

The Lost Colony of Roanoke

The first English colony in the New World was planted on Roanoke Island, near the Outer Banks of North Carolina, in the 1580s. The first expedition to explore the area was sent in 1585. A larger military expedition, led by Ralph Lane, settled on Roanoke in 1586. In 1587, a group of English families, led by John White, settled on Roanoke Island. Later that same year, White returned to England to bring more supplies and settlers back to Roanoke. He was delayed in England and could not return to Roanoke until 1590. When he returned, White found none of the settlers he had left behind. No one ever saw or heard from them again. The Roanoke Colony is one of history's biggest mysteries. In your group, use the evidence provided to build a theory about what happened to the Lost Colony.

Theory #1: They were killed in an attack.

- 1A: They were killed by Natives.
- 1B: They were killed by the Spanish.

Theory #2: They died of natural causes.

- 2A: They starved to death.
- 2B: They were swept away by a hurricane.
- 2C: They died of disease.

Theory #3: They left the island to live with Natives.

- 3A: They moved to Croatoan Island.
- 3B: They moved to the Chesapeake Bay.
- 3C: They moved further inland, away from the coast.

Evidence:

- A. The Englishmen of the second expedition to Roanoke, in 1586, attacked several nearby Native villages and towns. The English left in 1586 because they feared attack by the Natives.
- B. No bodies or recent graves were found near the colony.
- C. The colony at Roanoke was built as a place for English ships to rest and get supplies after attacking Spanish ships in the Caribbean. The Spanish wanted to eliminate this threat.
- D. The English were forced to borrow and beg for food from the Natives.
- E. The Outer Banks of North Carolina (where Roanoke is located) are hit with more hurricanes than any other spot in North America.
- F. The climate of Eastern North Carolina is warmer and wetter than the English were used to. Many nearby swamps bred mosquitoes which carried diseases.
- G. A Native whom the English had lived with and trusted, Manteo, was born on Croatoan Island.
- H. The word, "Croatoan" was carved into a post in the colony and the letters, "CRO" were scratched into a tree.
- I. John White found the houses in the settlement taken apart, but not burned or destroyed.
- J. There was no damage to the wooden wall around the colony.
- K. White told the settlers to carve a cross into a tree if they were in danger of being attacked. No cross was found.
- L. When White explored the island, he found that the small boats he left with the colonists were gone.
- M. Many years later, Native Americans told stories about strange Native tribes people with light skin, light-colored hair and blue eyes living in North Carolina.
- N. Spanish ships were seen off the coast of North Carolina (near Roanoke) in 1587.
- O. The English had difficulty planting crops in the sandy soil near Roanoke.
- P. Chief Powhatan, who helped the Jamestown colony survive in the early 1600s, bragged that he had found the Roanoke Colonists living in North Carolina and ordered his warriors to kill them all.