


# Searching for Virginia Dare

By Marjorie Hudson

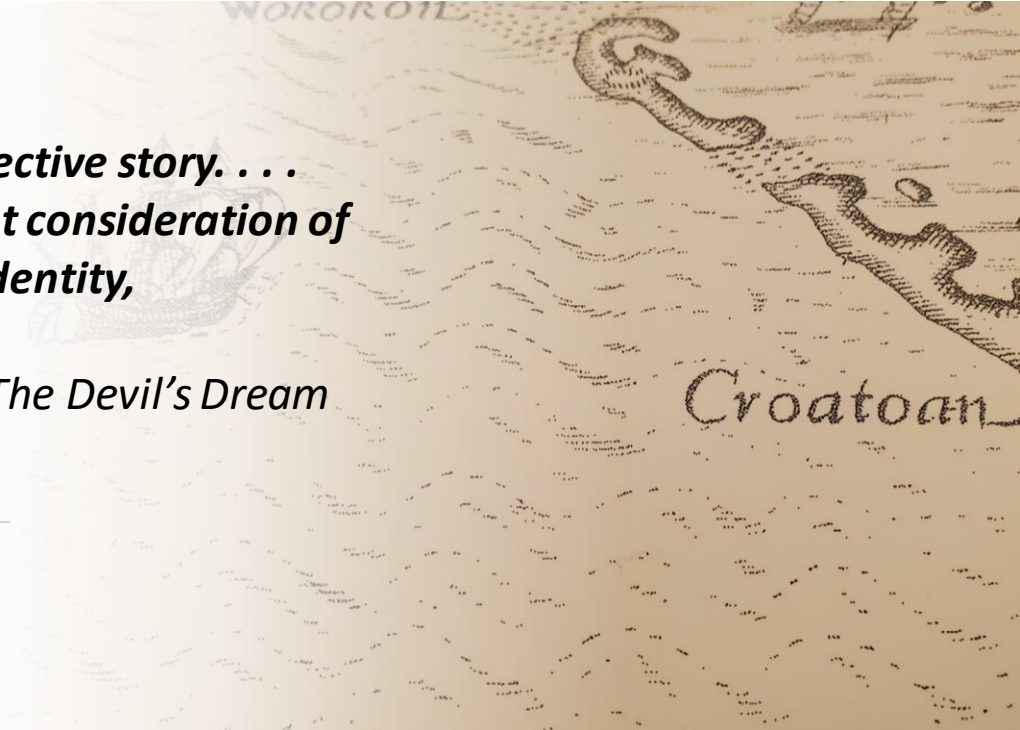
## Readers Group Guide



***“As fascinating as a detective story. . . .  
An absorbing, intelligent consideration of  
national and personal identity,  
beautifully written.”***

*—Lee Smith, author of *The Devil’s Dream**

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In ***Searching for Virginia Dare***, Marjorie takes readers on a journey across eastern North Carolina and Virginia, seeking stories, scholars, and connections in the web of evidence of the survival of the 1587 English colony set on Roanoke Island during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. Diverging from the path of conventional histories, Marjorie invents a mosaic form that invites memory, poetic line, fiction scenes, side trips, and introspection on the nature of family and loss as well as what it means to be an American. An entertaining journey, the book’s inventive forms have made it a focus of creative writing study from University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill to the University of Alaska–Anchorage.

