

# Jamestown, 1619

*Thomas Jefferson Model United Nations Conference*

## TechMUN XXVI

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**High School Specialized Agency**

**Co-Chair: Mara Casebeer**

**Co-Chair: Shreya Kurdukar**

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Dear Delegates & Faculty Advisors,

It is our distinct pleasure to welcome all of you to TECHMUN 2018! As your chairs, we are looking forward to making your TECHMUN experience unforgettable, enriching, and enjoyable. To briefly introduce ourselves, we are currently seniors/juniors at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, who have been active participants in Model United Nations since middle school. After four years of Model UN, we have grown an avid interest in global affairs, history, as well as the connections global politics has to science.

On the first day of committee, we will be expecting well-researched position papers to be turned in. Check the position paper guide at the end of the Background Guide for more details regarding position paper guidelines. Throughout committee, we are looking for delegations to propose creative solutions which adhere to country policy while demonstrating a keen sense of leadership and diplomacy. The most important aspect of Model UN is diplomacy, and we expect all delegations to be diplomatic, and to maintain decorum throughout the conference.

All in all, we are thrilled and honored to be your chairs at TECHMUN 2018. Please do not hesitate to contact us at [jamestowntechmun2018@gmail.com](mailto:jamestowntechmun2018@gmail.com), with any questions, comments, or concerns. We will be checking this email account very regularly, so we can guarantee you will be receiving responses shortly after emailing us! We wish you all the best, and we can't wait to meet you all at TECHMUN! Happy researching!

Your Chairs,

Mara Casebeer & Shreya Kurdukar

*Background on Jamestown*

Established on May 14, 1607, Jamestown was the first permanent English settlement in the New World. Through the acquisition of this land, England hoped to create a name for itself in the Americas that had been long dominated by Spanish exploration. The English exploration and settlement of Jamestown was sponsored by the Virginia Company of London, through which King James I gave a charter to explorers who were eager to create an establishment in the name of the company. Upon receiving the charter, these colonists combined with roughly 100 other aspiring colonists set out on the *Susan Constant*, the *Godspeed*, and the *Discovery* to discover this New World (Price).

Upon landing in the New World, the settlers searched for a settlement site, and eventually stumbled along the James River, located in Virginia. The colony was largely controlled by the British government, as it set Sir Thomas Gates as the first Governor of the colony (Price). In the initial years, starvation and disease ran rampant, as many settlers were unable to sustain themselves. Although these conditions did improve, they remained problems in the colony for the coming decades. (Price). Additionally, relations with the Native Americans started off rocky, as the colonists often tried to take advantage of the Natives, causing riots and violence between the two groups.

In the coming years, the colonists developed a more structured civilization by improving their farming practices and discovering tobacco as a major cash crop of the colony. 1619 was an important year for Jamestown, as it was the year the first shipment of African American slaves arrived, but also marked the formation of a self-government through the Virginia House of Burgesses (Price). Our committee will start in 1619, after the first shipment of African slaves.



## A Letter from the Virginia Company

*Noble Colonists,*

*The first shipment of African slaves has arrived onto our soil, and we now stand at crossroads. The future of Jamestown rests in the balance as we seek to address problems from disease and food scarcity to economic growth in the agricultural sector. Among us, we have people from every walk of life. From slave traders, to colonists, to natives, to representatives from the King, you represent all those that have a vested interest in the colony.*

*In order for the colony to thrive, we must think of both the current situation and the future of Jamestown. Disease is ravaging the colony, and we must come up with creative but plausible solutions to prevent its spread. For this, we need representatives to propose unique solutions that abide by their beliefs.*

*The topics of food security and economic prosperity are closely tied. The Jamestown economy is completely dependent upon tobacco, and demand from Great Britain is very high. This crop, however, destroys the ground that it is planted on, rendering it unusable.*

*The future of Jamestown of Jamestown is in your hands. It is up to you to develop the most feasible solutions for some of Jamestown's' most pressing issues. How you choose to address them will determine the fate of the colony and its people.*





## Topic 1: Disease and Food Scarcity

### *Introduction*

The early years of the Jamestown settlement were marked by a shortage of food and supplies necessary for survival. This led to thousands of deaths due to malnutrition and other related conditions. Jamestown was also located near swamps that were surrounded by mosquitoes, causing many settlers to die of malaria. Additionally, settlers often dumped their waste into the nearby river, causing water contamination and resulting in diseases such as Typhoid fever and dysentery. It is the role of this committee to increase the quality of public health, and ensure that as many settlers as possible survive!

