

Teachers Resource Guide

Rachel Stanton Transcript

Who are you and why are you at Jamestown (or in Virginia)? What year is it?

My name be Rachel Stanton. Come to Virginia last year in 1619. Samuel Jordan's me master and one of the Burgesses in the new government here. I come to Jamestown for to sell some of our fowl at the market. Best looking meaty birds in the whole colony. I tell you, when I come here last year I found when they bring the birds to market, they was selling 'em all off right quick. And then other people, what had birds not so good looking, were saying theirs was the best looking birds. Come to me, if we had a bird we wasn't selling, like one of the old tough cocks, where people could see from a good distance that our birds was better looking than the others. I asked Mr. Jordan if I could be bringing one to town and keep it with me. And I tell you I ain't got to do no talking to sell the birds now. People come up to me and said them's good-looking, when you comin' back, how many you bringing. Oh, best idea I ever had.

Describe your daily activities

What a blessing it is I learned to trade in England. I ain't sayin' I don't do nothing here, but I ain't been put out in the fields to work in the hot sun every day. Master Jordan has me for the poultress at Jordan's Journey, his plantation. We got more fowl than anyone else in the whole colony. We don't have them for some amusement or sport, we sell them for meat. And these are the best looking birds you're going to find here. I got a girl that help me, guess you'd say I'm the master of the trade here and she my apprentice. That's how I learnt to take care of them all. You got to make sure they's all fed and clean watered every day, wings trimmed if theys're flying off, spurs trimmed if theys're fighting amongst themselves, sick ones took out quick before the rest get sick or kill it themselves, the cockrels get culled out and six months took to market, pullets what ain't laying for being too old, well they get sold too, and the old cocks what ain't no good for getting chicks to hatch out, well we wouldn't be sellin an old, tough bird, they get stewed up for us.

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

I try not to think ill of people, but they sure didn't tell us what Virginia were really like. There's things about it what's the same as England, and there's things what different. I mean, just like England there's four seasons of the year here, but I tell you summer can go seem to be just about since the end of March all the way through to October. Last summer, when the new government first met, well all the men in the meeting there was seasoned mind you, but it were so hot, one of them dropped dead after being in the meeting for three days in that heat. They didn't tell you that as you gettin' on your ship to come here. And most what hoped to have a house full of children, well they find in Virginia if they didn't bring them with them, they ain't goin' get them. Conditions so harsh here, you should be thankful that you livin' through it, not worry about having anybody else in your house with you.

What expectations do you have for your future?

I don't know if I got expectations. I figured if I lived through the first year, well anything were better than being in England. Times is harder there than they ever been. I weren't ever going to have nothing, nor marry a fellow that would either. Didn't ever have any kin whatever owned

anything. Well, compared to the nothing I was sure of gettin' in England, whatever I get here will seem to be a fortune. Them that was here before the new government was formed last year, I think, was all give a hundred acres, man or woman. Well, doubt that happen to me. But I'm certain when I get done my indenture of seven years I'll be gettin' a new suit of clothes and a cast iron pot when I am finished. I tell you, I should be able to attract any man I want with that.

Items that would identify Rachel Stanton:

Woman's cap/apron--clothing

Indenture contract-she was indentured servant

Chicken-her job/skill that earned her a living/job/future

Dried corn-what she fed the chickens, new world crop introduced to in America