## Questions for Discussion

1. Did you learn about the Lost Colony in school? What do you remember learning? Why are people so interested in The Lost Colony and Virginia Dare?
2. Have you ever been to the Outer Banks? Do you know where Roanoke Island is? Why was its location so handy for a colony?
3. What was Queen Elizabeth's motive for creating an English colony in the New World?
4. At least five disasters at sea affected the fate of the Colony. Can you name them all?
5. The Spanish Armada plays a big role in the fate of the Colony. How so? Did you learn that in school when you studied English history?
6. Why do you think Sir Walter Raleigh assigned the governorship of the 1587 Colony to John White, an artist? Was his artistic background a help or a hindrance in the fate of the Colony?
7. What do you think happened to the colonists? To Virginia Dare?
8. Do you have any factual evidence for your theory?
9. Do you think the Elinor Dare stones are fakes? Why or why not?
10. Why do you suppose that so many works of art, music, and poetry have been inspired by Virginia Dare's story?
11. By 1709, explorer John Lawson had published strong evidence that the Colonists survived on Hatteras Island and that their descendants were among the Hatteras Indians. Why do you think that information was mostly ignored for many years? What do you think about new information that the colonists survived on Hatteras for many years?

# Author Interview

## **What set you on the trail of Virginia Dare?**

I'd dimly heard of Virginia Dare in literature and history references after I moved to North Carolina, but I really had no idea of the weight and fascination the story would hold for me. The invitation to explore Virginia's story came in a letter one day from scholar, poet, and fiction writer Emily Herring Wilson, who is known for her work with women's history and biography. She suggested I write an essay for an anthology about North Carolina women in history, and the name Virginia Dare came up. I realized at once that I knew very little about Dare and took that as a challenge. Long story short, it turned into a book.

## **This book contains history, road trip, fiction, and memoir. Why did you decide to include all those things?**

I started with history, hit a wall, turned to fiction, then opened up to memoir. It became a kind of natural process in my note-taking, and at one point, I decided to include all the different layers, especially the personal story, because the Virginia Dare story itself has so many emotional ups and downs, and I guessed that others would respond to it that way too. Virginia Dare's story helped me face some losses in my life and uncovered some family mysteries.

One of my reviewers said the book was a guidebook for writers, because it transparently shows the difficult processes of research – blind alleys, personal struggle, connection with people, getting lost, and grappling for ways to make sense of material during the writing process. I've always really liked that!

## **People continue to come up with new theories about what happened to Virginia Dare, don't they?**

There's been an absolute Renaissance in research and new literature on the subject. I'm learning new things all the time. The [First Colony Foundation](#) has been exploring a new location on the Chowan River, [Andrew Lawler](#) has a new book out about the search, [Scott Dawson and Mark Horton](#) have a new book with exciting findings on Hatteras Island. I'm still researching the artist who depicted Virginia Dare as a New World Venus. As long as people are interested in the story, there will be new research.



## SEARCHING FOR VIRGINIA DARE

By Marjorie Hudson

A North Carolina Arts Council Notable Book

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"Hudson has invented a new genre, a sort of parting of the authorial curtain to reveal . . . the commonalities that bind both author and reader to someone of another place and time." — **Chapel Hill Herald**

"Marjorie Hudson is to The Lost Colony what Annie Dillard is to the natural world and Diane Ackerman is to the senses. The result is a great American story— distilled from the myths we tell ourselves, and true, in the end, if anything is true."— **Greg Rappleye, author of *A Path Between Houses***

"In search of treasure, this appealing book journeys three centuries back to investigate the disappearance of the Lost Colony and its babe, Virginia Dare, crosses North Carolina to track ghostly white deer and seek blue-eyed Lumbee Indians, and at the same time probes the mystery of her own life story. What Hudson digs up instead of pirate chests is a wealth of historical fact, lit by imagination, reflected off personal memories. By an alchemy of language and insight, Hudson has made old legends shine like newly minted gold." — **Doris Betts, author of *Souls Raised from the Dead***

Read Marjorie Hudson's other books ...

***Accidental Birds of the Carolinas*, stories of Ambler County**

"This woman writes like a dream!" — André Dubus III, author of Oprah Selection *House of Sand and Fog*

***Indigo Field*, a novel of Ambler County**

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"Mesmerizing . . . redemptive." —Sue Monk Kidd, author of *The Secret Life of Bees* and *The Invention of Flight*

