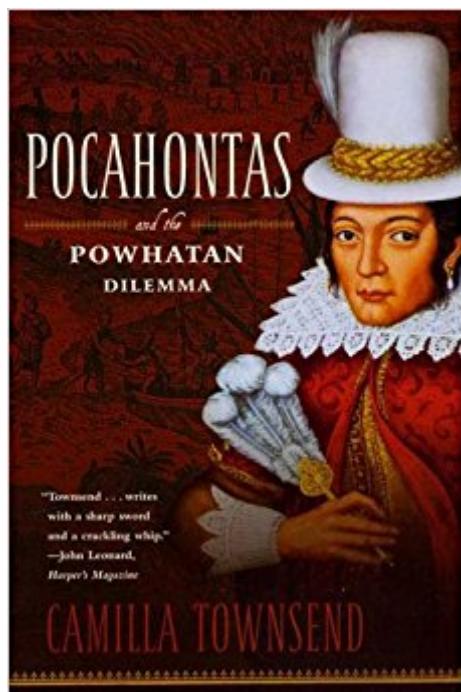


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Pocahontas And The Powhatan Dilemma: The American Portraits Series



Synopsis

Camilla Townsend's stunning new book, *Pocahontas and the Powhatan Dilemma*, differs from all previous biographies of Pocahontas in capturing how similar seventeenth century Native Americans were--in the way they saw, understood, and struggled to control their world--not only to the invading British but to ourselves. Neither naïve nor innocent, Indians like Pocahontas and her father, the powerful king Powhatan, confronted the vast might of the English with sophistication, diplomacy, and violence. Indeed, Pocahontas's life is a testament to the subtle intelligence that Native Americans, always aware of their material disadvantages, brought against the military power of the colonizing English. Resistance, espionage, collaboration, deception: Pocahontas's life is here shown as a road map to Native American strategies of defiance exercised in the face of overwhelming odds and in the hope for a semblance of independence worth the name. Townsend's Pocahontas emerges--as a young child on the banks of the Chesapeake, an influential noblewoman visiting a struggling Jamestown, an English gentlewoman in London--for the first time in three-dimensions; allowing us to see and sympathize with her people as never before.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Famous in American legend as the Indian woman who saved and then married Captain John Smith of Jamestown, Pocahontas has often been a symbol of the capitulation of Native America to British colonialism. Historian Townsend, working from a very fragmentary record, gives Pocahontas a fiercely independent life, within her own nation and outside it. In this often pedantic and speculative

biography, Townsend traces Pocahontas's life from her childhood and youth (when her strength and athletic ability rivaled the best of either sex) to her eventual marriage to John Rolfe and her move to England. Townsend presents her as shrewd in working for her people's best interests, and self-assured and confident of her abilities to construct her own identity in a world dominated by powerful and imperialistic others. Unfortunately, a paucity of information results in too many conditional statements ("we can never really know," etc.); many readers will prefer genuine gaps.

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"Camilla Townsend, who writes with a sharp sword and a crackling whip, refuses to believe anything just because so many people have repeated it. • • Harper's Magazine • What Camilla Townsend does in Pocahontas and the Powhatan Dilemma is to sift with care through all the written records she could find - her bibliography is impressive - and skillfully piece together a plausible picture of a brave, intelligent young woman and her eventful, if brief, life. • John M. and Priscilla S. Taylor, The Washington Times • This captivating book is ideal for anyone interested in the true story of Pocahontas, as well as historians and students interested in early Colonial American history. • • Simone Bonim, History in Review"Camilla Townsend brings a fresh perspective to this timely and welcome biography. She goes beyond the usual accounts by English colonists, drawing on sources such as the early Spanish explorers, opinions of members of the Virginia Indian descendant communities, original but highly plausible interpretations of Algonquian words, and recent archaeological studies. This history is meticulously researched and yet thoroughly charming; it should appeal to both casual readers and serious scholars. • • Deanna Beacham, Program Specialist, Virginia Council on Indians • Who would have thought there was anything new to say about Pocahontas? Yet fresh insights abound in this book. With sparkling style, sound scholarship, and disciplined historical imagination, Camilla Townsend weaves from the fragmentary evidence a tale far more compelling than the myths and wishful thinking that have surrounded the subject since the days of John Smith. • • Daniel K. Richter, McNeil Center for Early American Studies, University of Pennsylvania • There are few characters in American history less understood than Pocahontas. Camilla Townsend's fascinating new book has rescued Powhatan's daughter from both myth and mistakes. By applying the insights of recent scholars to the contemporary texts she knows so well, Townsend has done more than provide a brief biography of a crucial figure. She has made Pocahontas understandable to a twenty-first-century audience, and she has done so with elegant and spare prose. Her book should be read by everyone interested in the early colonial era

or the Native American past. • Peter Mancall, University of Southern California

This book was very informative and changed my ideas of this period of time with the Jamestown colony, Pocahontas and her tribe. It is a bit dry, as it is not a novel by any means. But it is presented as well researched -- it helped me to have a better grasp of this historical "event".

This book is a hard read because it uses the language from back then, and not the current english. However it was very enlightening on what occurred back then.

Book was interesting with a different view of Pocahontas than the general perception. Well documented. This book also gave a much more detailed discussion of Powhatan.

I had to read this book for a history class, and I really enjoyed it! It was extremely informative, and Townsend does an excellent job of shooting down myths without making any presumptions. I recommend this to anyone who would like to know the truth about Pocahontas!

This is my ancestor - so I am happy to have the story....

Interesting history of a woman surrounded by myth

This is good reading in preparation for the forthcoming commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the Pocahontas/Rolfe wedding next April 5.

thanks.

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