



## *Blood on the River: James Town 1607* Selected Passages

The debatable issue for this project is:

**Was the British aristocracy (i.e., those who ruled because of the family they were born into), according to *Blood on the River*, responsible for poisoning the colonies' relationship with the native population in America?**

The following are passages selected from the novel *Blood on the River: James Town 1607*, by Eliza Carbone (Penguin Group, 2006). They can be used to support arguments and counter-arguments on the debatable issue. Page numbers follow the passages in parenthesis.

### **Passage A**

“By God, who will build the houses? Who will grow the crops? Do they think they can *eat* the gold and silver they are hoping to find?’ [Captain John Smith] spits on the ground. ‘I know these gentlemen. They’ll expect to have everything done for them, expect it to be easy. They won’t lift a finger to work.’

“Reverend Hunt speaks calmly, lays a hand on the man’s shoulder. ‘John, there are carpenters going, too, and laborers, and these boys, and —’

“*More* gentlemen than commoners!’ the man shouts. The investors of the Virginia Company were raving *mad* when they chose the men for this journey” (10).

### **Passage B**

“I will present the charges,’ says Master Wingfield. Somehow, despite the fact that we’ve been at sea for nearly two months, his silk doublet and velvet breeches still look relatively fresh. ‘You are under arrest for intent to overthrow the government of this mission, murder the council members, and make yourself ruler.’

“My mouth drops open.

“Wingfield, you are a *liar*,’ Captain Smith growls.

“And you, sir, will be hanged when we reach the West Indies,’ Master Wingfield says coldly” (23).

### **Passage C**

“I catch my breath. I expect to hear the scrape of the canons being loaded, but instead I hear Captain Newport’s voice: ‘We are *not* Spanish barbarians. We will not slaughter these people . . . unless they attack first. . . .’

“Captain Smith begins speaking strange words and using hand motions to communicate. I easily understand the hand motions. We come in peace (hand over his heart). We desire trade (he dangles several strings of sparkling beads). We need food (he rubs his stomach). . . .

“All afternoon, the natives come back and forth to our ships in their canoes, bringing sweet-smelling fruits and other food from their island, which sits, green and lush, nearby” (32-33).

### **Passage D**

“Captain Smith scoffs. ‘I suggest we find a place to *live* before you go digging for gold. We can’t eat gold.’

“Master Wingfield gives him a disdainful look. ‘Did you not read your contract with the Virginia Company? The part where it says we are to turn a profit for the company as soon as possible? We will eat the supplies we bought, and dig for gold’” (59).

### **Passage E**

“And there is one lone voice, Reverend Hunt, who says he has not come for gold or to find the new passage to the Orient. He says we have been sent by God for noble purposes: to bring the good news of Christ to the Virginia natives, and to look for survivors from the Roanoke colony. Of course, as soon as he says it, all the other men agree that that’s some of why they have come as well. But I know their hearts are set more on gold and profits than on finding lost colonists or saving souls” (60).

### **Passage F**

“The injured men are brought to Dr. Thomas Wotton, aboard the *Godspeed*. A gentleman, Gabriel Archer, has been shot through both hands, and a sailor has been shot twice in the torso.

“I see now that this land is not so free and open. This is Indian land, and they do not want us here” (62).

### **Passage G**

“‘[The Native Americans] are interested in trade, and we have brought the things they prize: copper, metal tools, glass beads, needles, mirrors, and such. It will be a delicate balance, but if we can find a piece of land they are not using, and come to them in peace with goods to trade. I believe we can settle here without a war.’ [Captain John Smith] scratches his beard, thinking: ‘We must do it without a war. There are many more of them than there are of us’” (64).

### **Passage H**

“Then a group of gentlemen go off to search for a place for us to settle. The reports they come back with are encouraging. They have met lots of natives and have been welcomed into their villages, invited to eat with them and watch their dances. They say we do not need to fear the natives” (66).

