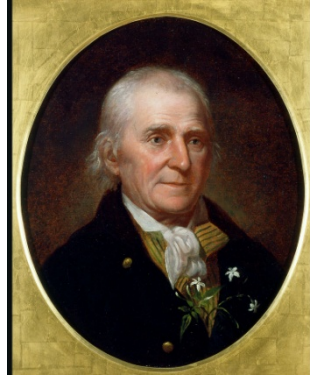


2006 Georgia History Festival Featured Historical Figure Teacher Guide

William Bartram

(1739-1823)



William Bartram c. 1808 by Charles Wilson Peale Used by permission of Independence National Historical Park

Explanation: The William Bartram teacher guide includes all the text from the online resources with bolded vocabulary terms and their definitions (page 1-19). The packet also includes a list of GPS standards aligned to the resources (20-21).

Brief Biography

Son of John Bartram, America's first professional botanist, William Bartram (1739-1823) was born on April 9, 1739, in Kingsessing near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. From a young age, William developed a keen interest in botany and drawing. Though he tried on more than one occasion to enter the professional world in both business offices and printing shops, Bartram always longed for the outdoors. It is no surprise, therefore, that we find a 26-year-old William accompanying his father on the elder Bartram's great botanical expedition to the newly acquired Florida territory in 1765. Commissioned "the King's Botanist," John Bartram was to explore the new southern territory acquired from Spain in 1763.

During the expedition, William Bartram fell in love with Florida, even attempting a short-lived venture into indigo farming along the St. John's River. Though this experiment ultimately failed, he remained in Florida for a time, taking a position as a draftsman on an expedition to map the coastline. Eventually he was forced to return to his father's home in Pennsylvania, but his love for the South did not dissipate with time and distance.

In 1773 he was finally able to return to the area after securing funding from wealthy plant collector John Fothergill to conduct a botanical exploration of Florida. While visiting the Georgia coast in March of that year, Bartram learned of an important meeting between representatives of the Creek and Cherokee Nations that was to take place in two months' time in Augusta. He decided to stay in the area long enough to attend the meeting and record the

proceedings. In the meantime, however, he explored the Georgia coast, including visits to Savannah, Midway and Sunbury.

Since the official minutes of the May 1773 meeting of Native Americans in Augusta have been lost, Bartram's description is the most valuable record available. The meeting dealt with the cession of lands by both the Creeks and Cherokees. Following the meeting, Bartram joined the surveying expedition sent to mark the new boundaries. However, an outbreak in hostilities forced Bartram to abandon his journey soon after it began. He then returned to the coast before continuing on to Florida.

In October 1774, Georgia Governor James Wright signed a treaty with Creek leaders, and Bartram decided to resume his tour of Indian territory. He described the mountainous Cherokee territory along the Little Tennessee River, and then headed south toward Mobile, Alabama. He then traveled to Pensacola, and on to the Mississippi River. Bartram's writings give an invaluable look into Native American culture, particularly that of the Creeks, at the time of the American Revolution.

He returned to Philadelphia and spent eight months with his father before John Bartram's death in September 1777. William spent the next several years preparing the account of his travels for publication. *Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida, the Cherokee Country, the Extensive Territories of the Muscogulges or Creek Confederacy, and the Country of the Choctaws*, was published in 1791. William Bartram spent the last years of life quietly, in Philadelphia. He died at the age of 84 on July 22, 1823.

Adapted from New Georgia Encyclopedia article on William Bartram by Edward J. Cashin.

Bartram Timeline

1699 Birth of John Bartram, America's first professional botanist and father of William

1735 Beginning of regular seed shipments to Peter Collinson of England

1739 Birth of William Bartram at Kingsessing, near Philadelphia on April 9 (the introduction of the new, or Gregorian, calendar in the British colonies in 1752 added eleven days, resulting in Bartram's birth date also being listed as April 20, 1739 in some accounts)

1744 Benjamin Franklin forms the American Philosophical Society with John Bartram as charter member

1753 William begins to draw birds
First natural history journey with his father to Cadwallader Colden in New York

1754 Travels with father to Connecticut to visit Reverend Jared Eliot

- 1757** First time to his uncle's plantation, Ashwood, in Wilmington, NC
- 1761** Returns to Ashwood to go into business in NC
- 1763** Area in Florida which Bartram explores in 1765 acquired from Spain
- 1765** John Bartram appointed Botanist to the King by Peter Collinson;
Discovery of *Franklinia alatamaha* (last seen in the wild in 1803/naming honors Benjamin Franklin) by John and William Bartram
- 1765-66** Traveled with father through the Carolinas and Georgia;
Visited Bethesda; Trip up the St. Johns River in Florida with his father
- 1773-77** William's travels through the Carolinas, Georgia and Florida
- March 1773** Arrives in Charleston, SC
Bartram learns of meeting between representatives of Creek and Cherokee Nations; Explores Savannah, Midway, and Sunbury
(*In 1773, Savannah featured 5 squares each with its own well or a pump. Most squares were fenced in.)
- May 1773** Meeting occurs (official minutes lost, but Bartram's description exist)
Hostility breaks out after meeting deterring Bartram from surveying new boundaries.
- October 1774** Georgia Gov. James Wright signed a treaty with Creek leaders
Bartram explores new territorial boundaries.
- 1775** American Revolution begins with the Battles of Lexington and Concord
Bartram reaches the Mississippi River
- January 1776** Bartram returns to Savannah (leaves later that year for the final time)
- 1777** Death of John Bartram in September.
- 1781** Feb 20th, "Free Quakers" who advocated resistance to Britain were organized
- 1782** Due to poor health, Bartram turns down an offer to be the professor of Botany at the University of Pennsylvania
- 1786** Elected to the American Philosophical Society
- 1791** Publication of the Travels, reporting the result of William's 1773-77 trip

1803 Publication of Benjamin Smith Barton's Elements of Botany, with plates drawn by Bartram

1807 Bartram and brother John publish a catalogue of their garden

1808-14 Publication of Alexander Wilson's American Ornithology

1811 Bartram signs his nephew-in-law's army commission

Nov. 5, 1813 Bartram writes his nephew now highly decorated as Colonel, "I Rejoice in your good health & prosperity; And heartily congratulate you, on the success of our brave defenders of our country...My worthy nephew, I hope you will return, in good health and covered with glory."

