today as the Virginia Tidewater. They are headed toward Werowocomoco, the main settlement of Powhatan, their tribe's paramount chief (or mamanitowik). Strangers have arrived in the bay on three great ships, and they appear to be seeking a place to stay. The messengers soon arrive in the village whose name translates to "King's House," hide their canoe, and proceed toward the village, which is hidden away from the bay in the forest beyond, to deliver the message to their regent.

In the opening passages of the book, Townsend uses a blend of historical record and empathetic imagining to reconstruct a scene that might have truly occurred. She is attempting to do justice to the native tribes of the Tsenacomoco *by imagining their perspective rather than erasing it, as colonialism has done over the years.*

As fast as word ordinarily spread throughout the village, Townsend says, it likely wouldn't have been long before the chief Powhatan's nine-year-old daughter, Pocahontas, heard the news about the man in the great ships. Among the region's tribes, boats like these are known and their arrival is even "anticipated." Though they mostly just pass by or shelter in the bay's calm waters for a few days before moving on, twice during chief Powhatan's lifetime, strangers have come to stay. "Both times," Townsend writes, "[their arrival] had boded ill."

Rather than feeding into the myth that the Powhatan people were somehow excited or mystified by the arrival of strangers in their homeland, Townsend turns to the historical record to show that the native tribes were already familiar with stories and warnings about previous arrivals.

Forty years ago, the strangers kidnapped one of Powhatan's kinsmen and did not return him until 10 years later: he came back bearing the new **name** Luis, speaking the strangers' tongue fluently. He warned his tribe that the strangers came from "a land of thousands" and should be killed—in response to "Luis's" warning, his tribe killed all the strangers swiftly. More strangers came anyway, and confusedly attacked another tribe as vengeance. Twenty years ago, even more strangers arrived south of the Powhatan lands, where the Roanoke and Croatan tribes lived. These strangers were English, whereas the others had been Spanish. Their settlement in Roanoke failed, and they fled.

Townsend shows how racism and issues of communication led to punitive attacks on the wrong tribes—adding even more fuel to the fires of discord between settlers and natives. She also shows how hard it was for settlers, in spite of their superior weapons, to thrive in the New World—suggesting that the Indigenous population believed there were ways they might still triumph over the strangers who came to their land.

Four years ago, in 1603, yet another incident occurred. An English ship arrived in the middle of the Tsenacomoco territory, where the Rappahannock tribe lived. They seized many Rappahannock men and left, and the werowance (chief) and Powhatan fretted together over whether they'd return with more men. Now, as the news of more ships comes to Powhatan, he and his people wonder if the same men have returned—and what they have in store this time. There is much, Townsend writes, that Powhatan did not and could not have known about the "larger geopolitical contest" motivating the arrivals of Spanish and English settlers.

Townsend reminds readers that with only part of the picture, Powhatan could not have known about the larger forces motivating English settlers—not just to journey to the New World, but to thrive in order to compete with the Spanish and establish superiority over them. The Powhatan were determined to get the settlers off their land, but the settlers were now determined to stay at any cost in light of past failures.

In order to paint a "fuller picture," Townsend relays the story of Luis in greater detail. Luis returned from his capture as leader of an expedition to establish a mission of Dominican friars. However, Luis rejoined his tribe and slaughtered the friars, which led to a series of hostage-takings, punitive acts of vengeance, and slaughters en masse of both Native American tribes and Spanish settlers. Similarly, in 1584 at the English colony at Roanoke, a young Native American boy was taken prisoner by the English to be trained as a translator. He returned to Roanoke Island in 1585, turned on the English, and with his tribe slaughtered the majority of the Roanoke colonists.

Townsend shows how native hostages and prisoners fought against their captors even after years of imprisonment, determined not to let the forces of colonialism erase their language, identity, ties to their tribes, or ancestral lands.

For Pocahontas, Townsend writes, daily life would not have changed immediately in the wake of the news about the strangers' return. The morning after the messengers delivered the news, Pocahontas, who lived a protected life in the heart of her father's territory "surrounded by his personal army of at least forty warriors," would have gone about her ordinary routine. Pocahontas's father, Powhatan, born Wahunsenacaw, had made himself the paramount chief or mamanitowik of about 30 tribes, or 20,000 people. He did so over the course of many years through alliances of intermarriages, acts of war, and forced resettlement of survivors. Now, all of Powhatan's chiefdoms pay him tribute in the form of goods, crops, hides, and pearls—in exchange, he and his army serve as allies for whoever needs them.

Townsend uses this passage to illustrate Powhatan's might as a chief—and his skill as a politician. Whereas many myths about Powhatan and his people suggest that his leadership skills were primitive or backwards, based on force and violence, Townsend wants to do justice to Powhatan's legacy by showing what a savvy, strategic, respected leader he truly was.

Pocahontas, meanwhile, was likely the daughter of a common prisoner of war, a woman from a family of little or no political significance. Born in about 1597, Pocahontas was just one of Powhatan's many children. At birth she was given two **names**: Amonute, her public name, and a hidden name known only to her parents. By 10, as per her people's traditions, she is given a new nickname: Pocahontas, a word meaning "mischief." All the while, she is aware that her name will change again when she is older and has new experiences.

Townsend begins deconstructing myths about Pocahontas, beginning with her very name. While Pocahontas has often been characterized as a "favorite" of Powhatan in the popular imagination, Townsend works to show why this was not likely true at all. As such, she underscores how the authentic story of Pocahontas's life has been corrupted in service of a narrative in which Pocahontas is a mere political tool.

Powhatan is a powerful, politically savvy leader who nevertheless is self-aware enough to know he is "no absolute monarch." Though many of the tribes he rules show him fealty out of respect or fear, he knows he can't make all of his subjects do his bidding. To consolidate power further in the Algonkian tribes' matrilineal system of inheritance, Powhatan uses intermarriage to his advantage. He fathers children with powerful women from other tribes, knowing his sons by them will grow up "to rule with loyalty both to [their] father and [their] mother's people." The English, when they arrived, were "scandalized" by Powhatan's marriage practices, unable to see the careful strategy behind them.

Townsend uses anthropological records and historical fact to show the reasoning and logic behind Powhatan's methods of rulership. Colonists, she suggests, were always going to see the native populations they sought to overtake as backwards and savage—they never even attempted to consider the elaborate and sophisticated strategies by which Powhatan took hold of a region (and kept it).

To this day, scholars remain uncertain about Pocahontas's place in Powhatan's "complicated web" of social politics. They are certain that her mother was not a "political pawn" but a common woman; Pocahontas, then, has no power of her own, and is not (contrary to popular myths about her) even her father's most treasured daughter. She works alongside her siblings and their mothers, planting and harvesting daily, collecting berries, preparing fires, and cooking meals. She attends nightly dances and bonfires, listening to the stories of her elders and the creation myths of her people.

Townsend attempts to provide a holistic view of Pocahontas's early life—a narrative that has been all but erased from the historical record and replaced with factually erroneous myths. Townsend knows that such myths continue to strip agency from Pocahontas even in death, and uses her own reconstruction of Pocahontas's youth to attempt to restore some justice, and indeed agency, to the young woman's story.

Having lived in the region for 300 years by Pocahontas's time, the Tsenacomoco tribes keep maps and notch sticks to denote quantities. Though there was is written language, 300 years earlier there was an agricultural revolution. This allowed many semi-nomadic tribes, with the help of the Three Sisters (corn, beans, and squash, whose seeds arrived through trade) to begin literally putting down roots, establishing chiefdoms, and becoming agriculturalists.

Townsend is determined to provide a full, complete historical context in order to help her readers deconstruct myths about the Powhatan people that they may have internalized over the years. While many people are taught that the tribes of the Virginia Tidewater region were primitive or disorganized, Townsend shows that, in fact, they had sophisticated systems of governance in place—and were poised on the verge of even greater breakthroughs at the time of the settlers' arrival.

Understanding that these tribes had only been farmers for 300 years, Townsend writes, is "crucial" to understanding the advantages European settlers had over them. Sedentary farming yields higher population growth and faster technological advances in any society than a nomadic lifestyle does. Whereas the English and Spanish settlers had begun approaching the advances that come with agrarian life millennia earlier, the tribes of the Tsenacomoco were further behind on that timeline. Unbeknownst to both groups, Townsend writes, "something like a technological race" had been going on for centuries—and the Europeans had already won.

Townsend wants to dispel the racist and factually incorrect idea that the Algonkian tribes were less intelligent than the colonists who invaded their lands. Rather, she shows how forces beyond anyone's control contributed to the imbalance of power between the two groups and secured the English's ability to use their superior weaponry to subdue the Powhatan people.

