**READING 1: RICHARD FRETHORNE, VIRGINIA (1623)**

Richard Frethorne arrived in Virginia just three months before he wrote several letters to his parents. Below are compiled excerpts of those letters.

Source: Richard Frethorne, Letter to his Father and Mother, March 20, April 2 & 3, 1623, in Susan Kingsbury, ed., *The Records of the Virginia Company of London* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1935): 58–62.

LOVING AND KIND FATHER AND MOTHER:

…I your child am in a most heavy case by reason of the country…it causeth much sickness, such as the scurvy and the bloody flux and diverse other diseases, which maketh the body very poor and weak. When we are sick there is nothing to comfort us; for since I came out of the ship I never ate anything but peas and loblollie [water gruel]. As for deer or venison I never saw any since I came into this land. There is indeed some fowl, but we are not allowed to go and get it, but must work hard both early and late for water gruel and a mouthful of bread and beef. A penny [small] loaf must serve for four men which is most pitiful…people cry out day and night – Oh! that they were in England…to be in England again, though they beg from door to door.

We are in great danger; for our plantation is very weak by reason of the death and sickness. For we came with twenty merchants, and they are half dead just; and we look every hour when two more should go. There came some four other men yet to live with us, of which there is but one alive; and our Lieutenant is dead and also his father and his brother. Yet we are but 32 to fight against 3000 if [the Indians] should come…For we live in fear of the enemy every hour.

I have nothing to comfort me, nor is there nothing to be gotten here but sickness and death. I have nothing at all–no, not a shirt to my back but two rags, nor clothes but one poor suit…. My cloak is stolen by one of my fellows, and to his dying hour he would not tell me what he did with it; but some of my fellows saw him have butter and beef out of a ship, which I, doubt not, paid for. I am not half of a quarter so strong as I was in England, and all is for want of victuals; for I have eaten more in one day at home than I have been allowed here for a week. You have given more than my day’s allowance to a beggar at the door.

For when we go to Jamestown (that is 10 miles of us)…we must lie in the boat on the water and have nothing but a little bread. For when we go into the boat we would have a loaf allowed to two men, and it is all we would get if we stayed there two days. But Goodman Jackson a gunsmith pitied me and made me a cabin to lie in when I would come up, and he would give me some poor jacks [fish] to take home with me, which comforted me. Oh, they be very godly folks, and love me very well, and will do anything for me. And he much marvelled that you would send me as a servant to the Company; he saith I had been better knocked on the head. And indeed so I find it now, to my great grief and misery; and I saith that if you love me you will redeem me, for which I do beg. If you cannot get the merchants to redeem me for some money, then for God’s sake get cheese and butter and beef. Any eating meat will yield great profit. If I die before it come, I have entreated Goodman Jackson to send you the worth of it.

Father, do not forget me, but have mercy and pity my miserable case. You would weep to see me. I hope all my brothers and sisters are in good health, and as for my part I have set down my resolution that certainly will be; that is, that the answer of this letter will be life or death to me. Therefore, good father, send as soon as you can.

RICHARD FRETHORNE