

Teachers Resource Guide

Matoaka Transcript

Who are you? What year is it?

My name is Matoaka; I am from the people of Wahunsunacock (Powhatan). That's my father. He's a great leader amongst many tribes. Being one of his favorite daughters, I would follow him all the time. One day my ventures took me out to the shores of the river. And there, I saw these strange men getting out of a large canoe. They had hair on their faces and I wanted to know what were they doing on our land and what were their plans for the Wahunsunacock.

Describe your daily activities

My day usually started with bathing in the river. Then, I would go and gather berries, nuts and fruits; this would usually be part of our morning meal. I would then go to the garden and work our corn, our tobacco, our squash, and many of our beans. Our corn was our staple food; it provided soups and it also provided breads that we would use to eat with each meal. We used a mortal and pestle to grind our corn and that would help to make the bread. I loved to garden because I would be out close in the woods by my friends: the squirrels, the raccoons, and even sometimes the deer. They would come up to the garden to have a taste of our corn.

What do you think about the English settlers at Jamestown and in Virginia?

I am saddened by the disharmony between our people and the English settlers. I am saddened by the destruction of our land and our people. We have learned greed from them and in return we have shown hatred. I am very saddened by all that I see.

What expectations do you have for your future?

I expected both of us to live in harmony: the English and the people of Wahunsunacock. We would learn from each others' customs. We would learn how to build taller buildings. And also, they would teach us of these strange metal things that they carried with them; their muskets, their guns. We would learn how to fire them. But also, we taught them how to garden using the slash-and-burn method. We would burn down a part of land and from that the ashes would help to make the land very fertile. The soil would be ready to grow again new vegetables. That is what I expected for both of our people.

Items that would identify Matoaka:

Shell and metal necklace that would show her status as chief's daughter

Dear antler rack that she uses to work in the fields

Basket she uses to gather berries

Horn tools she uses to make clothing or repair household items