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The Mystery of the Lost Colony of Roanoke

"Good morning class! It's time to put your detective skills to work. This week, we're going to be exploring one of America's biggest mysteries, the lost colony of Roanoke!" The class cheered in excitement. Ms. Johnson had been teaching them all about the English colonies and John White's journeys to the New World. They couldn't wait to learn more.

"Today," Ms. Johnson said dramatically, "We're going to do some research to figure out what may have caused the colony's disappearance." She pointed to a table set up with supplies. "I have textbooks, maps and photographs for you. You are also welcome to use the class computers for your research. Use your detective skills to determine what caused the colony to disappear. I can't wait to hear your theories!"

Steven and Natalia gathered around the table with supplies. They decided to take an old map and a book about the history of Roanoke. As they started to work, Ms. Johnson stood over them. "Great choices," she said. "That book has some interesting photographs that might help you."

Natalia opened the book and flipped carefully through the pages. "What's that?" Steven asked. He was pointing to an old photograph. It looked sort of like an old painting.

"That's the tree!" Natalia said excitedly. "When Ms. Johnson taught us about the Roanoke Colony, she said that all John White

could find was a post with 'Croatoan' and a tree with 'CRO' carved into them." The two children grinned at each other and touched the photograph.

When Natalia and Steven opened their eyes, they found that they were transported back to the Roanoke Colony. The children walked around the colony but saw no signs of life. The colonists were nowhere to be found. The settlement appeared to have been long forgotten. Just as Natalia was about to speak, they spotted a few men walking towards them.

Natalia and Steven quickly hid behind a thick group of trees, careful not to be seen. The men looked around the colony as if searching for something.

"That's John White," whispered Steven. "I remember him from the pictures Ms. Johnson showed us."

The children watched closely as the men approached a tree. John White looked closely at the tree and discovered the letters C-R-O carved into it. Steven and Natalia listened as the men talked about what they had found.

According to the men, there were no signs that the colonists had been in any danger. Before John White returned to England for supplies, he had instructed the colonists on what to do if they had to leave the colony before he returned. White had instructed the colonists to carve their destination into a tree. He also told them to carve a cross next

to the destination if they had left due to serious danger. There was no such cross.

The men seemed confused. If they weren't in any serious danger, what could have caused the colonists to leave? It had been three long years since John White had left the colony. The men wondered aloud about the fate of the colonists. It was clear that the colonists had been gone for a long time. There was no sign that the colonists had been in trouble. They knew that the Croatan was a friendly American Indian tribe that lived in the area. They wondered if the colonists had turned to them for help.

As the men started to turn away from the tree, the children knew it was time to leave. "I wonder why they didn't stay longer to look for the lost colony?" Natalia whispered.

"It's because there was a storm coming and the ship's captain wanted to leave."

"Oh yeah, I remember now. How sad!"

"Come on, let's head back before any of the men see us," whispered Steven. "I bet we'd give those men quite a fright if they saw us."

They both touched the photograph in their book. Before they knew it, they were back in Ms. Johnson's classroom. Natalia turned to Steven and said, "I think I've got some ideas about what may have happened to the colonists. Let's start writing them down!"

"Great idea," Steven replied. "But let's watch the video about the Roanoke Colony, first."



Think & Review

1. Why did John White have to return to England and leave the colonists at Roanoke?
2. Why would the colonists name their colony Jamestown after the English king?
3. Why was John Rolfe important to the development of Jamestown?
4. What is a primary source?
5. What President created Thanksgiving?