

Note for teachers or homeschool moms:

Dark Enough to See the Stars in a Jamestown Sky by Connie Lapallo is geared toward adults or high school students, but middle schoolers may also enjoy the story. (My 11-year-old daughter read it and is now asking about the sequel.) The content is appropriate for all.

This novel is an excellent tool to help upper middle schoolers, high schoolers (or anyone) learn more about:

- the reasons for English exploration of the New World and the climate in England at that time.
- the political leaders involved in early Jamestown, as most (including John Smith) are “still around” during the setting of the book (1592-1609 in England and 1609-1611 in Jamestown). I portrayed the leaders as human beings and kept their personalities as true as possible to what period documents suggest. I did find each of them to have distinctive traits.
- the uncertain politics and how close Jamestown came to being yet another failed English colony.
- the culture, setting, and daily life of the Jamestown adventurers.
- the role of women and children in the early days of the colony of Virginia.
- the reasons why the Starving Time occurred. Could it have been prevented? This is a good topic for discussion.
- shipboard life during this time.

Historically accurate and fact-based. Woven throughout the story include:

- Actual settlers – men, women, and children
- Political leaders
- Religious issues, such as the Protestant Reformation
- Laws and Charters
- Wars (conflicts in Europe as well as Indian conflicts)
- Native American leaders
- Native American language, dress, food, and customs
- Tribal names and relations
- English foods, customs, dress, and spoken language – in England and at Jamestown
- Ballads and musical instruments of the time
- Popular proverbs from the time
- 125 literary quotations and poems used as chapter openings and within chapters
- Even bible references are from the Geneva Bible (in use until 1611) *unless* the reference is too awkward; then the King James version is used.

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Additional Resources in the back of the book include:

- Glossary
- 3 maps
- What's Fact, What's Fiction?
- A "Who's Who" of Virginia political personalities (John Smith, George Percy, George Yeardley, etc.)
- Virginia Indian tribes – the basic tribal groups and their locations
- Long-term Jamestown survivors—what happened to them? To my knowledge, this information is not collected anywhere else.

Discussion questions based on the book:

1. What was the original reasoning behind the Ulster Plantations? Why didn't they work?
2. Why did the English consider the Spanish such a threat, even at Jamestown?
3. How did the Dutch Wars play into the settlement of Jamestown, particularly in 1609?
4. Do you think Joan had a choice as to whether she went? If you said yes, would you have gone if you were she? Why or why not?
5. What factors lead to John Smith's sudden departure of Jamestown?
6. Was Percy the best choice to take Smith's place as President? Was he a successful leader? Why or why not?
7. What factors played into the Starving Time? Do you think it was preventable?
8. What actions show Sir Thomas Gates to be a strong leader? (Bonus: what trait did he exhibit that was unusual in a military man of his time? – email me for the answer!)
9. Were the Laws Divine Morall and Martiall too harsh or exactly what the struggling colony needed?
10. Fun question (not in book): What is *La Bahia de la Madre de Dios* and what does it have to do with Virginia? (E-mail if you can't find the answer.)