Several months after the strangers arrive on Tsenacomoco land in 1607, December arrives, and Pocahontas's people prepare for the long winter ahead. Then, more news comes to Powhatan's village: one of his kinsmen, a warrior named Opechankeno, has caught the strangers' "werowance" and is bringing him to Powhatan. This man's **name**, the messengers says, is John Smith.

Townsend foreshadows the pivotal meeting between John Smith and Powhatan. However, all of the fact-checking Townsend has done in this chapter suggests that what her readers think *they know about the fateful summit is about to be overturned.*

CHAPTER 2: WHAT THE ENGLISH KNEW

In 1606, about a year prior to Powhatan learning of John Smith, Smith prepares to join the newly-chartered Virginia Company's first trip across the Atlantic. He devours books by Spanish explorers, thrilled by their accounts of the New World and their encounters with the region's native tribes. These books, Townsend writes, were often salacious, containing exaggerated accounts of the beauty—and lustiness—of the native women of the New World. These accounts also described native people as obsessed with and desperate to please white Christian settlers, "whom they count[ed] as nobleman," according to one such book. These popular books inspired Smith—and settlers like him—to conceive of the New World as a place where they'd be worshipped as gods by foreign women.

Townsend shows how cultural myth's erasure of historical fact has been an issue for centuries, a vicious cycle which inspires continued inaccuracy and willful ignorance. Smith and the other members of the Virginia Company, Townsend suggests, likely fell prey to myths about the New World—and would go on to create their own myths, too, leading to centuries of propaganda and misinformation.

The Virginia Company's maiden voyage on three ships—the *Susan Constant*, the *Godspeed*, and the *Discovery*—represent the English's hopes of creating the first viable colony in the New World. The Spanish had already launched their own very successful expeditions in hopes of finding new trade routes to get to the textiles, spices, and gems of the East. The English, having read translated accounts of the Spanish settlers' success in the Caribbean and their conquest of the Aztecs and the Incas, also launched expeditions to the New World in the late 1500s—but their attempts at establishing colonies in both Canada and the Carolinas failed. The Spanish "soon indirectly ruled Europe."

The Spanish's power and might have annoyed and intimidated the English, who became determined to play out the rivalry between the two countries on the stage of the New World. Townsend shows how the English's determination to maintain a stronghold in the New World was tied to their desire to surpass the Spanish forces.

Many English explorers and settlers, according to their own written accounts, believed they would be fairer and more just to the native peoples of the New World than their Spanish counterparts—and that this fact made them more worthy of conquest. The feeling that they had a divine right to conquer the New World, combined with war with the Spanish and population overgrowth in England, created a perfect storm which led to the creation of the Virginia Company. In December of 1606, 144 people—among them John Smith—set out for the New World.

Townsend additionally shows how the English settlers' determination to stay in the New World was tied to their belief that they were somehow divinely chosen or uniquely prepared to conquer and govern the region's native populations. This mythology, she argues, has endured throughout the years in spite of its racist and fundamentally incorrect roots.

Though cultural myth says that John Smith was a fearless explorer who must have been excited as he set out from England, Townsend writes that the truth was likely darker. Smith knew that, in reality, the Virginia Company's mission might be yet another doomed one. Though perhaps superficially inspired by the exciting tales of the New World many of them had read, most of the colonists were also aware of the violence, bloodshed, and uncertainty of the place. Many, Townsend writes, may even have opposed colonization deep down. "It is rare," she writes, "that a great wrong is committed […] without some among the perpetrators protesting the deed."

Townsend suggests that while most of the Virginia Company no doubt felt concerned about their ability—or their very right—to colonize the New World, most of the men had worked hard to convince themselves that they were on the side of righteousness.

None of the men, Townsend posits, even dreamed of exterminating the Indians entirely—most settlers knew how dependent they would be on the natives of the New World for help making their colonies thrive. The English had "sworn they would not become […] the Spaniards," and the historical record indicates that many colonists wanted not to enslave or kill the Indians but rather "give them the *opportunity* to work [and] to become Christian." Pastors, explorers, and writers like Thomas More envisioned utopic ideas of the New World in which there existed a "joining and dwelling together […] to the great wealth of both peoples." Many colonizers, having heard rumors of bloody human sacrifice among the Aztec tribes, even believed they were "sav[ing] the Indians from themselves."

The men who aimed to settle the New World wanted to act benevolently toward the tribes they would conquer—but Townsend shows how the impulse to convert or "save" native tribes is just as racist and cruel as the impulse to kill or dominate them. Either way, Townsend argues, the English wanted to erase the natives' culture and their very history in order to make way for a new society—one in which they made the rules.

The Virginia Company's instructions from King James I were influenced by accounts from explorers, linguists, mathematicians, and artists such as Theodor de Bry and Thomas Harriot, who published an account of their time in Roanoke which described the Indians as "a people poore" who were "for want" of the English's judgement, knowledge, and indeed their religion. King James, then, instructed the colonists to "draw the […] heathen people…to the true service and knowledge of God." Other instructions, however, from the shareholders of the Virginia Company themselves, warned the colonists to be prepared for a fight—and to never trust the natives with their weapons.

The men of the Virginia Company, Townsend shows, were able to convince themselves of their mission's virtue because of a direct mandate from the king of England—who himself was supposed to be a divinely-appointed ruler.

Many backers and members of the Virginia Company alike envisioned the Indians becoming loyal "Subjects to king James […] whereas now they live in miserable Slavery." The English, however, "did not know as much as they thought they did" about how the Indians would react to their presence—and their best-laid plans would soon nearly "prove their undoing."

Townsend foreshadows the failure of the Virginia Company to bring the native tribes to heel, showing how their utopic visions of creating a new Christian nation ultimately hindered rather than helped them in the New World.

CHAPTER 3: FIRST CONTACT

By December of 1607, John Smith has been captured by the Pamunkey tribe, whose werowance is Opechankeno. After days of being dragged from village to village and presented to local tribes, Smith uses some of his rudimentary Algonkian to ask that a missive be sent back to Jamestown, letting the other colonists know he is being treated kindly so that they will not launch a punitive expedition against the local tribes. Shortly after Christmas, Smith is brought to Werowocomoco to face Powhatan. As Smith is brought through the village, Townsend writes, there is no doubt that Pocahontas would have been among the crowds who came out to watch his arrival.

Townsend describes John Smith's journey to Powhatan's village, showing how significant his capture clearly was—not just to Powhatan himself, but to all the people of the Tsenacomoco. *Successfully capturing Smith meant that there was a chance of fighting back against or even defeating the "strangers" who had come to their land.*

As Smith arrives before Powhatan, he is weary and exhausted—none of his life's previous adventures, including fighting as a mercenary soldier and working as a slave on a farm in what is now Russia, prepared him for the New World. It has been a year since the Virginia Company departed from England. Throughout the Virginia Company's first spring in the New World, Smith faced malnourishment, imprisonment aboard his ship, and violent clashes with the Paspahegh, Appomattock, Weyanock, Quioccohannock, and Chiskiak. All of Jamestown was stricken ill by a waterborne parasite during their first summer, and many died. That fall, starvation struck, and as Smith and his men set out to find food, they were captured by Opechankeno's men.

In outlining the myriad struggles Smith faced for the last year of his life, Townsend conveys the exhaustion and desperation he may have felt to make peace—or to pretend to, at least—with the leader of the Powhatan people. The colonists were sick, starving, and at a total disadvantage—Townsend suggests that Smith knew just how much relied upon this fateful meeting.

When Smith is brought before Powhatan, he likely finds the werowance adorned in pearls and furs, his wives all around him. Later in life, Smith claims that Powhatan called for him to lie his head on a stone while a warrior picked up a club. Just before the moment of impact, Smith writes, the young Pocahontas threw herself onto Smith, begging her father to spare Smith's life. This anecdote is "unequivocally" false, Townsend writes, though it is one of the best-known about Pocahontas. Smith never wrote such a story until 1624, after Pocahontas's death—and after she had become a celebrity in London whose name would sell books. Townsend adds that in Smith's writings about his adventures around the world, "at each critical juncture" he writes of a "beautiful young woman" falling in love with him and protecting him from her people.

Townsend highlights Smith's unreliability as a narrator, pointing to specific rhetorical tools he used in his writings to puff up his readers' image of him as a powerful, desirable conqueror. She points out the unfairness and indeed the cruelty in the fact that Smith's myths have endured throughout the years, while the facts of history have been erased by his ridiculous stories.

It is impossible to know, given the salaciousness of Smith's fabricated tales, if anything "remotely resembling" the anecdote he described happened at his first meeting with Powhatan. The myths he created are so ingrained in the collective cultural imagination, Townsend writes, that scholars defend them to this day. For the truth, she says, one must look to Algonkian culture and ritual. Townsend states that Powhatan would never have had Smith clubbed, since this was a punishment reserved for criminals. In all likelihood, Powhatan actually ritually adopted Smith at their first meeting, in keeping with the political strategy of expanding his control by establishing bonds of kinship.

