

JOHN WHITE



BIOGRAPHY

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John White was an English artist born around 1540. His drawing skills made him useful on exploratory expeditions to the New World that were happening at the time. That was how he came to the attention of Sir Walter Raleigh, who was an important member of the court of Queen Elizabeth I.

In 1585, John White joined an expedition to Roanoke Island, off the coast of what is now North Carolina, to record what he found there, and to see if the area was suitable for settling. They later tried to settle there, but colonization failed after the settlers clashed violently with the Croatoan Native Americans there.

But Raleigh arranged for John White and a group of families to return to Roanoke in 1587 to attempt colonization again. There were 150 people in total, and John White was made governor of the colony. The new colonists hoped to live in peace with the native peoples, but the earlier violence had not been forgotten. Within one month of landing, White was forced to return to England to ask Raleigh for reinforcements.

While White was in England, war started with Spain, and it was three years before White could raise the funds to return to the colony. When White returned to Roanoke Islands in August 1590, he found the colony abandoned. He searched frantically for the settlers, including his daughter and granddaughter, the first English baby born in the New World, named Virginia Dare.

Before he had left for England, White had told the colonists that if they were forced to move before he came back, they should leave messages to him carved on trees. On his return, all that could be found in Roanoke was the word "CROATOAN" engraved on a tree. White concluded there must be a connection between the word and the nearby tribe, but before he could investigate, a violent storm forced him out to sea and back to England.

Years later, expeditions that set out in search of the colonists found traces of them, including words carved on trees, in many different places, but no survivors were ever found. Some historians now believe they were taken by the Croatoans and traded far and wide – sold to other tribes and sent to work in mines and forge metal.

As for John White, he died three years after the storm forced him from Roanoke, and he never returned.

Understanding words

Before we can understand a story we have to know what all of the words mean. Let's try one...

a Write the sentence in which you found the word 'exploratory'.

b From that sentence, suggest what 'exploratory' means.

c Write a new sentence using the word 'exploratory'.

d Use a dictionary to find words with a similar meaning (synonyms) to 'exploratory'.

e Draw a small picture showing what you think 'exploratory' means.

Try this for other words, too. 

Finding key words

Next, we need to find the key words that tell us what the story is about...

Read the story and underline the key words. Write the most important of these key words in a list like the one below. Write next to it a word that means a similar thing (a synonym). You don't have to use all the spaces, but you should not use more.

Key word	Synonym (similar word)
Example: clashed	fought

Sequencing

Sequencing means getting the events in the right order. Write these sentences in the correct order, so they make sense.

Walter Raleigh sent White on an expedition to Roanoke Island in North America to make a record of what he saw there.

But in 1587, colonization was attempted again. White was made governor of the colony.

John White was born in England around 1540.

Shortly after they set up the colony, White went back to England to ask for help.

War with Spain delayed White for three years. When he returned to Roanoke, the colony was abandoned, and the colonists were gone.

The first attempt at colonizing Roanoke Island was not successful.

White was an artist who came to the attention of Sir Walter Raleigh.

Get to the facts

1 Who was an important member of Queen Elizabeth I's court?

2 How many people went to colonize Roanoke in 1587?

3 When did John White find the Roanoke colony abandoned?

4 What was the name of the first baby born in the New World?

5 Which word did White find engraved on a tree?

Make a story...

When you read a description it often gives you ideas about how the event might be described differently.

CROATOAN

I was desperate to find my family and the other Roanoke colonists. But I had no idea where they had gone or what had happened. Just as I was about to give up hope, I saw a word carved into a tree trunk... (now complete the story)

Below is a plain text version for printing:

Understanding words:

- a Write the sentence in which you found the word 'exploratory'.
- b From that sentence, suggest what 'exploratory' means.
- c Write a new sentence using the word 'exploratory'.
- d Use a dictionary to find words with a similar meaning (synonyms) to 'exploratory'.
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Finding key words:

Read the story and underline the key words. Write the most important of these key words in a list. Write next to it a word that means a similar thing (a synonym).

For example:

Key word – clashed Synonym – fought

Sequencing:

Write these sentences in the correct order, so they make sense:

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