

Sir Walter Raleigh



Early Life

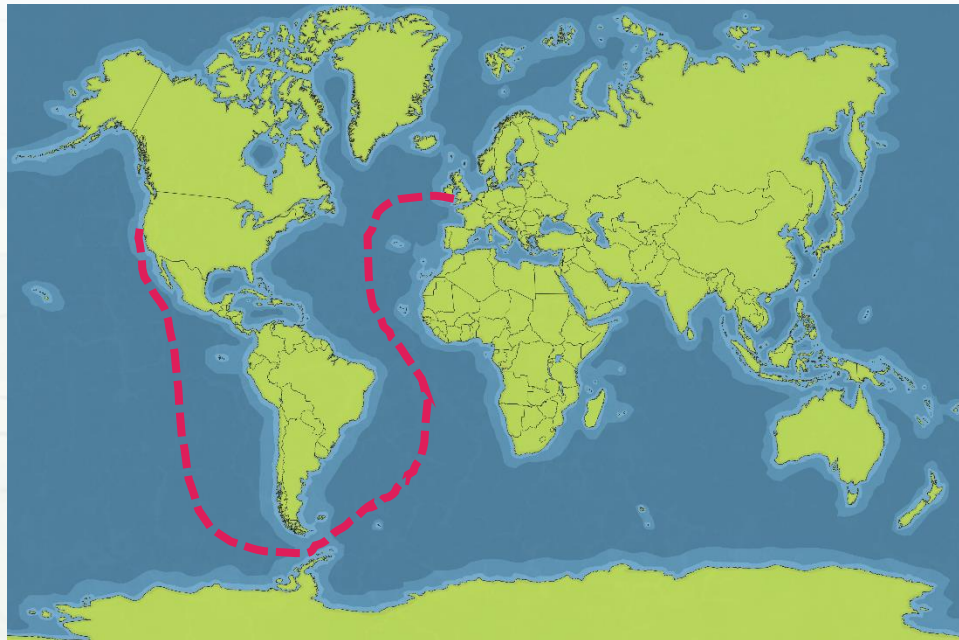
Walter Raleigh was born around 1552 in Devon, England. He was born into a well connected, wealthy family. He went to Oxford University and studied law in London.



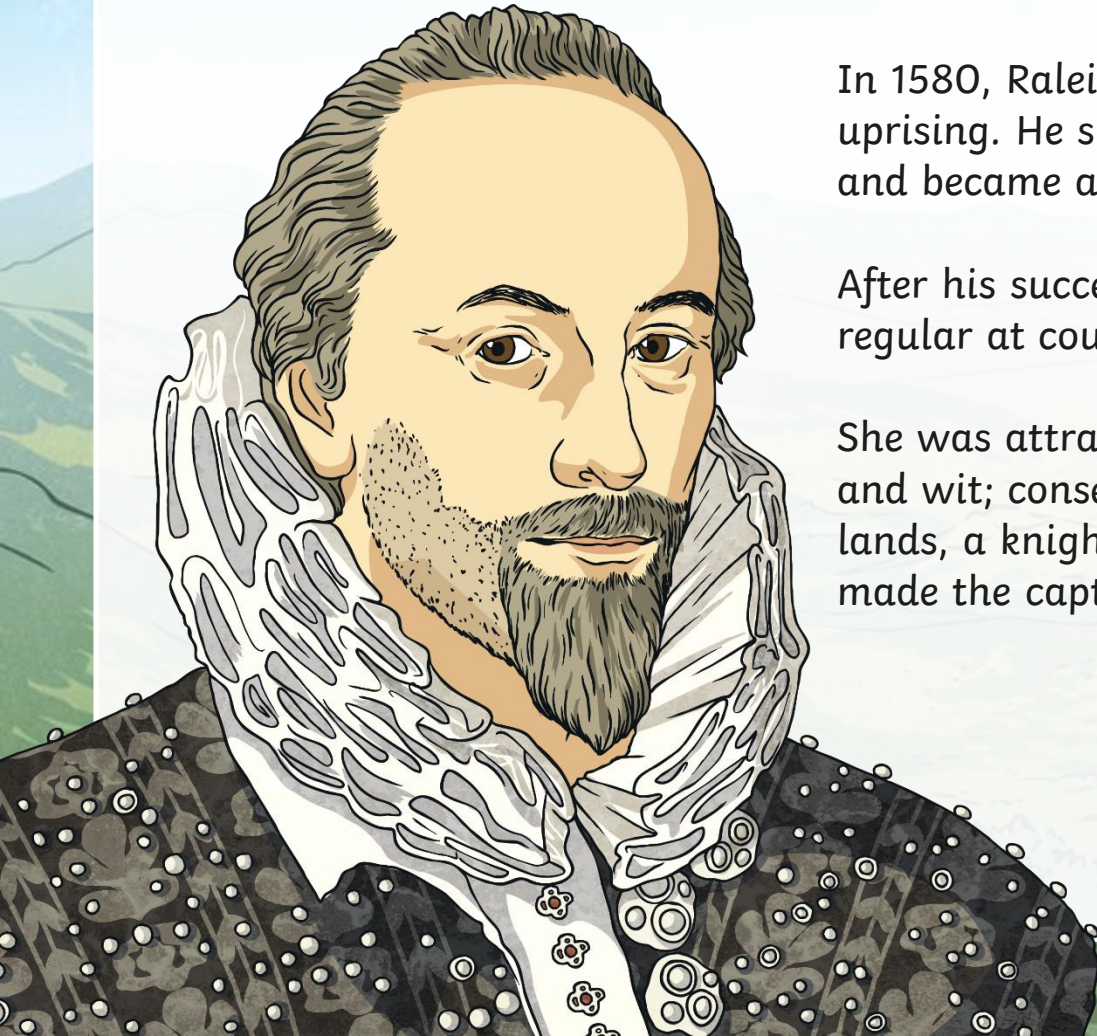
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1578