Townsend attempts to perform her own form of erasure in this passage, debunking Smith's biased, unreliable perspective and turning instead to historical fact and reason to fill in the blanks. Townsend is determined to put an end to the pervasive cultural myths which have endured throughout the years and replaced the Powhatan people's truths.

When Powhatan asks Smith about the settlers' purpose in Tsenacomoco, Smith likely lies and states that they were stranded and waiting for help to return, then bluffs by describing the might of Europe, the King of England, and the English's "innumerable" ships and "terrible manner of fighting." Powhatan then offers to take care of the "stranded" Englishmen if they will become Powhatan's tributaries and allies—and provide him with iron and copper weapons. Smith and the English are there to make the opposite arrangement and enlist Powhatan as a vassal—but Smith is in "no position" to argue, and agrees to consider the proposition.

Townsend shows how Smith used language and communication—or lack thereof, as he lied profusely to Powhatan—to try to secure some measure of power over the great chief. Smith knew he had no bargaining power, and feared for his vey life—he turned, Townsend suggests, to the only weapon at his disposal.

In spite of all the doubt that can be cast on Smith's false testimonies about his experiences in Werowocomoco, two things are certain: Powhatan made him a kind of werowance in his own right, and while he lived at the village before returning to Jamestown, he likely got to know Pocahontas—at least a little. After four days, Smith is returned to Jamestown, where he makes a gift of cannons—but not guns—to the Powhatan tribe and reunites with Captain Newport, newly returned from a supply trip back to London.

Townsend shows that Powhatan and his people extended their goodwill—and good faith—to John Smith, even as the settlers continued to dupe and distrust the natives.

Powhatan now faces a dilemma: whether to allow the settlers at Jamestown to stay, or whether to attempt to destroy the settlement. He likely knows that even if he and his warriors obliterate the colony, more English will come to create another—and his own people will suffer heavy losses either way. Though Powhatan knows the English possess more powerful weapons, he is not without power himself—but knows he'll have to come up with ways to "outmaneuver" the settlers into offering him useful weapons and armor as tribute without pitting his forces against theirs.

Townsend imagines what Powhatan—a gifted political strategist—might have wrestled with as he considered how best to keep his people safe from the encroachment of the settlers. Unable to secure the weapons he wanted from Smith, Powhatan likely realized he needed to outsmart the settlers to get them to leave—and prevent them from erasing his people from their own homeland.

Townsend writes that contrary to myths perpetuated by even the most well-intentioned historians and anthropologists, Powhatan had no interest in following the advice of priests or gods or trading for goods of "ceremonial or spiritual value." Powhatan and his werowances wanted guns and metal, and to get them, they wanted to put the English in their debt by sending them gifts of corn and crops. The warriors of the Tsenacomoco tribes aren't the only ones who wanted metal goods—the women who worked hard as harvesters and cooks wanted kettles, farming tools, and knives as well.

Townsend continues working to refute the cultural myths which have perpetuated throughout the years that imagine the Powhatan people as unintelligent or politically naïve. She posits that they knew the value of the settlers' weaponry, and wanted it for themselves in order to strategically enhance their advantage over the colonizers.

Townsend writes that she wants to make one thing very clear: at no point did Powhatan or his kinsmen ever see or revere the English as gods, or even as beings of superior intellect. Powhatan may have, after consulting with his priests, begun to believe that the Europeans' gods favored them by blessing them with "enviable tools"—but never saw the colonizers themselves as anything other than men, just as fallible as himself. He recognized the Europeans' advantages—but also knew the men were at a relative disadvantage, as well, since they were uncertain about the landscape and often unable to even feed themselves.

Again, Townsend works to deconstruct the harmful cultural myths which have suggested that the Powhatan people worshipped—or even particularly liked*—the Europeans who came to their lands to brutalize and colonize them.*

The early relations between these two groups, Townsend concludes, were marked by tense but logical attempts to understand the strangers who had come to their land on the part of the Indians—and as Powhatan met with his advisers and discussed the Europeans strategically and plainly, Pocahontas would have "heard all her elders had to say."

Townsend continues imagining Pocahontas's place in her people's narrative, suggesting that while not as prominent as myth has made her out to be, Pocahontas was a perceptive and present figure in her tribe.

CHAPTER 4: JAMESTOWN

In February of 1608, at Powhatan's request—he has been sending regular gifts of corn and raccoon tails to Jamestown—Captain Newport travels to Werowocomoco to meet with him. As the group of Englishmen and native guides proceeds across creeks and into the forests surrounding *Werowocomoco*, the English are tense, and keep their weapons trained on their guides. At the meeting between the two leaders, Newport gives Powhatan gifts of silk and a greyhound dog. Powhatan asks for guns but is refused them. The men agree to each exchange a "son"—but each party deceives the other. The English offer up a young man named Thomas Savage, an apprentice of low birth, while Powhatan sends a young man named Namontack, who was not likely one of his biological children.

Townsend shows how in spite of the Powhatan people's efforts to improve relations between their groups—and to secure fair payment for their assistance—the English colonizers' inherent distrust of the Algonkian tribes made authentic, above-board politics impossible. With both sides' distrust increasing, Townsend foreshadows the decades of bad faith and punitive retribution that would soon begin to unfold.

While Thomas Savage stays at Werowocomoco, he befriends Pocahontas. She teaches him Algonkian, and he, it seems, teaches her English. In April, Newport travels to England with Namontack, leaving behind a group of settlers who are hard at work day in and day out fortifying Jamestown. Tensions between the settlers and the Indians continues to increase, as the colonists disturb Powhatan and his tribe with the noise of shotgun drills. The Powhatan people, meanwhile, often steal metal tools from the fort.

Townsend continues to demonstrate how in spite of efforts to bridge the gaps in power and communication between the two groups, distrust, dislike, and subterfuge continued on both sides.

In May of 1608, the English and Paspaheghs each seize hostages from each other's groups. The English raze the Paspaheghs' village, and the tribe surrenders and release their hostages—but the English do not release all of theirs in return. Three days into the Paspahegh men's captivity, Powhatan sends Pocahontas to Jamestown to negotiate for the prisoners' release. She is 10 years old, and it is her first visit to the colony. Accompanied by a man whose Algonkian **name** sounds to the English like (and is recorded as) "Rawhunt," Pocahontas solemnly and silently enters the fort and, with the help of Thomas Savage, translates a speech made by Rawhunt asking for the release of the prisoners and a return to peace. More messengers soon arrive with gifts meant to serve as ransom, the negotiation continues. Soon, Pocahontas is speaking kindly with the colonists and comforting the prisoners.

This passage begins to introduce Pocahontas as a significant figure both within her own tribe and to the settlers at Jamestown. Pocahontas was not, Townsend reminds her readers, politically significant because of her father's favoritism. Instead, this passage shows how Pocahontas began to use her language and communication skills to come into her own power, and to attempt to maintain her people's sense of power in the face of colonialism, brutality, and erasure.

Pocahontas is sent, in all likelihood, not because she is Powhatan's favorite daughter—it is possible that she is sent because, as the daughter of a commoner, she is "among the children he could most afford to lose." It's also possible that Pocahontas is the best translator available, or that her presence will signify a white flag to John Smith, who knows her from his time at Werowocomoco. In the end, Pocahontas secures the prisoners' release—and over the course of the rest of the year makes several more visits to the fort. As her language skills increase and her presence at Jamestown becomes accepted, Pocahontas grows in value to both her father and to the English.

Townsend shows how Pocahontas, considered expendable by her father, created her own kind of significance and agency through the power afforded her by her language and communication skills.

"It is only possible to glimpse [Pocahontas's] character," Townsend writes. Historians have never discovered a letter, diary, or anything else written in Pocahontas's own words—everything that is known about her comes through "in the comments left by the white men who knew her."

Even though Pocahontas worked hard to establish agency in her lifetime, Townsend suggests that the power she managed to scrape up for herself has all been erased by history. The very tools which made Pocahontas important—language and communication—have in fact been used to erase her narrative from the world.

Because the language Pocahontas spoke is largely lost—and because the Englishmen who wrote about the Powhatan people could not differentiate between the differences in their versions of Algonkian—only a "hodgepodge" of words exists, and historians cannot find things composed about Pocahontas in the words of her own people. The only full Powhatan sentences historians have, oddly enough, come from John Smith, who was instructed in the language by Pocahontas and who wrote down sentences she taught him. The sentences in his notebooks reveal Pocahontas to be a curious child who asked about the arrival of more colonists in large "canoes" and expressed a desire for precious white beads.

