



Pocahontas, from Fiction to Fact: Using Disney's Film to Teach the True Story

Guide for Curriculum Unit 96.03.06
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In 1994, Disney studios produced the animated feature, Pocahontas. It met with popular acceptance and was mass-marketed around the world. Little girls still wear the Disney image of a voluptuous Indian woman blazoned on their sneakers and tee shirts. Some historians objected to the inaccuracies found in that film. I chose to use the film to help to teach the truth about Pocahontas and the Powhatans and the settlers of Jamestown because children are already interested in the subject.

This unit is designed to engage fifth grade students in the study of early colonial history through the use of three films about Pocahontas. Their interest will be piqued with the showing of the Disney version as well as a fictionalized, live action film for comparison and contrast. A third film, from the A & E Biography series, will provide a visual, factual account of the life of the Powhatan princess. Students will have the opportunity to learn about and use primary and secondary sources, to examine the specifics of life for both the English and the Powhatans in 1607 and to create a replica of an early settlement in tidewater Virginia.

(Recommended for Social Studies/U.S. History, grade 5)

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