**Document A: “True Relation” (Modified)**

Arriving in Werowocomoco, the emperor

welcomed me with good words and great

platters of food. He promised me his friendship

and my freedom within four days. . . .He asked

me why we came and why we went further with

our boat. . . . He promised to give me what I

wanted and to feed us if we made him hatchets

and copper. I promised to do this. And so, with

all this kindness, he sent me home.

*Source: Smith’s own words, from* **A True Relation** of such

occurrences and accidents of note as hath happened in Virginia

Since the First Planting of that Colony*, published in* ***1608****.*

**Document B: “General History” (Modified)**

They brought me to Meronocomoco, where I

saw Powhatan, their Emperor. Two great

stones were brought before Powhatan. Then I

was dragged by many hands, and they laid my

head on the stones, ready to beat out my brains.

Pocahontas, the King’s dearest daughter took

my head in her arms and laid down her own

upon it to save me from death. Then the

Emperor said I should live.

Two days later, Powhatan met me and said we

were friends. He told me to bring him two guns

and a grindstone and he would consider me his

son.

*Source: From Smith’s later version of the story in* **General History** of

Virginia, New England and the Summer Isles, *published in* ***1624****.*

**Paul Lewis**

**Historian, Interpretation A (Modified)**

Author, The Great Rogue: A Biography of Captain John Smith (1966)

In 1617, Pocahontas became a big media event in London.

She was a “princess” (daughter of “king” Powhatan), and the

first Indian woman to visit England. Because she converted

to Christianity, people high in the church, as well as the King

and Queen, paid attention to her.

While all this was going on, John Smith published a new

version of *True Relation*, adding footnotes that say that

Pocahontas threw herself on Smith to save him. Smith even

takes credit for introducing Pocahontas to the English

language and the Bible.

Then, in 1624, Smith expands his story in *General History*.

He adds details to the story, and says that Pocahontas

risked her life to save his. Why would a chief who had been

so friendly before, suddenly decide to kill John Smith?

*Source: Excerpt from* The Great Rogue: A Biography of Captain John Smith*,*

*written by the historian Paul Lewis in 1966.*

**J.A. Leo Lemay**

**Historian, Interpretation B (Modified)**

Author, The American Dream of Captain John Smith (1991)

John Smith had no reason to lie. In all of his other writings

he is very accurate and observant. For 250 years after his

captivity, no one questioned his story.

The reason the two versions differ is that their purpose is

different. In *A True Relation*, Smith didn’t want to brag about

his adventures, he wanted to inform readers about the land

and people of Virginia. In the *General History*, his goal was

to promote settlement in Virginia (and added stories might

get people interested).

There is no doubt the event happened. Smith may have

misunderstood what the whole thing meant. I think it was

probably a common ritual for the tribe, where a young

woman in the tribe pretends to save a newcomer as a way of

welcoming him into the tribe.

*Source: Excerpt from* The American Dream of Captain John Smith*, written in*

*1991 by historian J.A. Leo Lemay.*