Townsend shows how language and communication—and the power the ability to communicate confers—is deeply intertwined with colonialism and its goal of erasure. Though Smith preserved some Algonkian sentences, his actions—and the actions of his men—no doubt confirmed and hastened the erasure of an entire complex linguistic tradition.

At the same time, Smith's notebooks and his later writings about Pocahontas speak of her as a "nubile and sexy" young woman rather than the 10 or 11-year-old girl she was. Either Smith wrote false accounts of Pocahontas, was attracted to a child, or some mixture of the two. The writings of Smith's contemporaries reveal that many other colonists saw Smith's relationship with Pocahontas and his language lessons with her as a ploy to get closer to the Indians, Powhatan specifically. Some suspected he even was trying to "ma[ke] himself a king, by marrying Pocahontas," revealing their lack of knowledge about the Powhatan people's matrilineal systems of inheritance and power.

Though John Smith and Pocahontas are often rendered as lovers or friends in dominant cultural myths, Townsend shows here that given the age gap and power imbalance between them, there is no way that Smith and Pocahontas could conceivably have had any sort of romance. If there were any sexual overtures made by Smith toward Pocahontas, she definitively states, they were grossly inappropriate and would be illegal by today's standards.

Late in the summer of 1608, Captain Newport and Namontack return from England with more supplies. Newport summons Powhatan to Jamestown to receive presents from the British king—and to swear loyalty to him. Powhatan, through a messenger, replies that Newport should come to him. Newport obliges—and at the meeting, forces Powhatan to submit to having a crown from King James placed on his head, an act that Powhatan likely recognizes as a power play. He himself has used the practice of "anointing tributary werowances who were bound to do his bidding" to signify his own power in the region.

Townsend uses this passage to show how the English continued to try to assert their power over the Powhatan people under the guise of friendship or even fealty. She suggests that all parties knew just what games were being played as the two sides struggled for power and autonomy.

As the season continues on, John Smith—having been made president of Jamestown—continues to demand "as much corn as possible" from the surrounding tribes, threatening them with violence if they do not give him all he asks for. In December of 1608, when Smith goes to Powhatan to beg for more corn, Powhatan asks for swords and guns in exchange—but Smith refuses. Powhatan agrees to a lesser trade but warns Smith that if he continues to take advantage of the Powhatan people, they will retreat into the woods and hide themselves in lands where the English cannot find them.

Powhatan knew that without the English's metal weapons, he and his people could do little in the face of their demands. As a result, he resorted to the only kind of power he knew he still had: knowledge of the region, possession of food, and political sway over the other tribes in the area.

The visit is tense—Smith later claims that Powhatan and his kinsmen threatened Smith's and his men's lives, and that only a warning from none other than Pocahontas helped them evade the ambush. Townsend doesn't entirely refute this possibility, though she admits that the anecdote only surfaced at the time of Smith's most sensationalized writings about Jamestown and Pocahontas herself. Relations between the Jamestown colonists and the Powhatan were bad enough, she says, that the Powhatan might have been planning an attack. Instead of carrying one out, however, Powhatan moves his people from Werowocomoco quickly and stealthily. Pocahontas flees with them—and does not see Smith again until her voyage to England many years later.

It is impossible to know for sure, Townsend admits, whether or not Pocahontas did extend help to the English at a crucial moment. But in all likelihood, she says, the Powhatan were more focused on a strategic retreat than an offensive move.

Over the next several months, tensions continue to escalate. In pursuit of an escaped Paspahegh hostage, Smith and his men raid a nearby village, killing many and taking more prisoners. The tribe's werowance conveys a message shortly after, threatening to flee to the forest (as the Powhatan did) if the violence continues. Smith agrees to a truce—though he is frustrated by his inability to bring the natives under his thrall as the famed conquistador Cortés had done in South America.

Townsend shows how Smith's frustration and embarrassment were so intense and profound that they motivated him to leave Jamestown entirely. Smith measured himself against the outlandish stories of Spanish explorers, and found his own progress and power lacking in comparison.

What Smith doesn't realize is that the Spanish came upon Indigenous tribes who lived sedentary, agriculturist lives in permanent villages—they were not like the Algonkians, who were comfortable living nomadic lives until relatively recently. In a letter sent around this time, Smith writes that the English had tried to conquer the "'wrong' Indians." In 1609, in the wake of increasing unrest among the colonists at Jamestown, Smith leaves to return to England. Without him—and without the help of Powhatan—the colonists begin to starve.

Smith himself did not fully understand the unique dynamics the Spanish encountered in South America—or the ways in which agricultural practices that were developed hundreds of years ago (or lack thereof) stood to influence the dynamics of Smith's own present.

As the new leaders of Jamestown attempt to extort help from Powhatan by taking hostages, they face swift retribution: Powhatan executes a man named Ratcliffe who tracked Powhatan to his new village, sending a clear message that he will not be pursued. In May of 1610, however, two new ships arrive at Jamestown. Finding barely 100 people alive in the colony, the people on the ship quickly decided to help the colonists evacuate. It seems as if Jamestown has failed, and as if the colonists are at last abandoning the New World and leaving the Powhatan people in peace. As the ships head downriver, however, they are met with a surprise: a new governor, Lord De La Warr, arriving with a new charter, 150 new settlers, and provisions. Both fleets return to Jamestown, and a messenger brings word to Powhatan: the colonists are staying after all.

Unable to bend Powhatan to their will through force or bribery, the settlers resorted to extortion—a method which also backfired. Fearing that their experiment was doomed for good, the colonists at Jamestown jumped at the opportunity to evacuate. Townsend then shows, however, that just as fate and chance played a significant role in the power dynamics between the settlers and the Algonkians, so too did chance foil the Powhatan people's efforts to drive the settlers from their region.

CHAPTER 5: KIDNAPPED

One of the new arrivals at Jamestown in 1610 is a man named John Rolfe. Though he will one day be Pocahontas's husband, they are, at the time, both married to other people. John Rolfe's pregnant wife arrives at Jamestown with him; meanwhile, Pocahontas, then 12 or 13, is newly married to a warrior named Kocoom, likely from the Patowomeck (or Potomac, as it was Anglicized) nation. Because of Pocahontas's mother's "lack of political significance," Townsend writes, Pocahontas would have been free to choose her own partner. Not much is known about Kocoom, but what is clear is that Pocahontas must have liked him to have chosen him out of all the suitors available to her once she reached marriageable age.

Most people don't realize that prior to her marriage to John Rolfe, Pocahontas lived a life marked by agency and choice, as it seems she was able to choose her first husband out of an array of potential suitors. Townsend suggests that Pocahontas most likely lived a happy life among her own people.

It is likely that Kocoom died a few years after the marriage, as there is no record of him beyond a certain year—and given Pocahontas's later marriage to a colonist, it seems unlikely that her union with John Rolfe would've been condoned had she had a living ex- or "common law" husband. Pocahontas seems not to have had any children by Kocoom, though Townsend doesn't rule out the possibility that Pocahontas suffered miscarriages, stillbirths, or even an infant death.

Though the historical record does not document what happened to Kocoom, Townsend uses cues from social and political mores at the time to reconstruct the theory that Kocoom, a prominent warrior, was likely killed, leaving Pocahontas unmarried once more.

Meanwhile, back in England in 1609, the Virginia Company has just undergone a major restructuring and is no longer a private venture but a public joint-stock company in which men might buy shares or trade their labor for passage to the New World. The backers do all they can to round up interested investors and laborers, knowing that in order to turn a profit, the New World will need many more people to work in it. The restructuring is successful: within just 20 days, a new expedition has raised much more than 40,000 ducats. There are still some who oppose colonization and the seizure of the Indians' land, having heard of the violent struggles settlers have faced so far—but with so much money now in the mix, there is no stopping the Virginia Company from sending more English overseas.

Townsend shows how the wealthy backers of the Virginia Company—perhaps disheartened by the reports coming in from the New World—wanted to make a last-ditch effort to open up the company, increase interest in it, and recruit new laborers and settlers.

John Rolfe, Townsend writes, was likely aware of the dangers in the New World. Clashes with the native population and the moral question of whether the English had any right to be there at all were part of the discourse at the time, and Rolfe surely would've had to wrestle with these questions. Nevertheless, he harbors hopes of becoming a merchant trader—and so he and his wife set off for Virginia.

Townsend makes sure to remind her readers that not everyone who set off from London for the New World was certain that the English had a right to the place—but because the Virginia Company's patrons had already begun spinning myths about the opportunities available there, many went along hoping for the best.