### **Passage I**

“One day Captain Smith surprises us. ‘I believe the savages are spying on us,’ he says. ‘I have watched the way they look around while they are here. I think they are counting our men, seeing where our tents are located, and plotting an attack. We have invaded their land, and I believe they will fight us to get it back. We must build a palisade to protect the settlement.’

“‘Nonsense,’ declares President Wingfield. ‘You see how friendly they are. If we build a palisade it will look as if we are their enemies. We will build no fortifications’” (72).

**Passage J**

“‘These are not just disorganized people living in towns here and there,’ says Captain Newport. ‘They are tribes within an empire. Their emperor is called the Powhatan, the people are the Powhatans, and the river we named the James River, they already call the Powhatan River. They are a kingdom of warriors. The boys are taught to use bow and arrow when they are six years old. Their mothers don’t even give them breakfast until they have shot their targets in the morning. When the great Chief Powhatan wants to conquer a new tribe, the warriors get the job done very quickly’” (83).

**Passage K**

“‘We are making a fort, like soldiers in a war. . . . If we had to depend on the gentlemen, many of whom still don’t want to dirty their velvet, we would be at the mercy of the Indians for many more weeks. As it is, the natives mount small attacks every other day on any man or creature who strays too far from our guarded, half-built fort’” (84-85).

**Passage L**

“‘Master Wingfield is no longer our president. He is under arrest, locked up on the *Discovery*, and his private store of wine, dried beef, eggs. Oatmeal, and other good food has been shared equally among all of us’” (98).

**Passage M**

“‘Captain Smith translates for our leaders. Our visitors say that within the Powhatan empire, there are tribes who are our friends, and some who are our enemies. Our enemies are the tribes closest to us because they feel we are encroaching on their land. They are the Paspahugh, whose land we are on, and also the Weanock, the Appamatuck, ateh Kiskiack, and the Quiyoghcohanock. Our friends are the Arrohateck, the Pamunkey, the Mattaponi, and the Youghtanund. Those who are our friends will intercede for us with our enemies. They will try to convince them that we pose no threat, that we are only using a small piece of land, and we are not making war with them’” (103).

**Passage N**

“‘A few days after Captain Newport arrives we hear shouts of ‘*Wingapo!*’ and look to see Indians paddling to shore in three canoes. ‘*Wingapo*, Captain Smith!’ they call. When the canoes land and the Indian men begin to pull them up onshore, Richard and I go closer. The canoes are filled with bread, fish, and meat’ turkey, squirrel, deer, and raccoon” (129).

**Passage O**

“‘Captain Smith is now my brother, my countryman. My father will send gifts to help.’ [Pocahontas] says it with such authority that I am reminded that she is not just a little girl, but a princess.

“‘The Powhatan people, whom we have at times considered our enemies, now treat us as their own. They bring us deerskins and bear furs to keep us warm. Every few days they come in canoes laden with meat and bread and corn as gifts’” (137).

**Passage P**

“Namontack shakes his head again and frowns. ‘Our tribe is better than your tribe,’ he says. ‘Your tribe has no women. I do not understand why Chief Powhatan brought you into the Powhatan empire. A tribe with no women and children is not worth much.

“My jaw drops. ‘Us in Powhatan empire?’ I ask in my halting Algonquian.

“‘Yes,’ Namontack says with the patience one uses when explaining something to a small child. ‘Captain Smith was adopted into our tribe. He became a son to Chief Powhatan. Captain Smith is your ruler, your *werowance*, and so now your tribe belongs to Chief Powhatan. You are Powhatan people. . . . that is why we took care of you after the fire’” (139-40).

**Passage Q**

“Now it all makes sense: The gifts of food and animal furs, the sudden peace between us. Chief Powhatan is taking care of us because he considers us one of his tribes. If it were just me, I would be very happy with the arrangement. It means survival and peace. It means an end to the bloodshed between our settlers and the Powhatans. But I know these gentlemen, and I know they have no interest in being the subjects of a man they consider to be a lowly savage” (140-41).

