Corn and Crisis

Food, trade, and survival at Jamestown

5.C.1.5.B "challenges of the Starving Time and the value of Powhatan trade to sustain the colony"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two problems that made food hard to get at Jamestown, and circle the food Powhatan peoples traded to the settlers. Write 1 and 2 beside two sentences that show why trade helped or why losing it hurt.

When Food Ran Short

1. In 1607, English settlers built Jamestown beside the James River. Ships brought supplies, but the settlers needed food they could get nearby. Many spent time searching for gold instead of growing enough crops. The river water near the fort was often unsafe to drink, and illness weakened workers. When food ran low, the settlers could not simply wait for the next ship from England.

2. The Powhatan peoples already lived in the region and grew corn. At times, they traded corn and other food with the English for goods such as metal tools and copper. This food helped the settlers survive while they struggled to raise their own crops. Trade was not a guaranteed supply: Powhatan leaders made their own choices, and the two groups sometimes fought over land and food.

3. In the winter of 1609 to 1610, the colony faced the Starving Time. A ship carrying needed supplies had not arrived, and fighting with Powhatan forces made it dangerous for settlers to leave the fort to find food or trade. Without enough crops, supplies, or access to trade, many settlers starved or died from illness. By spring, only about 60 of roughly 500 settlers were alive.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the settlers' work choices and illness make food trade valuable?

2. What did each side offer in trade, and how did the trade help the English?

3. How did fighting affect the settlers' access to trade during the Starving Time?

4. Why was the colony in danger when supplies from England and trade were both out of reach?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence message as a Jamestown settler in the winter of 1609 to 1610 to someone in England. Explain two problems your colony faces, why earlier trade with Powhatan peoples mattered, and why you cannot count on that trade now.

ANSWER KEY

Corn and Crisis

GRADE 5 · 5.C.1.5.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two problems that made food hard to get at Jamestown, and circle the food Powhatan peoples traded to the settlers. Write 1 and 2 beside two sentences that show why trade helped or why losing it hurt. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the settlers' work choices and illness make food trade valuable?	**Some settlers searched for gold instead of growing enough crops, and illness weakened workers. Traded food helped fill the shortage.**
2	What did each side offer in trade, and how did the trade help the English?	**Powhatan peoples offered corn and other food. The English offered goods such as metal tools and copper. The food helped the settlers survive.**
3	How did fighting affect the settlers' access to trade during the Starving Time?	**Fighting made it dangerous for settlers to leave the fort to find food or trade.**
4	Why was the colony in danger when supplies from England and trade were both out of reach?	**The settlers had not grown enough crops, so without the ship's supplies or access to trade, they had too little food.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Our colony has too little food because we did not grow enough crops. Illness has made it harder for us to work. Earlier, trade with Powhatan peoples brought us corn when we needed food. Now fighting makes it dangerous to leave the fort to trade, and we cannot count on getting more.

Accept other passage-supported problems, including unsafe water and the missing supply ship. Responses should distinguish the value of earlier trade from the difficulty of trading during the Starving Time.