

Colonial Virginia Module **The Virginia Company**

We find out from records of the Virginia Company and letters from Smith and other people in England about what they're doing and why it's a good idea to go to Virginia.

They're basing their idea of colonization on what the Spanish did for nearly a century in Mexico and in Peru and in the Caribbean. The Spanish go and find settled Indian groups. They'd like them especially to be rich, like the Incas or the Mayas, to have gold or silver. Then the Spanish conquer them, either through warfare or through diplomatic treaties.

They try to take over at the top so all of the gold, all of the corn, all of the beaver skins, all of the wealth that normally has gone to the dominant chiefs, the Spanish want that to come to them. And they ship that out to Spain. And that's how they get wealthy. That's what the English think they're going to do in Virginia.

It's an incredibly expensive thing to colonize. The King of England didn't put up all the money to go settle Virginia, although the King claimed the land. They chartered a private company. In this case the Virginia Company, in which you get investors and they put in money. And they decide to support John Smith and other men who are going to go out and stake a claim and explore what's there.

The idea of landing in Jamestown is you'll set up a little town where you can live, and from there you'll travel out and you'll find wealth and riches. You'll find Indian groups with whom you can make alliances. Find out who the important political leaders are. See if you can conquer them or get them to follow you. And see if you can follow the rivers to see if you can get farther into the continent and maybe even to the other side.