The seven-week journey launches in June of 1609—in July, sidelined by a hurricane in the Caribbean, the ship bearing Rolfe and his wife runs aground off the coast of Bermuda. Over the next several months, an impromptu colony springs up on the island—many feel they've been given an opportunity to live in paradise. In February, Rolfe's wife gives birth to a girl who dies shortly after. By May, Rolfe, his wife, and the other settlers decide to move on after all. Having built two ships, they set sail. By the end of the month, they reached Jamestown, but find the colony in poor shape. They help the colonists living there prepare to leave, but have their fateful encounter with Lord De La Warr on their way down the river and decide to stay. Months later, Rolfe's wife—whose name is lost to history—dies. Rolfe must know that had they stayed in England, he might have had a family.

Townsend shows just how despairing the shipwrecked colonists must have felt upon arriving at Jamestown after such an ordeal to find the colony had all but failed—and the relief they must have felt when they realized that help was on the way, and that there was still a chance for success. She compounds these feelings for John Rolfe, in particular, by showing the immeasurable losses he suffered as a result of having journeyed across the sea with the Virginia Company.

Within months of De La Warr's arrival, Jamestown descends into war with the surrounding tribes. Settlers are instructed to have no contact, either violent or benign, with the Indians, while Powhatan orders his people to attack any settlers who stray beyond the bounds of the fort. De La Warr attempts to extort land and friendship from the mamanitowik, but Powhatan's position remains immovable: he wants the colonists gone and warns them that if they encroach any farther onto native lands, there will be consequences. In August of 1610, the colonists massacre a Paspahegh village. Over the next several months, they continue expanding in direct defiance of Powhatan's orders—any Indians who approach these new settlements are killed.

Townsend shows how relations between the settlers and the Powhatan continued to deteriorate into violence in spite of the chief's efforts to deter the colonists from expanding their boundaries. The settlers had the upper hand because of their superior weaponry—they could go anywhere they wanted and do anything they wanted with relative impunity.

As months turned into years, colonists seek to take valuable hostages from the surrounding tribes, for both retribution and political strategy. Captain Samuel Argall, a favorite of De La Warr, is sent over from England to find a way to stop the deterioration of relations with the Indians. In December of 1610, Argall visits Patowomeck country and is able to successfully negotiate the return of an English hostage of the tribe. Argall's return to negotiation tactics rather than blind escalation of violence signals a turn in settler-Indian relations. Throughout 1612, Argall continues negotiating for food and hostages with the neighboring tribes, establishing a precedent for fair trade of both goods and people—hostages are valuable as translators and peacemakers to both settlers and natives.

Samuel Argall's use of hostage-taking transformed from punitive extortion into political strategy as both sides realized the value of having members of the other's people amongst them. Both for practical purposes of translation and political purposes of encouraging goodwill and nonviolence, the trading of hostages and wards became a way, oddly enough, of keeping relative peace.

In 1613, during a visit to the Patowomeck nation, Argall hears that Pocahontas is stationed at the nearby village of Pasptanzie, the home of a Patowomeck werowance named Yapassus. Argall tells the chief that if he does not accept the exchange of several English hostages for Pocahontas, their alliance—and the goodwill that has been hard-won between them—will be severed forever. The chief agrees to turn Pocahontas over to Argall. Argall's move is strategic—he knows that the Patowomeck are among the northernmost Algonkian tribes and benefit least overall from Powhatan's protection, and thus harbor resentment toward him.

Argall, using the precedent he'd set in taking hostages as a political move, realized the value of taking the chief's daughter hostage. He likely didn't know about Pocahontas's relative political insignificance, and imagined that having her as his prisoner would greatly help his ability to influence and command Powhatan himself.

Pocahontas has been in the company of the Patowomeck for about three months—they were her late husband's people, but she is likely there on political business for Powhatan. One afternoon, Yapassus and his wife invite Pocahontas to come look at the large English ship anchored on the shores of their village. Yapassus's wife claims she wants to go aboard and take a look inside—she asks Pocahontas to accompany her. According to a later report, Pocahontas was wary of going on board—she knew many Indians had been kidnapped recently, and was more than aware that her father was at war with the English. Nevertheless, Yapassus and his wife cajole her aboard, where Argall declares her his prisoner.

Townsend shows how Yapassus—unhappy with his people's treatment under Powhatan—betrayed Pocahontas out of desperation. Unable to secure proper protection from Powhatan, Yapassus, as his people's chief, likely feared worsening relations with the settlers. He knew that if he didn't do their bidding, they'd retaliate—and without protection from Powhatan, Yapassus's own people would be left vulnerable.

Confronted with the realization that she is now a prisoner, Pocahontas descends into a "pensive" silence. She knows, no doubt, that silence is a tactic in and of itself. Pocahontas speaks at last, but not to her captors—instead, she speaks to Yapassus. Though the English cannot understand what she says, it is clear from their report that she is "enraged."

Again, Townsend shows how even though many of Pocahontas's words are lost to history, it's possible to reconstruct and reimagine what she must have been thinking and feeling at various points throughout her life.

Within two days, a messenger from Powhatan arrives with news that if the English bring their ship to Powhatan's village, he will give them anything they demand for the safe return of his daughter. Rather than bring Pocahontas to her father's village, however, Argall steers course for Jamestown to bring her to the governor, Sir Thomas Gates. As Pocahontas returns to Jamestown for the first time in years—no longer an emissary of her people, but a prisoner of the English—she holds her head high as the crowds gape at her. She is no doubt afraid, however, knowing how bad things are between the settlers and her people. Pocahontas is led into the house where she is to stay—the girl, 16 at the most, is now a hostage.

In spite of Pocahontas's youth, Townsend posits, the young woman now had a very serious role to play in the relations between her people and their colonizers. Though she was in a position of relative powerlessness as a prisoner, she also must have known that there were still ways she might yet leverage her situation into a kind of alliance.

CHAPTER 6: IMPRISONMENT

Several months after her initial capture, Pocahontas remains imprisoned at Jamestown. Though Powhatan has sent back captive colonists and weapons in exchange for Pocahontas's release, her English captors refuse to make a trade. Jamestown is, at the time, under strict military rule—Sir Thomas Gates and his second-in-command, Sir Thomas Dale, rule with such iron-fisted cruelty that a report from a Spanish captive at the time claims "many [had] gone over to the Indians."

This passage shows that as the English's desperation to maintain a façade of power and stability increased, their flexibility in terms of political negotiations with the local tribes decreased. Though things were bad for them, they didn't want to be seen or imagined as wanting or needing anything from the Powhatan people.

About 50 miles north of Jamestown, another there is another colony called Henrico with is smaller but happier. Several months into Pocahontas's captivity, she is relocated there in hopes that she might be "socialized" by the white men and women who comprise the colony's majority—at Jamestown, many Spaniards and Indian captives make up the population. Pocahontas is delivered to the household of Reverend Alexander Whitaker, who has built a church across the river. Here, Pocahontas is dressed in English clothing, instructed further in the English language, and given a copy of the King James Bible to learn. The reverend, though Pocahontas's jailer, is "determined to treat her with such kindness that [she would allow him to] control her hopes, her thoughts, her very life." Whitaker, born into a wealthy family of scholars, had come to Virginia in 1611, hoping to convert as many Indians as he could to Protestantism.

This passage, Townsend suggests, contains many of the seeds that eventually grew into the myth of Pocahontas. As Pocahontas's value to the English as an example of their power to influence and convert the Algonkian tribes increased, she became less of a person and more of a figurehead in the eyes of her captors. The root of Pocahontas's status as a mythologized figure, Townsend posits, lies here: in Pocahontas's potential as an emblem of Protestant might.

During the week, Pocahontas has lessons in language, conversation, and religion with Whitaker—who viewed her less as a person, Townsend writes, and more as a way to test his ability to convert natives. On weekends, Pocahontas joins Whitaker in town, where he preaches. It is on one of these Sundays, Townsend presumes, that Pocahontas and the widowed John Rolfe first meet. By the end of the winter of 1613, Rolfe writers a letter to Thomas Dale asking permission to marry Pocahontas and professing his love for the young woman. Though Pocahontas is unconverted—and though Rolfe expresses reservations about her "background"—he also uses impassioned language as he describes his love for her and his wish to marry her.

Townsend attempts to show that Pocahontas was less of a person to her captors than an idea—and suggests that John Rolfe, in spite of his declarations of love for her, might have seen her the same way. Rolfe seemed embarrassed and doubtful about loving an Indian woman—he clearly didn't see or appreciate Pocahontas's humanity as thoroughly as his impassioned letters might suggest.

Townsend uses a combination of records and speculation to construct Rolfe's qualms and quandaries during this time. He loved Pocahontas, but the Bible warned against taking "strange wives." Rolfe tried to fight his passion for the woman—he was also no doubt, Townsend writes, full of guilt over the fact that he had, by his own admission, begun to forget his recently-deceased first wife. Rolfe's letters reflect his determination to assure Pocahontas's conversion to Christianity—perhaps to mitigate his own guilt, and perhaps to ensure that their potential children would be Christians.

