

Historical Fiction



Level 4

The Life of Mattachanna *(A child of the great Powhatan)*

It was summer. The sun shone down on the river and made it sparkle. Everyone was waiting. Then suddenly it came, the sound that the Indians were waiting for, the sound of the first bird call. They all ran splashing into the river. They did this to praise their sun god, Okee. It was the summer of 1607, Mattachanna was 11 summers old. She was born in 1596, 11 years before the settlers came.

Mattachanna liked to weave. Her first basket was awkward but not as awkward as others. She was working on a basket when she heard some commotion going on outside. Mattachanna carefully set her basket down and ran outside the longhouse to see what was happening. Mattachanna's mother, Quantema, told her that some hunters had seen big canoes by the shore. They were the pale faces' boats.

Powhatan sent runners to the nearest tribe so that all the tribes would soon know. Powhatan also sent a messenger to the white people telling them to return with the Indian messenger.

Mattachanna was surprised to hear this. "Will the messenger tell them what tribe he is from?" she asked. "And why so soon? You usually wait awhile before you let them know of us." Powhatan laughed and said, "The messenger I sent was not from here, he is from a different one of my tribes and he will take them to another tribe. My dear child, there is no reason to worry, for I thought of that too." Mattachanna ran to tell Pocahontas, one of her sisters, even though she probably already knew about it. Mattachanna was right; in fact Pocahontas had asked the same question and received the same answer.

This story has few characters, as appropriate for a short story. The first paragraph makes it clear when and where the story takes place.

It was another three weeks before some of the settlers came to Mattachanna's village. When



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This paragraph and the next are good examples of giving realistic details in a story

the settlers came they brought beads, bells, and copper trinkets. So the settlers and the Indians traded. The Indians traded corn and furs for beads, bells and copper. Pocahontas and Mattachanna whispered about the settlers, “They smell kind of funny,” said Mattachanna. Pocahontas nodded, “They look kind of funny too,” she said. “I wish we knew what they were saying and then we could be spies for father,” giggled Mattachanna. “Me too,” Pocahontas giggled back.

A day after the settlers left, Mattachanna and Pocahontas asked their father if they could go hunting with their brother Naquatas. Powhatan said yes, as long as they didn’t go too far from the village. And so they went hunting. They stopped to check each snare they found, in one there was a big fat dove which they clubbed and put in a deer skin sack. In another snare a plump white rabbit awaited them. They clubbed it also. Then, they came upon one of their log traps and found the best thing you could find, a white buck! They were very excited. Powhatan would give them many presents if they brought it back alive. It looked as if the buck had just fallen so they took their skin rope and put it around the buck’s neck. They tied the rope to the tree and lifted off the logs and brought their catch home. Their father gave them new bows and arrows, soft furs for their beds, new moccasins, and a small basket of goodies. They were well pleased.

The next day the palefaces came back. Powhatan traded 8 baskets of corn for 4 copper kettles. Pocahontas and Mattachanna each traded 2 soft brown rabbit skins so that each of them could have a small copper box of beautiful beads. They also traded small baskets of corn so they could share a wooden doll with fabric clothes, which they marveled at. Their father on the other hand was not so happy. You see, he wanted guns, but the English would not trade him for any. Powhatan decided to forbid everyone to trade



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with the white people. This troubled Mattachanna and Pocahontas. They didn't want to disobey Powhatan, but they also did not want the settlers to starve. They begged their father to let them each bring one more basket of food to the settlers if they gave them each a copper kettle full of beads and bells.

Powhatan said yes. So they went to deliver the food to the settlers. The settlers gladly gave them each a copper kettle full of beads and bells. They were about to go back to their village when they thought of some things that they could tell the settlers that might help them survive. They told them where to find foods such as nuts and edible plants and then they returned to their village.

In the spring Pocahontas went to one of their cousins' village to stay there for a while. Mattachanna's village had moved to a different spot for the winter and had decided to stay there. The new spot was far from the settlers and was also well hidden. During the months that Pocahontas was gone, Mattachanna married Tomocamo. Mattachanna was anxious for news of Pocahontas. Finally some came, and it wasn't very good news. Pocahontas had been captured a few months earlier and had gotten married two weeks ago. The Englishmen were looking for other Indians that might want to go to London with Pocahontas. Mattachanna and Tomacamo packed a few baskets of things and went to Jamestown in a canoe. Now they wouldn't have to carry all the baskets and they would get there faster. They arrived in time to get their things on the ship.

In the morning they set sail for London. Mattachanna and Pocahontas told each other what had happened during the past couple months. Pocahontas told her what had happened in Jamestown and Mattachanna told Pocahontas what had happened in the village. During the 3 weeks that they were on board Mattachanna and Pocahontas wove baskets, which was about all they could do. While they wove

This is the weakest part of the story, as it lacks the detail other parts of the story have, and brings in a new character without introducing him.



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The story ends somewhat abruptly, but it does do a good job of cleaning up all loose ends. For this level it is a very plausible conclusion

baskets they talked and sang songs of their tribe. By the time the trip was over the sisters had each gotten sea sick a couple of times.

During the time they stayed in London, Mattachanna, Tomocamo and Pocahontas became Christians. Sometime later, Pocahontas became ill and died. As soon as Pocahontas' funeral was over Mattachanna and Tomocamo went back to the village. Mattachanna ran into Powhatan's arms and told him every thing. She stayed in the village for the rest of her life telling her people about Jesus.

THE END

