

# Writing activities: William Hilton explores the Cape Fear River

BY PAULINE S. JOHNSON

These suggested writing activities are designed to help students understand Hilton's report on his 1663 expedition as they read "William Hilton Explores the Cape Fear River."<sup>1</sup> The activities include exercises in understanding chronology, adopting multiple perspectives, and building historical empathy.

- **Tracking time.** One of the difficult historical skills for young students is understanding chronology. As 8th graders have generally not had a great deal of previous study in the discipline of history and many of them are still thinking concretely, some students have a difficult time placing events in a historical context. An activity that can allow you to assess their understanding of this time period and gauge their proficiency in chronological thinking is to ask the students to write a fictional account of this exploration. Using the basic information from Saturday, October 24th through Saturday, October 31st, ask students to write a diary as if they were on the ship with William Hilton. In assessing this assignment, the students should write an entry for each of the eight days. You will also be able to ascertain the sophistication of the chronological thinking of your students.
- **Rewriting the story.** By asking students to write the story described in the sidebar (the Indian who shot at the boat, the hunt for the shooter, the agreement between the chief and Hilton) from the viewpoint of the Native Americans, the students will gain practice in thinking about multiple perspectives. You could ask them to write this in the form of a letter, a short play, or a television drama.
- **Making the case.** Have the students keep a record of the evidence that would convince the Barbados planters that the Cape Fear area would be a good place to plant more plantations.
- **Species inventory.** Have the students list the plants and animals Hilton listed in his report. Why would the descriptions of plants and animals have been of interest to the Barbados planters? You may want to have the students also examine John Lawson's animal sketch<sup>2</sup>.

- **“A Writing left in a Post.”** Have the students write the letter written by the “New-England-Men” that is described by Hilton in the last paragraph. Ask your students to imagine why the New Englanders would not have liked the Cape Fear area.

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## Notes

1. See <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-colonial/1.7>.
2. See <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/multimedia/5930>.

## About the author

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I am currently the Director of a Teaching American History Grant for Buncombe County Schools, Asheville City Schools, and Madison County Schools. I have taught history and English in the seventh and eighth grades for over twenty-six years at Reynolds Middle School in Asheville, North Carolina. I am currently doing adjunct work for Mars Hill College and Western Carolina University. I have a Masters Degree from Western Carolina University and am Nationally Board Certified in Early Adolescence/Social Studies-History. I am certified to teach K–12 and I also have Academically-Intellectually Gifted certification.