

WALTER RALEIGH

Walter Raleigh is known for introducing the potato and tobacco to Britain. It seems he would have preferred to have found gold in South America. Read these details of his life, then answer the questions that follow.



Walter Raleigh



Queen Elizabeth I



King James I

Walter Raleigh and El Dorado

Born in Devon around 1552, Walter Raleigh had a lifelong interest in America, or the New World as it was known. He was well-educated and a favourite of Queen Elizabeth I, especially after he quelled an uprising in Ireland in 1580. As a result, he was knighted and promoted to Captain of the Queen's Guard.

He had already sailed to America to establish a colony, but failed; and tried again a few years later without success.

He is credited with bringing back potatoes and tobacco to Europe, although the Spanish had already introduced them here. In fact, the Spanish, at the time, in conflict with England had a strong grip on parts of South America.

When the first Spanish explorers reached the continent, they heard many legends about tribes in the high Andes and their use of gold in their ceremonies. Stories varied, but it was claimed that gold played a part in the rituals of leadership. It was said that a new leader was covered in gold dust. Then gold and other precious jewels were thrown into Lake Guatavita to please the underwater goddess. The Spanish called this chief *El Dorado* – the Golden One. Soon, it became the name of a mysterious city of gold.

Meanwhile, Raleigh fell into disfavour with Elizabeth when he married one of her maids of honour without asking the Queen's permission. In a rage, Elizabeth imprisoned them both in the Tower of London – not in a dungeon, but in some comfortable rooms.

When he was released, Raleigh hoped to regain the Queen's favour by setting off to find the fabled city of El Dorado. Raleigh sailed to the River Orinoco and beyond, but failed to find any gold.

James I, who succeeded Elizabeth I, did not trust Raleigh, who was accused (probably falsely) of plotting against the King. Once more, he was thrown into prison in the Tower. This time, he spent 12 years locked up. In 1616, James, in need of money, agreed to let Raleigh, now an old man, try again to find El Dorado. The one condition was that there should be no conflict with the Spanish.

The expedition was a total disaster. Raleigh's son was killed in a battle with the Spanish. Raleigh, having defied the King, returned in October 1618 without any gold, to face a death sentence. As his executioner hesitated, Raleigh said: "This is sharp medicine; but it is a sure cure for all diseases..."

1. Why does the writer say that Walter Raleigh was born **around** 1552?

2. How did Queen Elizabeth I reward Raleigh for dealing with the uprising in Ireland?

3. Raleigh was rewarded for his successes. He also experienced some major failures. What were they?

4. What other word in the text is similar in meaning to **ceremonies**?

5. The stories and legends of tribal chiefs in the Andes might not have been true. What are the **two** phrases that are used to suggest they might not be true?

6. Describe the tribal leadership ceremony.

7. Today, El Dorado is thought of as a lost city of gold. What did it mean originally?

8. Why did Elizabeth I imprison Raleigh in the Tower of London?

9. Why did James I imprison Raleigh in the Tower of London?

10. What words suggest that Raleigh might have been innocent?

11. The text describes **three** ways in which 'The expedition was a total disaster'. What were they?

12. What was the 'sharp medicine' that Raleigh referred to on the day of his execution?

13. Why do you think it was a 'sure cure for all diseases'?