### *Historical Background*

The 1610's marked some of the most difficult times in American history, with the abundance of disease and food shortages rapidly increasing the mortality rates in Jamestown. Upon the establishment of Jamestown, colonists were told that their expedition would only be financially supported, given they generated wealth for the mother country of England. Due to this, many settlers solely set out to find gold and other riches, and thus ignored spending time farming and growing food ("Jamestown Settlement and the 'Starving Time'"). This resulted in many unanticipated difficulties, as within a few years, the majority of the original population had died either due to the lack of sufficient food. The time, between 1609 and 1610, was known as the Starving Time, and was characterized by immense food shortage, Native American attacks, and weak leadership. Within two years of the Jamestown's establishment, the majority of the original colonists had died and left only around 60 colonists by 1610 ("The Starving Time"). The situation was severe, as colonists were tied to posts in the square for attempting to steal food, and others reverted to cannibalism to keep themselves alive ("Jamestown Settlement and the





‘Starving Time.’). Had it not been for Captain John Smith’s leadership abilities, Jamestown would not have survived the Starving Time. Although the settlers survived through the Starving Time, many still faced problems with food quality and quantity throughout the next decade.



Figure 1. The original colony led by John Smith, with new farming developments.

Another large cause of death for settlers was disease, as after the first year of settlement in Jamestown, over 70% of the original population had died due to malaria (“Jamestown Settlement and the ‘Starving Time’”). While malaria and other insect-borne were some of the major causes of disease in Jamestown, disease also came from the lack of safe drinking water and food, as settlers did not have the means to purify water or preserve their food (Wolfe). This combination of malnutrition and disease-carrying insects, caused many of the settlers to be exceptionally vulnerable to disease, even those brought by the colonists, themselves (Wolfe). However, current studies suggest that it may not have been solely food and water that caused disease; arsenic poisoning may be to blame. Arsenic is a heavy metal element that attacks the energy production facilities in the body, thus damaging the nervous, cardiovascular, and gastrointestinal systems in the body (“Death at Jamestown.”). The symptoms produced by arsenic poisoning, including rapid death, cardiac arrhythmias, and “bloody flux” are common



among Jamestown settlers (“Death at Jamestown.”). Another major cause of disease was the import of African American slaves.

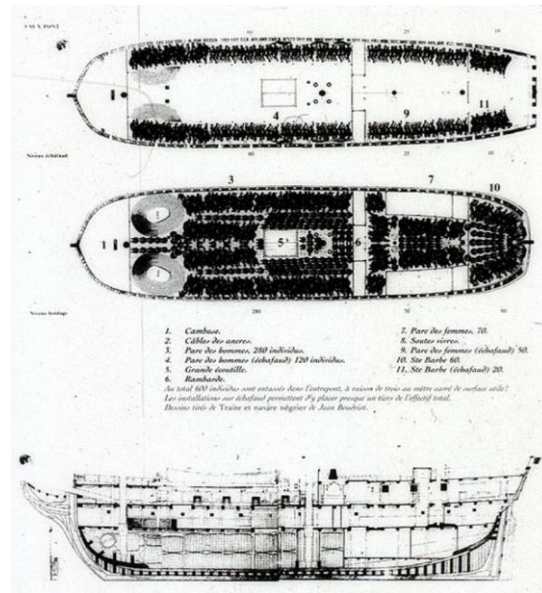


Figure 2. The alignment of slaves on cargo ships.

The conditions to transport these slaves from Africa to the New World, lacked all forms of sanitation, as many of them were crammed throughout a cargo ship, confined to small living areas. This lack of hygiene resulted in many diseases, such as smallpox, being spread among the Africans, and soon killing many of the slaves and inhabitants of Jamestown.

### *Current Situation*

Currently, in 1619, the situation relating to food shortage and disease has improved greatly, however there are still many settlers dying from disease. Many people in the colony still lack access to clean drinking water, and have no methods to purify it. It is important to consider that in 1619, the colonists do not know the reason behind the seemingly sudden onset of disease and death. The first shipment of African slaves has arrived, and more are expected to arrive in



the coming months, so it is necessary to find the appropriate living accommodations and ensure that the arrival of the African slaves does not impact the health of the remainder of the Jamestown population.