In 1578, Walter Raleigh sailed to America with his half-brother, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, who was also an explorer. It is possible that this trip whetted his appetite for further explorations of the world.



1580



In 1580, Raleigh went to Ireland to end an uprising. He successfully repressed the rebels and became a landowner in Munster.

After his success in Ireland, Raleigh became a regular at court and a favourite of the Queen.

She was attracted to him because of his charm and wit; consequently, the Queen gave him lands, a knighthood and, in 1587, he was even made the captain of the Queen's Guard.

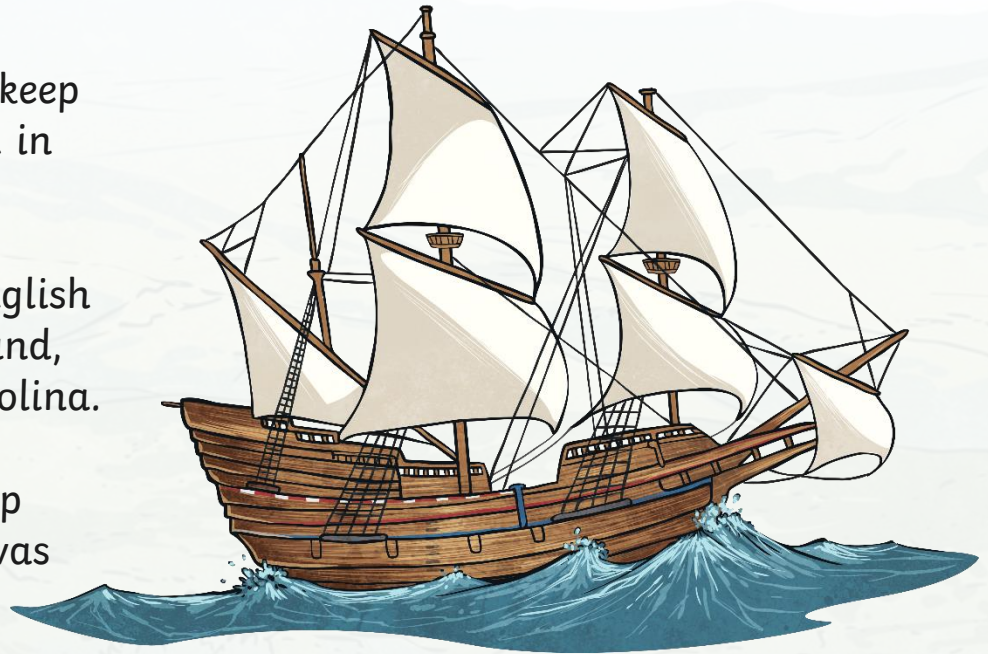
1585

In 1585, the Queen granted Raleigh permission to sail to America with the instruction to 'explore, colonise and rule remote, heathen and barbarous lands, countries and territories, not actually possessed of any Christian Prince or inhabited by Christian People'.

In return, Raleigh was allowed to keep a fifth of any gold or jewels mined in the area.

He attempted to set up the first English colony in America on Roanoke Island, which is now known as North Carolina.

