Summary: The Lost Colony

Exploring North Carolina
Five hundred years ago, European explorers landed in North America. At that time, they did not know this continent existed. They crossed the Atlantic Ocean hoping to find a new route to Asia. Europeans traded with India and other Asian countries that had gold and spices. The first European explorer was Christopher Columbus. He sailed west in 1492 from Spain.

In 1524, France sent an expedition led by Giovanni da Verrazano. They landed at present-day Cape Fear. Spain launched another mission in 1539. The explorer Hernando de Soto and his men reached western North Carolina in 1540. England did not want Spain to settle North America. So Queen Elizabeth I of England asked Sir Walter Raleigh to start a new colony there. In 1584, he sent two explorers, Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe, to start the colony. The explorers returned to England with two American Indians named Manteo and Wanchese. The American Indians taught the English leaders about their land and language.

Settling Roanoke
English settlers first came to Roanoke Island in 1585. Their colony failed, however. They fought with American Indians and they didn’t bring enough supplies. England sent another group two years later. They also settled on Roanoke Island. John White was their leader. After they landed in 1587, his daughter gave birth to a baby girl. This was the first European child to be born in North America.

John White sailed back to England for more supplies. But he couldn’t return to Roanoke until 1590. When he got there, everyone was gone. No one knows what happened to the settlers. Roanoke became known as “the Lost Colony.”

Though the first two colonies on Roanoke Island failed, British leaders learned many lessons. English leaders realized their colonies required more supplies. They also needed to choose a better location with a good port. It should be a place where settlers could grow their own food. This way they could trade with American Indians instead of competing with them.

Before You Read
Find and underline each vocabulary word.

expedition (ehk spih DIHSH uhn) noun, a journey taken by a group of people or explorers

colony (KAHL uh nee) noun, an area of land ruled by another country

settler (SEHT lur) noun, a person who moves to a new area to live

After You Read
REVIEW How many expeditions did Spain send to North America?
Underline the sentence(s) that describe the Spanish mission(s).

REVIEW What happened when John White returned to Roanoke Island? Put brackets around the sentence that explains what he found.