

POCAHONTAS

She is a legend.
She is a myth.
She is a fairy tale
but she was
real...



... and her

cross-

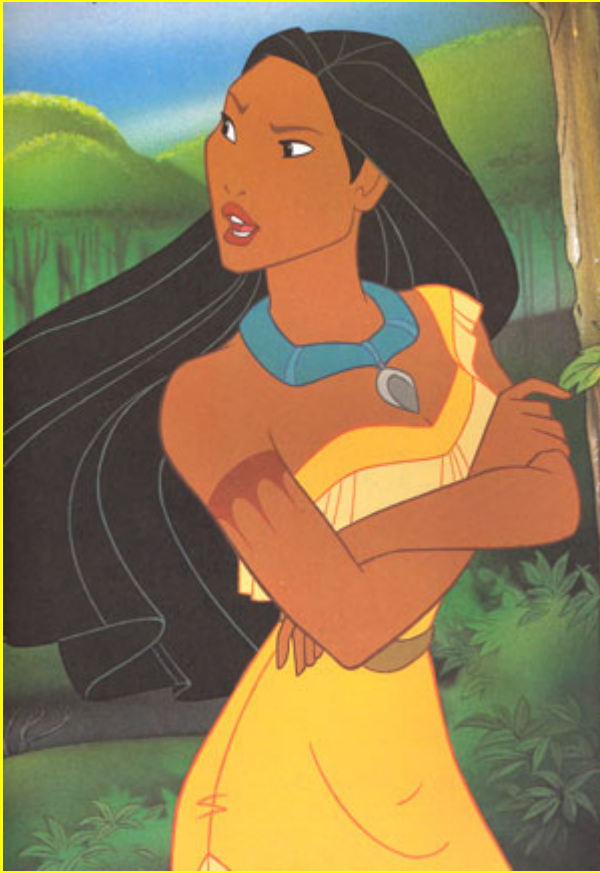
cultural

contact

**STORY
TOLD BY
CAPTAIN
JOHN
SMITH**

*Barbora
Kubíková*

Pocahontas was probably born sometime in 1595. She was truly an Indian princess, being one of the daughter of Wahunsuncawh better known as Chief or Emperor - Powhatan, the leader of the Powhatan Indian confederacy located in Virginia. During her life she had 3 names. Powhatan himself gave her the name Pocahontas meaning "Little Wanton", her tribal name was Mantoax or Matoaka representing "Little Snow Feather" and after the baptism she was renamed Rebecca.



Disney`s view



From the movie New World

Her first cross-cultural contact was when she saw the English colonists arriving in Virginia and began building settlements in Jamestown in late December 1607. From this point we have only Captain John Smith's historical records of the story. Captain John Smith led a small group of colonists in an expedition outside the fort in search of food. The settlers ran across an Indian hunting party led by Powhatan's brother, Openchancanough.



Picture showing how Pocahontas reportedly saved Smith's life.



A romanticized version of their relationship . It is more likely she recognized him in position of a father.

The Indians quickly overtook the settlers, killing everyone except Smith. Smith was taken back to the Indian village of Werowocomoco, Powhatan's residence, as a prisoner. There he met Pocahontas whom he described as “ a child of tenne years old which in feature, countenance and proportion much exceedeth any of the rest of her people ”(True Relation).

It is difficult to determine the extent of the contact between the European captive (John Smith) and the young girl. I think she quickly underwent initiation process because Pocahontas did make an effort to learn the English language and she may have communicated directly with Smith. Pocahontas chose liminality reaction mode because she also served as a connecting element and was a frequent visitor. She regularly brought provision and goods to first settlers and played games with them as well.



A painting illustrating a wedding between Rebecca (Pocahontas) and John Rolfe.

She completely broke her old status and acquired the new one because after some time spending among English in Henrico as a captive enjoying surprisingly quite freedom and respect, she began a religious instruction and eventually converted to Christianity in 1614, taking the name Rebecca. Later on she married a colonist and tobacco farmer John Rolfe.



The famous Sedgeford portrait of Pocahontas and her son, Thomas Rolfe, carefully preserved through the centuries, although its travels and whereabouts have been shrouded in mystery.



Introduction to the English King

Pocahontas and her son Thomas

The marriage was a political alliance that came at a critical time in the colony's history. After the marriage, the colonists enjoyed a peaceful relationship with the Indians that lasted until Powhatan's death in 1618. Pocahontas adapted well to the English language and culture. In 1615 Pocahontas gave birth to a son, named Thomas.

The last thing I want to focus on is her travel experience. The Virginia Colony's sponsors found it difficult to lure new colonists and investors to Jamestown and so they used Pocahontas as a symbol to convince people in Europe the New World's natives could be colonized and the settlement made safe. So Rolfe took her to England where she enjoyed banquets and dances and was introduced to King James I. The arrival of Pocahontas in London was well publicized. In the conclusion I would say she fully acclimatized.



1616 engraving of Pocahontas by Simon de Passe



From the movie "New World"

Pocahontas played a significant role in American history. In 1616 John Smith wrote that Pocahontas was "the instrument to pursurve this colonie from death, famine, and utter confusion." In my opinion she is a good example how we should act towards different cultures.



The only known image that was created during her lifetime



A romanticized and Europeanized version from late 19th century