### *Possible Solutions*

There are a few possible solutions that you may employ. The first may be turning towards the agricultural sector and an increased focus on farming. While the attention towards farming has risen, there is about to be an influx of people from Europe and African slaves, so the food must sustain them as well. Due to the import of African slaves, disease will also be rampant throughout the colony, therefore you may find it beneficial to take measures to improve sanitation as a whole. This may be on the cargo ships themselves or within living quarters for the slaves. You may also find it beneficial to improve access to quality water and develop some initial forms of purification systems, to limit the intake of polluted, contaminated water.

Additionally, while relations with the Native Americans are still tense, they have been improving with increased cooperation from both sides. You may choose to work alongside and form alliances with the Native Americans to farm and acquire food, as to prevent competition and instigate trade. Trade would also benefit the Virginia Company of London, which is still working to create new establishments in the New World.

### *Questions to Consider*

1. In what ways can the colonists, find or develop access to clean drinking water and safe food?
2. What farming practices can be adopted to ensure adequate quality and quantity of food?





3. How can you ensure that the majority of the population survives through the next drought or storm?
4. Will you, and if so, how will you improve the hygiene of the newly imported slaves?
5. How will Native Americans and colonists work together to create a safer and more sanitary colony?

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## **Topic 2: Economic Growth in the Agricultural Sector**

### *Introduction*

Currently, in 1619, the Jamestown economy is a one-crop economy. Just six years ago, tobacco was introduced as a cash crop, and its cultivation has led to a strong but volatile



economy. Tobacco cultivation requires large amounts of both land and labor, which both need to be addressed. In addition, a one-crop economy can cause premature specialization that could lead to an overly-dependent economy in the long run. It is up to this committee to determine how the Jamestown economy will grow, and if it will prosper, by addressing the current concerns with its agricultural production.

### *Historical Background*

In the early years of Jamestown, the economy affected primarily by the tobacco market and taxes from Great Britain. During this period, the number of tobacco plantations increased dramatically, which allowed the population to grow along with it. Before 1620s, the only crop that Jamestown yielded was tobacco. The crown valued the production of tobacco, and by 1617 the tobacco exported to England totaled 20,000 pounds (“Economy & Trade”).

In 1608, a colonist accidentally set fire to the colony’s living quarters, which set Jamestown further back on its production of food. This, along with the poor planning the previous seasons that resulted in low food storages, resulted in an increased dependence on the Native Americans. Even after John Smith took over the colonist and created rules such as “He that will not worke shall not eate (except by sicknesse he be disabled),” the colonists depended on trade with the Native Americans to get food (Price). This came to hurt the colonists when Chief Powhatan began a campaign to starve the English out of Virginia, and completely stopped the food trade. More than 500 colonists died that winter, and after the unexpected arrival of more colonists, they attempted to board a ship and leave Jamestown. They were stopped by another ship, who brought enough provisions and a new leader--Thomas West. Unfortunately, West could not mend the relationship between the colonists and the Native Americans, and left a few years later (Price).



The marriage of John Rolfe and Pocahontas, although it came after she was kidnapped by the colonists, resulted in resumed peaceful relations. John Rolfe began experimenting with tobacco, and it transformed the colony. He replaced native Virginian tobacco with tobacco from West Indies that sold better, and the Jamestown market was able to compete with Spanish tobacco. By the end of 1619, the colony was a successful one-crop economy that was completely dependent on tobacco (Price).



Figure 2. John Rolfe farming tobacco.

John Rolfe can be seen in Figure 2 farming tobacco. He is largely responsible for its success in Jamestown. This image was contributed by the Everett Historical Collection.

Tobacco cultivation takes a very long time. It begins in January in February, as for each acre of tobacco that the colonists want cultivated it requires 40 square yards of seedbed. The seedbeds have to be cleared, burned, and hoed. The seeds are sown in mid-March, and are then raked and covered with pine to protect the plants. In April, the crops are thinning to prevent crowding (“Tobacco: Colonial Cultivation Methods.”). If the the plants survive until May, the



seedlings are then transported to fields. This task is the most difficult, and is called “hilling.”

Until the plants are a couple feet high, they need to be cared for weekly, which is work that has to be done by hand. Two months later, the plants are “topped,” where the farmer removes the small leaves at the top of the plant. This process is repeated several times (“Tobacco: Colonial Cultivation Methods.”).



Figure 3. Tobacco plant drawing from Jamestown, Virginia.

