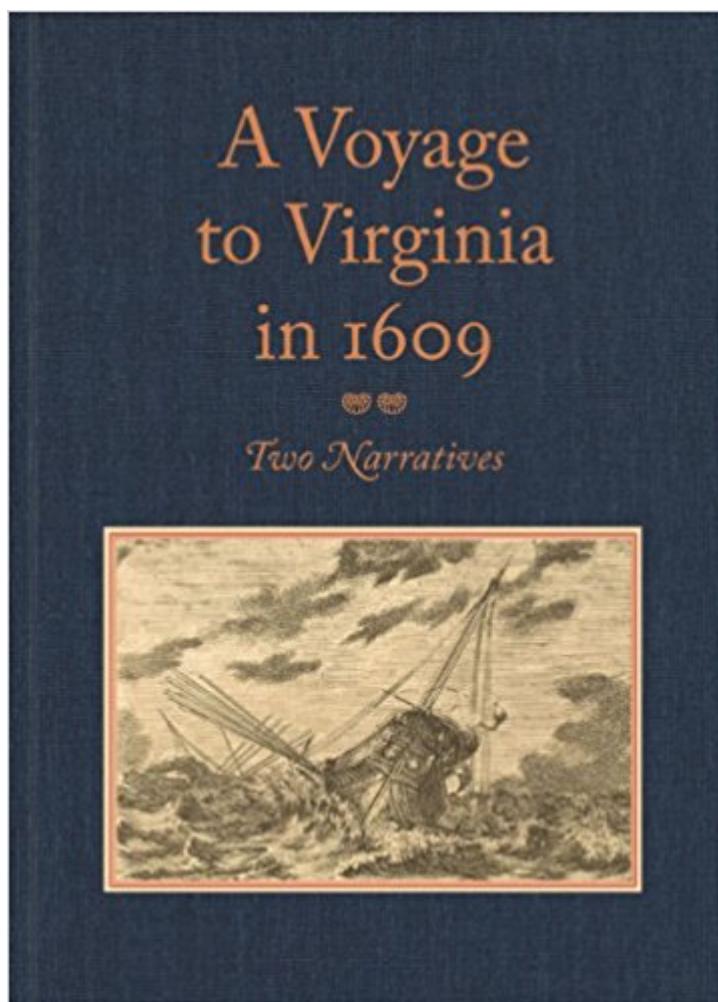


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# A Voyage To Virginia In 1609: Two Narratives: Strachey's "True Reportory" And Jourdain's Discovery Of The Bermudas



## Synopsis

To celebrate its fiftieth anniversary, the University of Virginia Press reissues its first-ever publication. The volume's two accounts of the 1609 wreck of a Jamestown-bound ship offer a gripping sea adventure from the earliest days of American colonization, but the dramatic events' even greater claim to fame is for serving as the inspiration for William Shakespeare's last major work, *The Tempest*. William Strachey was one of six hundred passengers sailing to Jamestown as part of the largest expedition yet to Virginia. A mere week from their destination, the fleet's flagship, *Sea Venture*, met a tropical storm and wrecked on one of the islands of Bermuda. Strachey's story might have ended there, but the castaways survived on the tropical island for eleven months and in an act of almost incomprehensible resourcefulness used local cedarwood, along with the wreckage of their own ship, to construct two seaworthy boats and continue successfully on their voyage. Strachey's frankness about his fellow travelers, mutinies on the island, and the wretched condition in which they finally found Jamestown kept his document from being officially published initially, but it circulated privately in London, where one of its early readers was William Shakespeare. The second narrative in this volume, by Strachey's shipmate Silvester Jourdain, covers the same episode but includes many fascinating details that Strachey's does not, including some that made their way into *The Tempest*. Presented with modern spelling and punctuation, this great maritime drama and unforgettable firsthand look at the profound struggle to colonize America offers today's reader the raw material that inspired Shakespeare's masterpiece.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The late Louis B. Wright was Director of the Folger Shakespeare Library from 1948 to 1968.

Many people know about the floundering Jamestown Colony in Virginia in the early 1600s, but most have never heard of the side trip that one vessel, the Sea Venture, which along with eight other ships was sent to bring aid to the struggling community, took on her way there. This book is a primary source narrative using the writings of two of that ship's passengers, telling of the time they spent separated from the rest of their fleet and their subsequent sojourn on the island of Bermuda. Until the Sea Venture was shipwrecked on the treacherous rocky shoals surrounding the island, no long-term colonists had settled there. The islands were known to pirates and other mariners, but Bermuda was known as the Devil's Island because successful navigation into her bays was virtually impossible and so many ships foundered trying. Although the devil was still at play with the fate of the Sea Venture, Bermuda was a huge blessing for the passengers of the ship, who had been swept into a hurricane, separated from their fleet, and only hours before had consigned their souls to God after almost four days of continuous bailing and attempting to stop their ship's leaks. Exhausted, the passengers had closed the hatch and waited for the deep blue to claim them. One passenger had stayed above, and it was he who called out the land sighting and guided the battered ship as far in as he could before the ship ran aground. William Strachey's narrative is the longer of the two and much richer in both detail and language. Silvester Jourdain's narrative has the feel of a letter written to sum things up for its recipient; its linguistic style is far simpler than Strachey's, but gives some pertinent details lacking in his writings. In this version, spelling and punctuation have been modernized, but the syntax is retained. If you are not accustomed to reading documents from this era, it might take a bit to get used to the style. There are extensive superscripted notes, with explanations printed at the end of each chapter, helping to explain terminology that is unfamiliar to modern readers and give extra information. In addition to the two narratives there are also two sections at the beginning of the book giving a little back story and telling how the narratives came into our modern era. Of particular interest to many, and indeed the reason why many people read it, is the fact that Strachey's narrative is believed to have been William Shakespeare's inspiration for his play "The Tempest." It is also interesting to note that John Rolfe, who would later assure his place in history through marriage to Pocahontas, was one of the passengers. From vivid descriptions of the flora and fauna of Bermuda, through the trials and infighting that the shipwrecked passengers

endured, to their eventual reunion with their fellow Englishmen in Virginia (not a spoiler, as you know their fate from the book's introduction), these two narratives are an excellent first hand accounting of this unique voyage.

Loved the book

This provided more pieces to a bit of family history (Stephen Hopkins and the wreck of the Sea Venture). Very happy to have found this.

A very dramatic account of a harrowing experience. It gives an insight into the character of the men and women that undertook long voyages in rickety ships virtually into the unknown. One of only a few published accounts of the times, this one in exquisite detail.

Great first hand original material. I wish the editor had not modernized the language.

Straight forward presentation

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