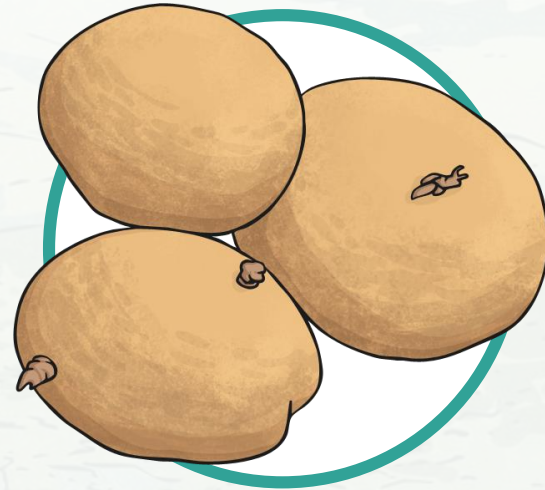
The colony failed. He tried to set up another two years later but that was also unsuccessful.



Potatoes and Tobacco

It has long been said that Walter Raleigh introduced potatoes and tobacco to England. However, the Spanish had already introduced these items to the country.

Raleigh is known to have made smoking popular in England. Apparently, when Raleigh's servant first saw him smoking, he threw water on him because he thought he was on fire.

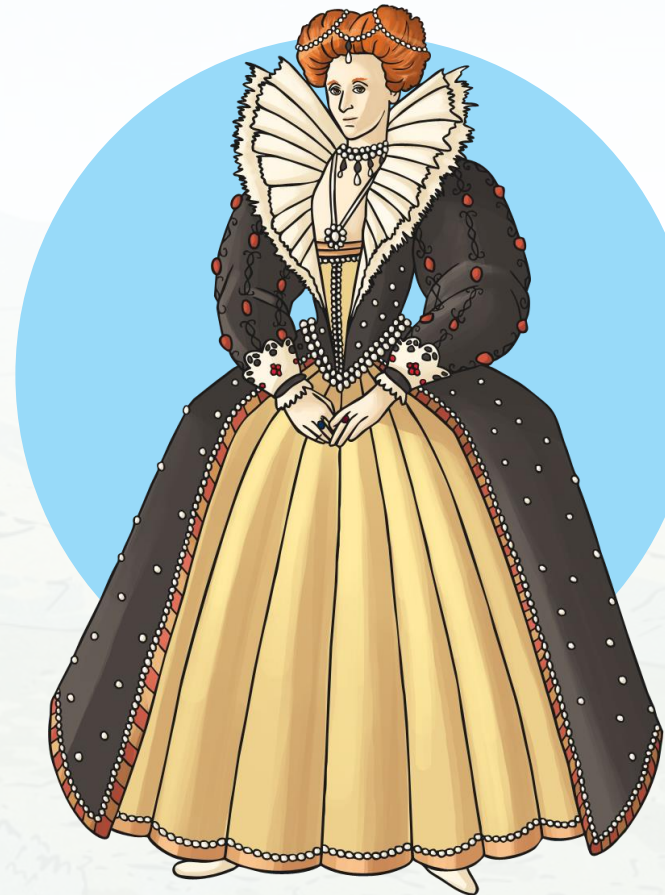


1592

1592 was a challenging year for Walter Raleigh. Queen Elizabeth I discovered that he had secretly married one of her maids of honour, Elizabeth Throckmorton.

Elizabeth was extremely jealous. She punished Raleigh by putting him in prison in the Tower of London.

Upon his release, he tried to become one of the Queen's favour again. He thought he could do this by finding El Dorado. This 'golden land' was supposed to be at the mouth of the Orinoco river in modern-day Venezuela. It was, however, an unsuccessful expedition.



1603

Elizabeth I died on 24th March 1603.

Unfortunately for Raleigh, her successor to the throne, King James I, distrusted him. The new King of England wanted to make peace with Spain. However, Raleigh had been popular with Elizabeth because he had raided Spanish ships. Raleigh was tried accused of plotting to dethrone James I. He was found guilty, sentenced to death and imprisoned in the Tower of London.

This sentence was reduced to life imprisonment by the King. Walter Raleigh spent 12 years in prison. He lived comfortably with his family. During that time, he wrote a book called 'The History of the World'.



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1616

In 1616, Raleigh was released to search for El Dorado again.

The expedition, however, was another failure. During the expedition, Raleigh disobeyed the King and attacked Spanish territory.

He returned in disgrace. Once again, he was immediately imprisoned in the Tower and sentenced to death.



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1618

Raleigh was executed in 1618.
Apparently, he said to his
executioner,

“This is sharp medicine but it is a
sure cure for all diseases. What dost
thou fear? Strike, man, strike!”



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His Legacy

Walter Raleigh is remembered today, particularly in the USA.

In North Carolina, their second-largest city was named Raleigh and a bronze statue has stood there in honour of him. Raleigh County in West Virginia, USA, is also named after him.



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