Final Portfolio Project

Name

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Pocahontas as an American Historical Figure

American history entails various leaders who played a significant role in society. A majority of these individuals took charge of exploration age, also defending their communities from manipulative strategies. Pocahontas is a household name in America where various historians have conducted research concerning her life and how she managed to influence relations among societal members. Her direct feelings and thoughts were not recorded, but many have been left to tell the story of a memorable woman in the 1600s. Born in 1596, the girl was named Amonute. However, she was nicknamed Pocahontas since she was playful and exhibited a frolic and curious nature (Bryant, 2018). The English settlers arrived in Jamestown when Pocahontas was about eleven years, and throughout her interactions with them, she faced a challenge of reconciling colonialists with Native Americans.

**Challenge Faced**

The biggest challenge faced by Pocahontas was reconciling native Americans and colonialists. The first settler to arrive in Jamestown was John Smith, who ended up being kidnapped by Pocahontas’ uncle. Smith was taken before Chief Powhatan, where Pocahontas appeared as his savior. During this time, she was a young girl, but the event prepared her for a challenging encounter with the English men and her community (Working, 2020).

**Historical, Governmental and Social Circumstances of the Challenge**

***Historical***

John Smith, an English colonialist, arrived in Tsenacomoca in 1607. At the time, Pocahontas was about ten years, and Smith was 27 years. After the event that saved Smith’s life, the colonists shifted to the Jamestown Island region and later began their exploration in outlying areas. Native Americans feared Smith since he used his guns to demand supplies and food from local chiefs. At Jamestown, Powhatan sent food as gifts to the English men, and during his visits, he was accompanied by Pocahontas because she served as a sign of peace.

***Social and Governmental Circumstances***

During the winter of 1608-1609, Smith and his fellow men visited different Powhatan’s tribes. Here, they traded beads with the inhabitants to receive more corn to counter the food challenge. However, severe drought encountered in the region reduced the harvest from these tribes, and Powhatan had also developed an official policy that would cease trade between them and the English (Brown, 2016). The settlers became fierce and were demanding more than the villages could offer. They began threatening these tribes and burned towns to acquire food, and the Native Americans did not welcome the events.

As the English continued to seek for food, Chief Powhatan tried to establish a bid with Smith. He required him to bring guns, swords, hens, and copper in exchange for corn. However, the negotiations did not end well, and the chief and her daughter excused themselves. Later in the night, Pocahontas went back to warn Smith of impending danger on his life. Smith was grateful that the girl was ready to risk her life to serve him with essential information. It illustrated her efforts to handle rivalry events between the parties.

The relationship between the tribes and colonialists continued to deteriorate. Chief Powhatan decided to move the capital from Werowecomoco to Orapaks. Also, Pocahontas would not visit Jamestown, and in 1609, Smith had to leave Virginia due to a gunpowder wound. Smith is recorded to have died as he traveled back to England.

**How Pocahontas Interacted With the Challenge**

With a ban to travel to Jamestown, the action did not end Pocahontas' involvement with the English. She found her way into their lives, and it is recorded of her efforts to save Henry Spelman, an English boy who was living with the Indians. The boys were sent to learn the local languages, whereas some were drawn from Powhatan Indians and sent to the English community to learn their language. Pocahontas was determined to offer a helping hand to colonialists she came across as the quest to reconcile the colonialists and Powhatan Indians continued.

**Pocahontas’ Success And How She Meet and Defeated the Challenge**

Pocahontas got married to Kocoum in 1610. Afterward, the relationship with her father remained close since she was her favorite daughter. Samuel Argall, a captain, realized that Pocahontas lived with Patawomeck. Knowing that Powhatan Indians and the English had a poor relationship, he designed a kidnap plot. The kidnap was successful, and the chief’s daughter was taken to Henrico, an English settlement. On learning of her daughter’s kidnapping, Powhatan was ready for negations to establish peaceful relationships with the colonialists.

While this was going on, Pocahontas managed to learn the English religion, customs, and language. As she went through religious instructions, Pocahontas met John Rolfe, who contributed to the introduction of tobacco to Virginia settlers. Later, the two fell in love, and after Pocahontas’ baptism in 1614, she got married. The union would serve as a success factor towards uniting these communities, and together, the couple had a son by the name Thomas. The marriage was significant in bringing peace throughout the region, and this was Pocahontas’ primary goal. Her initial encounter with John Smith and saving the life of a young English boy indicated her crucial role in reconciling Natives Americans and the colonialists.

**Resolution of the Challenge and Its Current State**

Pocahontas played a crucial role as an ambassador between the Jamestown colony and Powhatan’s rule. She did this an illustration of her brilliance and open-mindedness since she helped English colonialist settle in America. Her marriage to an English settler strengthened the relationship where she slowly assimilated into the colonialist’s way of life. However, the relations lasted up to 1622. Later, English settlers used Pocahontas to achieve their interest as they persuaded Native Americans to adapt to their ways of life. More English settlers were attracted, and trade between the countries evolved (Dolce, 2019).

The challenge continues to affect American society. This is because colonialists tried to change the American culture, which contributed to a change in attitude among different races. English settlers developed racial attitudes towards those who refused to follow European cultures hence negatively associated with people of color (Wood, 2016). Today, America faces high racial discrimination levels, and individuals relate to one another on racial stereotypes.

The new relationship established was significant to the U.S history. It led to the introduction of various cash crops such as tobacco and improved economic relationships between England and the U.S. This collaboration has continued to date, and the two countries have enhanced close business ties over the years.

Pocahontas is among the best –known Americans who shaped the country’s history. Various scholars and researchers have focused their study on her role in Native America, establishing her success in developing strong relationships with colonialists. Also, various books and films have been recorded highly contributing to oral literature. An incredible story concerning Pocahontas records that she saved the life of John Smith, an English settler. She helped stop John’s execution, and the event marked her journey in negotiating between English settlers and Powhatan prisoners. This was her primary challenge that was faced with opposition from her father and community men and women. However, colonialists managed to settle in the area through manipulation and propaganda, taking advantage of the already converted Pocahontas. Discrimination against different racial communities contributed to racial profiling, which is a challenge that has continuously faced today’s American society.

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