



Tobacco was one of the most important crops in colonial America, and was the main reason that Jamestown and North Carolina remained viable in the 1600s and 1700s.

The American tobacco industry was started by John Rolfe, the eventual husband of Pocahontas. Rolfe brought tobacco seeds to Jamestown from the Caribbean island of Trinidad. In 1612, he harvested his first tobacco crop, which was well-received in England, and which, became the colony's cash crop! Rolfe's tobacco was said to taste milder and less bitter than previous tobaccos. As Jamestown tobacco became more popular in England, more tobacco plantations were planted in Jamestown and surrounding areas. Tobacco became so important, that it was used as currency, to pay taxes, and even to purchase slaves and indentured servants. Because of its burgeoning tobacco industry, African slaves were brought to Jamestown in 1619 to work the plantations. Others worked as indentured servants. Indentured servants came to America to work for seven years. After seven years, they were free to pursue their own interests and were sometimes given parcels of land. Soon, tobacco crops covered most of southeastern Virginia and eastern North Carolina. This led to competition, falling prices, and harsher treatment of slaves and servants.

Those who planted tobacco considered it a form of art and a distinct tobacco culture formed. Planters took great pride in the quality of their tobacco and even developed their own unique seals and signatures to identify their brands. The reputation of each planter was tied to the quality of his product, and those who produced what was considered high-quality tobacco were held in high esteem by those in the community, and often gained political authority and social esteem. Successful planters would often flaunt their prosperity by importing expensive clothing and furniture from England.

1. What does “viable” mean in the sentence below?

Jamestown and North Carolina remained viable in the 1600s and 1700s.

- A. allowed
- B. interesting
- C. successful
- D. dry

2. How was Rolfe’s Tobacco different from European tobacco?

- A. It was more bitter.
- B. It was lighter.
- C. It was milder.
- D. It was rarer.

3. What was the effect of the growing popularity of tobacco? Circle ALL that apply.

- A. Slaves were brought to Jamestown.
- B. Indentured servants were freed.
- C. There was an increase in the number of tobacco plantations.
- D. Prices of tobacco rose quickly.

4. Which of the following about slaves and indentured servants were true? Circle all that apply

- A. As tobacco competition increased, planters were harsher toward slaves and servants.
- B. Indentured servant was just another name for “slave.”
- C. Slaves first came to Jamestown after John Rolfe cultivated his brand of tobacco.
- D. An indentured servant would eventually be free.

5. Which of the following would be an appropriate nickname for John Rolfe?

- A. Father of Jamestown
- B. Father of English tobacco
- C. Father of Virginia
- D. Father of American tobacco

6. How did tobacco influence culture in Virginia?

- A. Those who grew the most tobacco had the highest social standing.
- B. Those who grew the best tobacco were highly esteemed by the community.
- C. Those who grew the most tobacco were the wealthiest in Virginia.
- D. Those with the most slaves were the most successful.

7. How could a successful tobacco planter be identified when not on his plantation?

- A. By his tobacco signature
- B. By the size of his plantation house
- C. By the quality of his tobacco
- D. By his imported clothing