**Passage R**

“Captain Newport has also brought orders from the Virginia Company to place an English crown on Chief Powhatan’s head, making him a prince under King James and making all of his people English subjects. My mind reels when I hear this. Chief Powhatan thinks we are *his* subjects, and now they want to make *Powhatan’s* people *English* subjects? The whole thing tangles my brain in knots” (150).

**Passage S**

“If the thought of being Chief Powhatan’s subjects would be distasteful to the gentlemen, then I imagine that becoming subjects of King James would be just as distasteful to the Powhatan people. Especially after they hear Namontack’s report on King James, whom he met while he was in London” (150).

**Passage T**

“Captain Smith is angry at the whole plan – very angry.

“‘Make an emperor into a prince? Ask an emperor to travel to receive gifts? I assure you, this will not sit well with Chief Powhatan,’ he says. ‘He is king here in his own country. What right does King James have, from across an ocean, to make him his subject? Power is like weights in a balance. No one gains power without someone else losing power, and Chief Powhatan does not want to lose any of his power. It has been a long, hard road to peace with Chief Powhatan, but if he understands what this coronation means, it may well be the end of our peace.’

“Captain Newport refuses to budge. He is bound to carry out the orders from the Virginia Company” (152).

**Passage U**

“This New World is a good place to live, I think, as long as we live in peace with the Powhatan people” (164).

**Passage V**

“Your king has sent me presents? [Chief Powhatan] demands. ‘I also am a king and this is my land.’ He splay his arms and fingers to show this is *all* his land. ‘I will wait here eight days to receive the gifts. Captain Newport is to come to *me*, not I to him.’

“On the hike back to James Town, Captain Smith stomps his anger into the woodland path. ‘They know *nothing*,’ he shouts. ‘Those Virginia Company investors sit in their velvet chairs and dream up what they want to accomplish here. They know nothing of the reality of what is here, and they’re going to get us killed. They are idiots!’” (166).

**Passage W**

“When our barrels are close to empty, Captain Smith goes to trade with the natives for grain. But he comes back empty-handed. Chief Powhatan has commanded all of his tribes not to trade with us.

“He is wielding his power,’ says Captain Smith. ‘He is showing us that the crowning ceremony angered him, and that his power is not diminished by it’” (174).

**Passage X**

“This Sir Thomas Gates, our new governor, has gained power even though he is still somewhere out at sea. And so, Captain Smith has lost power. The new colonists do not respect him. When he tries to explain our delicate relationship with the Indians, how we trade and worked to keep a fragile peace, they scoff at him. ‘Those savages will understand the power in a musket – that’s all they need to know,’ they say” (189).

**Passage Y**

“How many do you think we killed?’ one [new colonist] is asking the other, holding up his club and examining it.

“My legs go weak. The club is stained with blood. I don’t stay to hear the answer, but run to Captain Smith’s cabin. My throat is tight with rage, but I choke out the words. ‘The new settlers,’ I say. ‘They’re killing and burning. . . .’

“They don’t care that the natives have saved us from starvation over and over again. They don’t care that that Chief Powhatan himself saved us from freezing and hunger when all our houses burned. They have no hearts, only pride and a feeling that they are superior. They say the natives are savages, but in truth, these ignorant Englishmen are the savages” (190-91).

**Passage Z**

“Chief Powhatan ordered his tribes to stop trading with the settlers at James Town. The natives also went to Hog Island, which the settlers had stocked with hundreds of hogs, and slaughtered them all. Then they went back to killing any settler they found outside the fort. . . . Men, women, and children starved and died. Hunger caused desperation. . . .

“The winter of 1609-1610 became known as the Starving Time. Chief Powhatan had tried again to wipe out the ‘tribe’ that came from the Chesapeake, and he had nearly succeeded. . . .

“Reluctantly, the settlers returned to try again. The next several years were difficult ones. James Town’s new leaders took revenge on the natives, even the Kecoughtans and the Warraskyoacks, who had helped the settlers so much. They slaughtered native men, women, and even children from many tribes. Revenge bred revenge, and there were raids and killing on both sides” (219-21).