Later in the narrative, Townsend will reveal that Rolfe's letters to others were not always entirely truthful. While she doesn't cast outright doubt on the contents of his letters about his love for Pocahontas, she does suggest that Rolfe's desire for Pocahontas wasn't rooted in authentic love for the person she was, but belief in the potential of the person colonization could make her into.

Though Rolfe's feelings are evident in his many letters and diary entries, Townsend writes, there is not even a scrap of information about Pocahontas's feelings for Rolfe—or her motivations for accepting his proposal and allowing herself to be baptized. Townsend turns to anthropological, cultural, and historical perspective to fill in the blanks about what Pocahontas may have been thinking. It is "impossible," Townsend writes, that Pocahontas was motivated (as the cultural myths about her have so often suggested she was) by genuine love of the English or belief in Christianity. She most likely had independent agendas of her own—but no real control over her own circumstances. At the same time, Pocahontas was not likely forced into marriage, as three of her relatives attended the ceremony—the question, then, Townsend writes, becomes why an Algonkian noblewoman would "cross into another world" forever.

Again, Townsend laments that any writing or records in Pocahontas's own voice are lost. She attempts, again, to reconstruct the motivations that might have been operating behind Pocahontas's decision-making as she converted to Christianity and married Rolfe. Townsend ultimately suggests that Pocahontas, like her father, was politically savvy in a way the English didn't fully understand—or weren't willing to see.

Townsend suggests that Pocahontas, following a "time-honored custom," married her enemy in order to bear children who would owe their allegiance to both sides. Powhatan even sent a letter, prior to the marriage, suggesting Pocahontas find a way to stay with the English—a letter that seems to confirm that both Pocahontas and her father were thinking strategically. It is also worth remembering, Townsend writes, that in her own tribe, Pocahontas would not have been eligible for a "politically significant match"—but here, in Henrico, she was a princess in the English's eyes, and could create a meaningful and potentially powerful alliance.

Pocahontas continued to realize that she had to make her own political significance, not having been born to any. Whereas she once made herself useful as a translator, she now realized that in spite of her position as a captive, she had an opportunity to become something more—both to the English and to her own people. She could potentially use her father's political methods to heal the relationship between her people and their colonizers from the inside out.

Townsend rewinds the narrative a bit to March of 1614 in order to illustrate how Pocahontas's marriage—and her remaining with the English in Henrico—was, in fact, politically significant. After Sir Thomas Dale takes over as governor of Virginia, he immediately launches an offensive against Powhatan, using Pocahontas as a pawn. With the young woman and many soldiers, he sails upriver from the settlement in search of Powhatan. Even with Pocahontas as a bargaining chip, though, they are barred from meeting with the chief. Instead, John Rolfe and another settler are brought to meet with Opechankeno, who relays Powhatan's wishes that Pocahontas stay with the English as Dale's symbolic "child." Pocahontas's willingness to do so in her father's name, Townsend asserts, effectively ends the war that had been raging for so many years.

Townsend provides this anecdote in order to show the basis in which Pocahontas began to see herself not as a pawn, but as a potential politician. She knew that her father wanted her back in his care—but at the same time, she knew that as the settlers were barring her from returning to him, there might be a way for her to secure a different kind of freedom and agency. Pocahontas, Townsend suggests, did the best she could for herself and her people in the midst of miserable circumstances.

CHAPTER 7: POCAHONTAS AND JOHN

In April of 1614, Pocahontas publicly declares herself a Christian, accepts the **name** Rebecca, and marries John Rolfe. Pocahontas picks a significant moment to accept baptism—she was likely waiting until a declaration of peace, her and her father's goal, had been made. Whitaker and Dale each believe, Townsend says, that they've "won"—they had no idea, most likely, about the strategies and political moves which factored into Pocahontas at last submitting to Christianity.

Townsend shows how Pocahontas's decision to accept Christianity was seen as a victory by her captors—they could not imagine that Pocahontas might be making a strategic social or political move on her own behalf. Thus, Townsend hammers home again just how seriously the colonists underestimated the intelligence and savvy of the Powhatan people.

The **name** "Rebecca," Townsend says, was likely chosen by Whitaker. It is symbolic: the biblical figure of Rebekah gave birth to twins after marrying a man from a foreign land. Esau came out red, while his brother, Jacob, come out holding Esau's heel. Rebekah favored Jacob, and eventually helped him trick his father Isaac into bestowing upon him the ritual blessing meant for the eldest son. Another perspective of Rebekah's story, however, shows Rebekah's people blessing her for bearing the children of her people's enemy. Pocahontas, upon receiving her new name, reveals that her old name was Matoaka—the colonists are surprised she'd never shared it before, and when asked why, Pocahontas apparently says she simply "had not felt like sharing it."

Townsend uses this passage to show just how powerful names were for the colonists—while, at the same time, Pocahontas and her people had a more fluid concept of name and identity. In naming Pocahontas "Rebecca," Whitaker hoped to pin an entire personality and destiny upon her—but in accepting the name, Pocahontas was merely accepting the arrival of a new phase of her life.

After her wedding to John Rolfe, Pocahontas moves with her husband to the land given to him by the Virginia Company, just across the river from Jamestown. As an intrepid agriculturalist, John Rolfe has begun to grow a Caribbean variety of tobacco and export it back to England—his farm is a major source of financial stability for the entire colony. By 1618, the colony would be exporting 40,000 pounds a year, breaking the Spanish monopoly on the plant. Pocahontas, Townsend asserts, is instrumental to the tobacco boom—she likely teaches John Rolfe her people's methods of growing, cultivating, and drying the plant.

This passage shows that though John Rolfe had long harbored dreams of being a successful tobacco merchant, it wasn't until he used the skills and tricks that Pocahontas, an Indigenous woman, taught him that he began to have true success, prosperity, and renown.

Jamestown has, at last, begun to thrive in earnest. Rolfe and Pocahontas are contented, spending their days teaching each other about their cultures, with Rolfe coming to believe that "the Indians [held] a just and lawful title" to their lands. Rolfe remains somewhat "condescending" in his attitudes toward the Indians, but Townsend asserts that Pocahontas's vitality and relative independence widens her husband's worldview. In the midst of the bitter winter of 1615, Rolfe brings Pocahontas some news: the leaders of the Virginia Company have invited her to cross the sea and visit London as an honored guest.

Townsend paints a peaceful picture of Pocahontas and John Rolfe's marriage and their lives in Jamestown—even as Pocahontas no doubt struggled against her husband's racism and condescension.

CHAPTER 8: IN LONDON TOWN

In April of 1616, Pocahontas, John Rolfe, their young son Thomas, Sir Thomas Dale, and about a hundred other passengers make their way across the sea on a ship helmed by Captain Argall. An adviser to Powhatan named Uttamatomakin and about six other native attendants are also in their company—a "veritable delegation" sent by Powhatan to discover information about England and report it back, no doubt an advantage afforded to the chief by virtue of Pocahontas's marriage to an Englishman.

Pocahontas's visit to England was a configuration of the Virginia Company in hopes that she'd serve as a kind of living advertisement for the possibilities of colonization—but for Pocahontas and her people, it was an opportunity as well: one that could be used to discover more information about the settlers' land and glean what their adversaries' true power really was.

Townsend wonders what Pocahontas's thoughts must have been as the ship arrived in Plymouth—a huge, dirty port city remarkably different from the world Pocahontas knew. She, Uttamatomakin, and their fellow natives undoubtedly realized the full force of what their people were up against. After pausing for several days in Plymouth, the ship heads up the Thames to London—where Pocahontas encounters a city of 200,000 people. London is not, however, a modern city: the streets are mud, and the low wooden buildings are crushed together. At an inn near Fleet Street famous for hosting notable people, John Rolfe and Pocahontas disembark their carriage and check into their rooms.

Townsend has spent the entirety of the book reminding her readers that the Powhatan people were not naïve about the full force of their adversaries' might—but now, as she imagines Pocahontas and Uttamatomakin realizing the true size of England, she suggests that they must have been overwhelmed, dismayed, and shocked by the sheer number of people in just one city.

Sir Edwin Sandys is a member of Parliament and a wealthy investor in the Virginia Company. He takes Rolfe and Pocahontas "under his wing," so to speak, while they stay in London. He pays "the Lady Rebecca" several pounds a week so that she can afford to dress well and pay her attendants throughout her demanding stay, as she'll need to look her best and be ready to be shown off at any moment. Sandys and the other high-ranking members of the Virginia Company—embroiled at the time in several lawsuits and on shaky financial ground—are determined to get London talking about Pocahontas's visit, and perhaps thus rescue the venture's reputation.

