

“Rescue of John Smith,” John Smith (1624)

In 1607, John Smith was captured by the Algonquian Indians of the coastal Virginia area. He was kept captive for a period of time before ultimately being released. One of his accounts of this release is excerpted below. It is the source for a popular belief that Pocahontas loved John Smith, but many scholars suggest that what actually occurred was a common ceremony aimed at establishing and demonstrating trust between different groups of people.

Which interpretation do you think is best supported by the text? Use at least three key details from the text and explain the central idea.

In the first empty column, write ONE word that best describes the idea, tone, or purpose of each section of the speech. Then explain why you chose that word, using specific evidence from the text.

Excerpt	Idea/Tone	Reasoning
At last they brought him to Powhatan their emperor. More than two hundred of his grim courtiers stood wondering at him, as if he were a monster. He sat covered with a great robe, made of raccoon skins.		
On each side of the house [stood] two rows of men, and behind them as many women, with all their heads and shoulders painted red ... and a great chain of white beads about their necks.		
At Smith's entrance before the king, all the people gave a great shout. The queen of the Appamatuck was appointed to bring him water to wash his hands, and another brought him a bunch of feathers, instead of a towel to dry them.		
They held the best feast possible, and then a long consultation was held, but the conclusion was, two great stones were brought before Powhatan. Then as many as could laid hands on him, dragged him to the stones, and thereon laid his head. Then they got ready with their clubs, to beat out his brains.		
Pocahontas, the king's dearest daughter, [begged for his life]. When no entreaty could prevail, [she] got his head in her arms, and laid her own upon his to save him from death.		