At all points while tobacco, shown in Figure 3, is grown it is at risk from a variety of diseases and insects. These could destroy the whole crop in less than a week, and planters have learned to inspect each tobacco plant every day (“Tobacco: Colonial Cultivation Methods.”).

In late August or early September, the plants are mature enough to be harvested. If the plants are harvested too early, they will not be sold for as much, and if they are harvested too late they could die from frost. Plants also ripen at different times. The harvester would cut the



plants on the bottom, and if possible, leave the leaves to wilt. This resulted in leaves that were bought at a higher price. After this, the leaves were cured (“Tobacco: Colonial Cultivation Methods.”).

Overall, tobacco cultivation is a long and complicated process, and takes immense skill to correctly execute. So far, it has been the Jamestown colony’s most lucrative trade, and it is important to consider the impact it will have on the economy in the long run.

### *Current Situation*

Tobacco has begun to influence the colonists life in every way. However, growing tobacco can be harmful for the soil. Tobacco drains the soil of its nutrients, and only about three growing seasons can be conducted on a single plot of land. Farmers have to wait for three years after those three seasons before the land will produce a successful tobacco yield. This means that Jamestown will have to expand tremendously to account for the tobacco demand (“The Growth of the Tobacco Trade.”).

In addition to the high demand for land, tobacco cultivation is extremely demanding work. For this reason, Jamestown is in need of new sources of labor to continue such a demanding cultivation process. Indentured servants, who come from England and work for a certain amount of years in return for their passage, have been used as a source of labor. England rewarded colonists with 50 acres for every new settler they brought over (“The Growth of the Tobacco Trade.”). However, once their time has been served, freed indentured servants can lead to instability. Overall, Jamestown must balance the current demand for tobacco from England with the future of the economy.

### Possible Solutions





The colonists have experimented with glassblowing, vineyard cultivation, and silkworm farming in recent years. Although they are not cash crops and do not fetch a high price compared to tobacco in the English market, they are worthy options to consider in creating a stable economy (“The Growth of the Tobacco Trade.”).

Expanding outward and claiming new land is difficult because of Jamestown’s precarious relationships with the Native tribes. In terms of the demand for more labor to produce tobacco, there are currently two options. The first is indentured servants and the second is African slaves who have been shipped over. We encourage you to explore creative solutions!

### *Questions to Consider*

1. What can the colonists do to foster sustainable economic growth now and in the future?
2. Should the colonists continue to plant only tobacco, or should they diversify their agricultural yield?
3. What other areas of the economy should Jamestown try to venture in to?
4. If the colonists decide to continue with Tobacco as their main crop, what can they do to improve its cultivation?
5. What source of labor should colonists use to cultivate the crops?

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## **Position Paper Requirements**

### **Overview**

The Position Paper that delegates will be writing is a culmination of the most important pre-conference research that they have done, acting as a summary of research and the representative view of their state on the issues presented to their respective organ. Position Papers are due, in hard-copy format, before the first committee session on Friday. Any delegate without a Position Paper will be deemed ineligible for awards, so remember to bring a copy for collection, and a copy for personal use! Remember to not plagiarize any aspect of the paper - our chairs and directors will be checking every paper for plagiarism and we expect a full MLA works cited for each. Failure to do so might result in delegate or school delegation disqualification!

### **Basic Structure**

- Times New Roman, 12pt font, single spaced
- A cover page with delegate name, nation, council, school



- Delegates can add additional details, including national flags, seals, or any symbolic edits to Model United Nations, to demonstrate thoughtful presentation and attention to details.
- One page per topic with titled sections: background, country policy and possible solutions
  - Background: This section should include an overview of the topic. What is the current situation, and what are the main nations affected? This should be the shortest section on the paper.
  - Country Policy: What past actions has your country taken to address the issue at hand? What does your nation think about the topic? This section should take up a majority of your paper, as delegates should remain representative of their country's view throughout committee
  - Possible Solutions: This should be the most interesting part of a delegate's position paper. Solutions should incorporate both research and creativity, with a focus on improving past actions conducted by their respective council. Feel free to come up with unique solutions to the dilemmas at hand which you plan to bring up during committee
- Complete MLA bibliography and in-text citations for all statistics and sources used

### **Helpful Hints**

- Remember to avoid first person pronouns! Staying in character is always important at Model United Nations conferences!
- Always use the active voice!



- Avoid fancy language which can distract your chairs from the true meaning of your paper!
- Remember to remain formal when writing your position paper and try to show all the research that you have done for committee, as this is the first impression that your chairs will have of you!