Three ships carrying 144 men left England for North America in 1606. The plan was to set up England's first colony in the New World. Captain Christopher Newport was the leader.

Others had tried to do this. Sir Walter Raleigh set up three trips between 1584 and 1587. Sir Humphrey Gilbert led the first try. It failed, and Gilbert's ship sank while returning to England.

The next group landed on Roanoke Island in 1585. That winter, they searched the Chesapeake Bay for harbors for larger ships. England was at war with Spain. But problems with Native Americans and the freezing winter forced them to return to England.

**Every colonist disappeared in the Lost Colony of Roanoke**

The third try in 1587 also failed. All 117 men, women and children disappeared. It was known as the Lost Colony of Roanoke.
In 1604, King James I of England signed a peace treaty with Spain. But he still wanted colonies in North America. He wanted to find gold or silver mines and a path to the Pacific Ocean. England also wanted to trade with Native Americans.

On April 10, 1606, the king gave permission to set up two colonies. One was on lands that today would be between North Carolina and New York. The other stretched up to Maine. The Virginia Company of London paid for the southern colony.

**Settlers named the colony for their king**

The three ships got to Virginia on April 26. The men settled along the James River. It was about 50 miles from Chesapeake Bay. They named the colony Jamestown.

About 30 Indian tribes lived in this area ruled by the powerful chief Powhatan. The colonists wanted to trade with them. At first, everyone was friendly. An attack by hundreds of warriors changed that. The colonists quickly built a fort.

The colonists felt safer but they started to get sick. There were more attacks. They had dirty water and bad food. More than half of them died.

New colonists and supplies came early in 1608. The English still looked for gold and a river to the Pacific. Captain John Smith could not find either one so he made a new plan. It was to grow crops and make things to be sent back to England.

The Virginia Company of London wanted Jamestown to make more money.

**Hundreds of new colonists made Native Americans unhappy**

Hundreds of colonists arrived between 1608 and 1609. The Powhatans were not happy. In the winter of 1609, the Powhatans trapped the colonists on Jamestown Island. They cut off their food and almost 200 people died. New leaders brought even more people to Jamestown in the spring of 1610.

These men made new laws. People had to go to church twice a day. The punishment for bad words, stealing and trading with the Indians without permission was death.
Tobacco was important to Jamestown

By the early 1620s, tobacco was being grown. It was being sent to England. By early 1622, about 3,000 new people arrived. England was getting rich. The Native Americans were losing more land and were angry. On March 22, 1622, they attacked colonists all along the James River. More than 350 people died.

King James took control of Virginia. The colonists built more plantations and grew more tobacco. By 1625, the Powhatans were beaten.

Jamestown taught the English a hard lesson. America gave many people new lives. It also destroyed the lives of the Native Americans. Their lands were taken by colonists so Jamestown and America could become rich.

James Horn is Colonial Williamsburg’s vice president of research and historical interpretation. He is the author of numerous books and articles on colonial America, including "A Land as God Made It: Jamestown and the Birth of America" (2005).
Quiz

1. Why did King James I want a colony in the New World?
   (A) He wanted to work with the Native Americans.
   (B) He wanted a place to keep his new ships.
   (C) He wanted to find gold and silver for England.
   (D) He wanted a place to send people from Spain.

2. Which sentence states a MAIN idea of the article?
   (A) England founded Jamestown so it would have more land than Spain.
   (B) England founded Jamestown so it could get along with Native Americans.
   (C) England founded Jamestown and took lands from Native Americans.
   (D) England founded Jamestown but the colonists were not able to survive.

3. What were the conditions like for the colonists?
   (A) They did not have clean water or good food.
   (B) The land was too rocky to plant.
   (C) They did not find any shelter to use for protection.
   (D) The weather was hot year-round.

4. Which sentence explains the MAIN idea of the section "Settlers named the colony for their king"?
   (A) Life was hard in the early Jamestown colony.
   (B) The colonists were friends with Native Americans.
   (C) Jamestown was named for King James I.
   (D) Captain John Smith could not find gold or silver.

5. Which is a reason the Native Americans were growing angry?
   (A) Their chiefs did not want to trade with the colonists.
   (B) Colonists kept taking more of their land.
   (C) Their ground was not growing enough food.
   (D) Colonists were stealing their gold and silver.

6. What is the MAIN reason why Native Americans attacked the colonists?
   (A) the colonists attacked them first
   (B) the colonists took their land
   (C) the colonists built a fort
   (D) the colonists would not trade with them

7. What caused Jamestown to succeed?
   (A) Fighting finally stopped in the colony.
   (B) Food was being sent from England.
   (C) Gold and silver were discovered.
   (D) Tobacco was being grown and sent to England.
Why was the settling of the Jamestown colony important?

(A) Its leaders rescued the colonists who were living at Roanoke.

(B) It was the first time anyone had tried to set up a colony in the New World.

(C) It was the first English colony to grow and make money in the New World.

(D) Its leaders helped King James I sign a peace treaty with Spain.
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