Edwin Sandys—and other men like him—clearly and transparently hoped that in showing Pocahontas and John Rolfe off around London's high society, they might drum up more money for—and more faith in—the Virginia Company. Sandys likely knew that the company was at a pivotal juncture and might live or die by Londoners' responses to Pocahontas's visit.

John Rolfe and Pocahontas receive invitations to social gatherings left and right—everyone wants to meet Pocahontas and hear tales of life in Virginia. Scholars and socialites alike, Townsend writes, likely saw Pocahontas as the personification of their colonialist desires for the land of Virginia itself: a foreign woman who had been tamed, brought to God, and instilled with a love of England. As Rolfe and Pocahontas go from party to party, Pocahontas becomes run-down and ill, her immune system under attack by "thousands of foreign microbes" to which she has no immunity. To escape the bustling crowds and polluted London air, Rolfe secures lodgings for them and their toddler, Thomas, in Middlesex, a suburb nine miles from the heart of the city.

Townsend attempts to reconstruct the scrutiny disguised as adoration Pocahontas must have faced during her early days in London. She was brought over to serve as a walking advertisement for the Virginia Company's possibilities in colonizing the New World, and while her experience of such a visit is unimaginable, Townsend does her best to look upon Pocahontas's trip to London with profound empathy and understanding.

Pocahontas is, in addition to being sick, no doubt exhausted by the attention being lavished on her and questions and favors being asked of her. In London, Pocahontas is a "model" forced to represent her entire race, and her admirers there likely see her as a caricature of an idea of an Indian they know from stories, plays, and dances. Townsend cites the example of one specific event Pocahontas attends: a Twelfth Night masque (or longform spectacular performance with elaborate sets and costumes) at the Court of King James. Pocahontas and Rolfe are treated well and seated prominently at the masque, though not its guests of honor—that designation is reserved for George Villiers, the king's new lover. As they watch an elaborate performance scripted by playwright Ben Jonson unfold, the room buzzes with whispers and gossip about Pocahontas—not all of it reverent or even kind.

Even as Londoners gawked and gaped at Pocahontas, feeling that in glimpsing her they might glimpse an entire race, many talked badly about Pocahontas behind her back and saw her as an oddity. This dissonance shows that while people were interested in hearing fabricated tales about the New World, they remained disgusted by or dismissive of authentic looks at its people and their culture.

Letters from the time sent between members of high society—such as John Chamberlain, a "genteel town gossip" popular at court—reveal a cruel, petty disdain for Pocahontas and make barbed jokes about her dark skin, her obsession with London society, and her "trick[ed] up" manner of dressing. For all that was written at the time about Pocahontas, her voice is "difficult to hear" in the cacophony of history—and yet two anecdotes provide a window into what she may have been thinking and feeling throughout her highly-scrutinized time in London.

Townsend knows that as difficult as it is to imagine what Pocahontas may have been thinking or feeling, there are ways of understanding her state of mind, her wishes, and her activities during her time in London. While others mocked her or said cruel things, using language to demoralize and demean her, Pocahontas remained focused on the purpose of her visit.

In the late days of 1616, Pocahontas sits for a portrait: an engraving of her was to be made by the renowned Dutch-German artist Simon Van de Passe. Her image, Townsend writes, was to be used to advertise a fund-raising lottery for the Virginia Company. According to Townsend, the portrait was marred in some ways by the Virginia Company's propaganda—they listed Pocahontas's age as 21 when she was 19 due to their need to represent her advertisement as one of a "consenting adult"—but in other ways, the portrait reflects the artist's desire to render Pocahontas based on how she may have wanted to appear. She wears pearl earrings (a symbol of the pearl-rich Virginia shores) and a plain hat, refusing to don a frilly, hyperfeminine one like those popular at court. Her high cheekbones, dark eyes, and black hair are rendered starkly rather than Anglicized or softened.

Townsend suggests that the engraving of Pocahontas done by Van de Passe was—and still is—significant because it seems to indicate that Pocahontas made many of her own choices about how she wished to be represented and immortalized. For a woman who was denied agency over so much of her life, Townsend argues, this moment represents one of the rare occurrences in which Pocahontas's wishes for her own destiny may have been heeded and respected.

Most tellingly, the portrait is surrounded by a description of its subject: "Matoaka als Rebecka daughter to the mighty Prince Powhatan Emperour of *Attanoughskomouck*." Pocahontas's true **name**, Matoaka, appears—as does the word *Attanoughskomouck*, likely a phonetic spelling of Pocahontas's homeland's own true name: Tsenacomoco.

Townsend shows that Van de Passe used Pocahontas's real name and even invoked a rough (but well-intentioned) phonetic spelling of her homeland. He thereby gave her back her agency in what little ways he could, even as her image was about to be used to spread the word about the Virginia Company's "success" in colonizing and converting the inhabitants of the New World.

Another anecdote which reveals Pocahontas's state of mind while in London comes from descriptions of an encounter she has with John Smith when he comes to visit her. Pocahontas is not overjoyed to see Smith, as he assumed she would be. Rather, she "obscure[s] her face" from him at first, then later disparages him in a long tirade. She explains that because Smith betrayed Powhatan and treated him as a "stranger," she is now treating Smith the same way. Though Townsend reminds readers that Smith often exaggerated accounts of his life, this encounter was indeed witnessed by several others who verified, in their own writings, Pocahontas's emotions of "profound sadness and anger" mixed with "judgment and superiority."

Townsend is careful to remind readers that while many of John Smith's writings are erroneous and incorrect, his report of Pocahontas's speech to him in London may be truthful in at least some sense. She argues that he wouldn't have reported such an embarrassing anecdote had it been fictional.

In March, Rolfe and Pocahontas are ready to return to Virginia. Edwin Sandys gives the Rolfes some money as a parting gift, symbolically meant to congratulate "the good example of [Pocahontas's] conversion, and to encourage other of her kindred [...] to do the like." The gift comes with a condition: Rolfe is asked to start a school that will be used to convert Indian children to Christianity. As they make their way down the Thames, Pocahontas's illness worsened. In the town of Gravesend, Rolfe helps Pocahontas to bed and sends for a doctor—but Pocahontas and many of her other native attendants are simply too ill, and there succumb to their sicknesses. Rolfe never records his wife's final moments or words.

Townsend uses this passage to show just how thoroughly Pocahontas was used as a pawn in the English's plans for further, deeper expansion and control within the New World. Pocahontas died just as she was about to return home—but had she made it back to Virginia, she might have been forced to watch as her husband gather up Indigenous children to use as pawns in the Virginia Company's propaganda machine.

On March 21st, Pocahontas is buried at the small church in Gravesend. She is given a Christian burial, and her grave remains unmarked by a stone. After the funeral, Rolfe, his son Thomas, Uttamatomakin, and Argall, along with the rest of the crew, continue along the river. At a stop in Plymouth, however, Rolfe arranges for a man named Sir Louis Stukely, a local vice admiral, to keep the child. Smith later wrote in a diary entry that he regretted doing so, and feared being punished or "censured" by God for abandoning his child. He asks that Thomas be sent to Virginia when he is older—but the two never meet again.

Townsend suggests that John Rolfe's decision to leave Thomas behind in England was a pivotal one. She uses John Rolfe's emotional reaction to his own decision to foreshadow the ways in which Thomas's absence would be felt not just by his father, but by the settlers and natives who, in equal measure, hoped his very existence might mean a way to potential peace for their people.

CHAPTER 9: 1622, AND QUEEN COCKACOESKE

After 35 uneventful days at sea, Rolfe returns to find Jamestown in a "pitiful state." The well has been ruined, and Whitaker has died. While Argall begins damage control, Rolfe goes to the woods to meet with one of the nearby tribes. He tells them of Pocahontas's death and of his plans for a school—according to his letter to Edwin Sandys soon after, the tribes are "willing to part with their children." Rolfe's letter leaves out the fact, however, that the Algonkians are in a difficult political position. Powhatan has retired, leaving his younger brother in charge and Opechankeno as a "chief military man." Uttamatomakin delivers a scathing and worrying tirade to Opechankeno "against England [and] English people." Meanwhile, it is likely that microbes which come off the ship from England with the returned natives infect the surrounding population, making the winter of 1617 a hard, devastating one.

Though Jamestown was in shambles, the Powhatan people were at a disadvantage themselves—both due to the demoralizing news from Uttamatomakin's report, and the foreign germs that had been brought directly back to their villages. Though Townsend suggests that the months to come would be pivotal ones in terms of power struggles and relationships between the Powhatan and the settlers, she shows just how much both groups were struggling to remain afloat.

