**Lost Colony of Roanoke Theories**

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| Theories | YES this theory account for… | BUT this theory does not account for… |
| Taken Hostage or Killed by the Spanish |  |  |
| Starvation / Lost at Sea |  |  |
| Native Americans Killed Colonists |  |  |
| Disease killed the whole population of Roanoke Island. |  |  |
| The village was destroyed by a severe storm such as a hurricane**.** |  |  |

**Theory 1: Taken Hostage Or Killed By The Spanish**

Saint Augustine was a colony Spain had in the New World. This colony is located on the eastern coast of what is now known as the state of Florida, USA. Spanish soldiers who were living there in 1588 heard reports that England had established a new colony in the New World. The English were at war with Spain and if the location of their settlement got out, the Spanish would find and kill the colonists. The Spanish had already killed off a French attempt to settle down in Florida back in 1562, killing over 130 men. Spain knew that this English colony was located north somewhere near Chesapeake Bay. The Spanish sent their ships up the coast to destroy the English colonists. The English colonists were

seen by the Spanish ships as they sailed their small boats south from Roanoke Island to live with the Croatoan Indians on Croatoan Island. The Spanish ships attacked the English colonists and took them hostage. They may have killed them. This is the reason why English settler's boats were missing when John White returned in 1590 to Roanoke.

**540 miles**

**Theory 2: Starvation / Lost at Sea**

Others speculate that the colonists simply gave up waiting, tried to return to England on their own, and perished in the attempt. When Governor White left in 1587, he left the colonists with a pinnace (a small boat) for exploration of the coast or removal of the colony to the mainland. Another claim suggests that, with the region in drought (a period of very low rainfall), the colony must have suffered a massive food shortage. The researchers concluded that the settlers of the Lost Colony landed at Roanoke Island in the summer of the worst growing-season drought in 800 years. "This drought persisted for 3 years, from 1587 to 1589, and is the driest 3-year episode in the entire 800-year reconstruction," the team reported in the journal Science. A map shows that "the Lost Colony drought affected the entire southeastern United States but was particularly severe in the Tidewater region near Roanoke [Island]." The authors suggested that the Croatan who were shot and killed by the colonists may have been scavenging the abandoned village for food as a result of the drought.

**Theory 3: Native Americans Killed Colonists**

Before the second attempt to set up a colony, the English set up an expedition led by Ralph Lane to establish a colony in North America. Things went well until Sir Ralph Lane, the colony commander, angered the Indians with his harsh policies (captured Indians for ransom and planned attacks on tribes to get more land). The natives fought back, killing one of the settlers. The rest of the colonists were forced to leave the colony, but the natives would not forget. Several explorers who helped set up the Ralph Lane colony returned to check on their progress. Because of the tense relationship with

the natives, the colonists had left, so when the explorers arrived, they did not find anyone. However, what they did find was interesting. They found remnants of one dead body, killed by tomahawk and scalp wounds. The body was found in several pieces, in several different places, giving the thought that the natives tried to hide the remains. From this past event, we know that the Natives were capable of such horrific acts. We also know they were capable of hiding the bodies. After what the residents of the Ralph Lane colony did to the natives, it is easy to believe they would seek revenge. When the leader of the Lost Colony, John White, returned to England for more supplies, is it possible the natives would attack the second group of colonists? Remember: when he returned several years later, all houses and forts had disappeared. That would be more than enough time for the natives to tear everything and down and hide all the evidence.

**Theory 4 - Disease killed the whole population of Roanoke Island.**

It is true that the English had brought over some diseases. However, note, there were no bodies found and the houses had disappeared. The only body that was ever found was shortly after the Ralph Lane colony left for England. No bodies were ever recovered from the Lost Colony expedition. While most diseases were brought from the Old World to the New World, there were several diseases that future colonists would die from, including dysentery, cholera, and “BurningFever.”

**Theory 5 - The village was destroyed by a severe storm such as a hurricane.**

Another possible theory is the one that perhaps a hurricane destroyed the Lost Colony. A hurricane could have washed away the colonists and it could have been powerful enough to destroy all of the houses and forts, true. However, there is a huge problem with this theory. See if you can find *why* this theory is very unlikely. Search back through your files and see if you can solve this.