Tensions escalate throughout the spring of 1618 as both Indians and colonists wish they could use the young Thomas Rolfe, back in England, as a bargaining chip. Opechankeno refuses to part with any more lands unless they go directly to Thomas; the English, meanwhile, wish they had use of the young, malleable Thomas as an interpreter and ally. Backers of the Virginia Company in London grow dissatisfied with Argall's inability to coax more land from Opechankeno and his people—a man many English don't even see, in spite of his status, as a "relevant player." Late in 1618, Powhatan dies. As tensions escalate throughout 1619, Opechankeno begins to realize that he can do little to stop the white invaders from claiming more and more of his people's land through force and violence.

Townsend shows how Opechankeno struggled against the colonists' encroachment upon his people's land—even as the settlers refused to see him as a politically powerful or even viable "player" in the negotiations between their groups. Opechankeno was helpless to stop his people from losing ground, yet remained determined to fight until the very end.

As another epidemic ravages the native populations, Argall is recalled to London and a new governor is installed—Opechankeno's interpreters tell him the man is of low station and little power. The new governor, humiliated by the Indians' lack of respect for him, asks Rolfe—recently remarried to a young English woman—to meet with them. Rolfe, however, knows his own value as a captive, and sends two lesser men in his stead. Opechankeno is offended by Rolfe's refusal to visit in person, but agrees reluctantly to a new kind of arrangement which might ease political relations. He states that he will not give up any more land, or any children for instruction in a "school"—but if whole families are given houses, cattle, and land, he will send groups to live among the colonists and learn from them.

Rolfe had the luxury of refusing to allow himself to be used as a pawn in negotiations between his people and the Powhatan, even though he had watched the same fate befall his wife. Rolfe wanted things both ways: he wanted to rise in social standing based on his negotiations with the Indians, but refused to actually meet with them to broker the negotiations himself.

Rolfe writes a letter exaggerating his role in brokering this new arrangement to Sandys—he fails to mention his new marriage, a fact which might offend the Indians and thus make him less of an asset to the English. John Rolfe is still determined to make something of himself as a merchant farmer, and uses his social position at Jamestown to petition King James I for changes to the tobacco importation law that would be in his favor. In 1621, Rolfe is even named to a colonial council as the fledgling Virginia government is reorganized. By puffing up his standing with the Virginia Company's patrons back in London, Rolfe has elevated his own position, too.

Rolfe's exaggeration in his letters to Sandys mirrors Smith's own sensationalized, falsified accounts of his journey to the New World. It also casts doubt on the content of Rolfe's earlier letters concerning his love for Pocahontas. Clearly, Rolfe was determined to advance his own position no matter the cost.

Rolfe is not the only one dependent on the political favor of Londoners—the three Virginia Indians who were left behind due to illness when Rolfe sailed back for Jamestown were, Townsend writes, "absolutely and completely dependent on powerful patrons" who hoped to convert them to Christianity—and often succeeded, pinning them to baptisms while they were in the throes of illness. Two women who'd accompanied Pocahontas to England as attendants—and who were likely of high birth back in Virginia—are essentially sold into slavery, shipped to Bermuda to become wives, along with servants to offer as dowry. One of the women, christened with the **name** "Mary" in London, dies at sea. The other, Elizabeth, is married off and disappears from the historical record soon after.

Townsend includes the stories of Pocahontas's relatives—whose true names are lost to history—to show how little agency women, especially Indigenous women, had within their own lives. Just as Pocahontas was used as a tool of colonialism, so too were her kinswomen used for sociopolitical purposes.

In March of 1622, Rolfe, then 37 years old, becomes seriously ill. He takes to bed and calls upon a reverend to help him compose a will. In the document, he leaves his plantation across the river from Jamestown to Thomas, and leaves a lesser property to his new wife and their daughter, Elizabeth. Rolfe dies; merely days later, the Powhatan people launch an attack on Jamestown and kill somewhere between 350 and 400 colonists—a quarter of the colony's population—in a carefully-orchestrated assault.

Townsend uses Rolfe's death to suggest the end of an era. While Rolfe's death in and of itself had no significance to the Powhatan people, Townsend draws a connection between the end of the first wave of Virginia Company settlers and the death of even the pretense of peaceable relations between the new settlers and the Powhatan tribes.

Many historians, Townsend writes, have puzzled over why the Algonkians so completely reversed their policy of peace. Some posit that the Indians were sick of losing their land; others suggest the attack was some kind of religious ritual, given that it coincided with the four-year anniversary of Powhatan's death and the five-year anniversary of Pocahontas's funeral. In reality, Townsend states, the Powhatan people likely chose to orchestrate such a deadly assault because of what Uttamatomakin reported of London—that there would be no end to the arrival of new settlers, that England was vast and populous, and that they would, eventually destroy the Algonkians. This, the tribes likely knew, was one of the last moments in which they'd have any kind of advantage as a people.

The Powhatan people likely knew that if there was any hope for their survival, an attack had to happen right away, employing the element of surprise to catch the settlers off-guard—and convince those remaining that it was time, once and for all, to abandon Jamestown.

When the heads of the Virginia Company back in London learn of the attack, they blame the settlers for becoming too "cozy" with the natives. The colonists respond that it was instead the fault of the Virginia Company for suggesting they get cozy in the first place. The Virginia Company gives the colonists carte-blanche to "remove the Indians and take the country for themselves"—at last, the colonists have license to wage all-out war on the Powhatan people, with no aim of making peace in the future, and so they do.

Townsend suggests that the colonists had been waiting for decades for an opportunity or excuse to massacre the natives with impunity and at last secure their stronghold over the region—in 1622, she argues, they finally got it.

Years later, in the 1630s, Thomas Rolfe, nearly 20, travels to Virginia and assumes the lands and titles that are his. He seems ashamed of his connection to the remaining Powhatan people, but nonetheless pays visits to Opechankeno and one of his mother's sisters. In 1644, after Thomas has been living in Virginia for many years, Opechankeno leads yet another uprising against the colonists with what remaining men he has. Thomas, at last forced to choose sides, fights against his mother's people, and is awarded the title of lieutenant as a result of his efforts. He gains more land and clout, even as the world of his own native family members "fell apart." In October of 1646, Opechankeno's successor is forced to sign a peace treaty ceding huge swaths of land to the English. After his death, the tribes, no longer united under a mamanitowik, struggle to survive.

Townsend shows Thomas Rolfe turning against his mother's people in order to hearken back to Reverend Whitaker's symbolic wish for "Rebecca"—that her child would favor his father's people. Thomas may never have known the political motivations behind the unfair destiny into which he was born, but when push came to shove, he disavowed his native heritage and fought of the colonists. Townsend doesn't suggest that things necessarily would have been different had Thomas grown up in Virginia among his mother's people—but the possibility remains.

By 1649, a queen named Cockacoeske has risen up to lead the Pamunkey tribe. However, between continued English expansion and fights against other, outlying Siouan tribes, her people's population drops steadily. In 1676, as Iroquoian groups raid the colony, Cockacoeske is called to Jamestown and asked to fight alongside the settlers. Cockacoeske, regal and silent for most of the meeting, at last agrees to supply 12 men to fight for the colonists—it is likely that she has about 150 at her command. The colonists end up attacking Cockacoeske's village; the queen flees into the woods while her people's homes burn.

Townsend introduces Queen Cockacoeske to provide an example of yet another woman who attempted to resist the English in her own way. While no one person's actions, Townsend knows, could have changed the course of history, Townsend will go on to allege that these small acts of defiance were not insignificant at all.

In 1677, after the arrival of commissioners of the king from London, multiple tribes gather together to sign a peace treaty. Among them are the Weyanock, the Nottoway, the Nansemond, the Appomattock—and Cockacoeske, the queen of the Pamunkey. The reservations created in that treaty still exist today—and the descendants of the tribes' leaders still struggle "to keep their traditions alive."

Townsend laments that the cruel, punitive action taken against the Powhatan tribes in the 17th century has plagued those same tribes up through the present day.

Townsend writes that many historians lament Pocahontas's death—had she lived, they claim, she might have been able to improve relations between the colonists and the Indians. This is, Townsend says, a "naïve" point of view—"the destruction of Virginia's Indian tribes was not a question of miscommunication [or] missed opportunities." The settlers, who wanted the Indians' land, were always going to take it—and to imply that a single person, be it Pocahontas or Queen Cockacoeske, could have stopped the inevitable is cruel and unfair. "A new nation," Townsend writes, "was [always] going to be built on their people's destruction." The story of Pocahontas and others like her, Townsend says, is not one of failure—rather, it is a story of a real-world heroism not found in "epic tales."

In the book's final passages, Townsend asserts that it is unfair to imagine that Pocahontas—or any one native individual—could have stopped the forces of fate that had been at work, unbeknownst to them, for centuries. Instead of creating myths which assign inaccurate values and acts to these individuals, Townsend suggests, people should instead celebrate the acts of defiance, heroism, and empathy for which they were actually responsible—no matter how small they may seem or how little difference they may have made in the face of colonial oppression.

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