1818 July 4th – Entry on Bartram's journal stated, "Rejoicing being anniversary of the independence of the U. States of N. America."

1823 Death of William Bartram of Kingsessing on July 22 in Philadelphia.

Sources

Billy Bartram and His Green World, by Marjory Bartlett Sanger, 1972

William Bartram and the American Revolution on the Southern Frontier, by Edward J. Cashin, 1927

"William Bartram (1739 – 1823)," The New Georgia Encyclopedia

"William Bartram and the American Revolution", Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, Vol. 97, No. 5, October 1953 by Francis Harper.

Celebrations of Travels 1791, 1991

Bartram in Georgia

William Bartram was 35 years old in 1733 when he began his "great adventure." During his three-and-a-half year trip, Bartram traveled over 2,400 miles. He traveled through eight modern-day southern states (Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, North and South Carolina, and Tennessee), but most of his time was spent in the backcountry, mountains, and coastal areas of Georgia. Bartram did not take a direct route through Georgia. Instead he seems to have taken a more leisurely journey back and forth throughout the state, using Augusta and Savannah as places to rest and prepare for his next adventure.



Map courtesy of the Bartram Trail Conference

Bartram traveled by foot, on horseback, and by canoe – sometimes alone and sometimes with groups. Along the way, he described, cataloged, and took specimens from the abundant and varied plant and wildlife. During his adventures, Bartram was able to describe and catalog over 200 species of birds alone! He cataloged, along with his father on an earlier trip, over 350 species of flora and fauna, 150 of which were completely new to science.

Bartram’s first destination in the Southeast was Charleston, South Carolina. From there, he rode a schooner to Savannah in March 1773. Bartram primarily traveled in the southeastern part of Georgia during the spring of that year. The Georgia assembly was meeting in the colonial capital of Savannah when Bartram first arrived in the port city after leaving Charleston. He made friends with some of the assembly delegates and throughout his travels would often stay with these men and their families whenever possible. Bartram became particularly good friends with Lachlan McIntosh and his son, John McIntosh.

After a few days of rest in Savannah, Bartram left by horseback for the seaport town of Sunbury in Liberty County. He also made a short trip to what he thought was St. Catherine’s Island. Bartram went next to Medway, now known as Midway, for a religious service. Bartram left Midway and traveled to Fort Barrington and stayed at the McIntosh plantation near Darien, Georgia. He then took a ferry across the Altamaha River and noted in his writings the vast differences between the farm and plantation land and the “high pine forests” for which Georgia is so famous.

Bartram and his friend John McIntosh were invited to observe a meeting which was intended to redefine the boundaries between Creeks, Cherokees, and the Georgia colony along the northern colonial border. While waiting for the meeting to begin in May 1773, Bartram “chose to employ [his] time in searching the country round about.” As a Quaker, he was very interested in visiting Wrightsborough “a new [Quaker] settlement about 30 miles from Augusta.” At the time Bartram visited the town, it consisted of “about 20 houses.”

After the meeting about the new Indian settlement, Bartram was invited to join a large group of men consisting of “surveyors, astronomers, artisans, chain-carriers, markers, guides, and hunters, besides a very respectable number of gentlemen...in order to speculate in the lands.” This party of men, led by Colonel Barnet, followed an old Cherokee trail to the “Cherokee Corner” on what we now know as the boundary between Clarke and Oglethorpe counties about nine miles southeast of Athens, Georgia.



*Mico Olucco the Long Warrior,
or King of the Apinols.*

Frontispiece from *Travels*

We think that Bartram, along with Colonel Barnet's party, passed through Clarke, Madison, Franklin, and Hart Counties during this surveying expedition. The group then went east to the Savannah River and ended up at the mouth of the Tugaloo River. By the middle of July 1773, Bartram had made his way back to Savannah.

Bartram did not spend much time describing his journeys during the late summer and fall of 1773. In his famous book, *Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida, the Cherokee Country, the Extensive Territories of the Muscogulges or Creek Confederacy, and the Country of the Choctaws*, published in 1791, he wrote that between July 1773 and March 1774 he spent his time "in botanical excursions to the low countries between [South] Carolina and East Florida. We know that during this time, he traveled in Jasper County, South Carolina, then back to Savannah via a ferry (called Three Sisters) on the Savannah River. He writes that he traveled a familiar road many times, a road he and his father first traveled in 1765.

Even though we have learned so much about Georgia through Bartram's descriptions of the land, animals, and plants, Bartram was not very precise in tracking his travels! In fact we now know that some of the dates published in his 1791 *Travels* are incorrect. For example, *Travels* gives the time of Bartram's excursion into Cherokee territory as 1776, when he was actually there in 1775.

Of special interest to Bartram were the different Native American Indian nations in the area. At this time, there were many Cherokees in the southern Appalachians. Bartram even calls this area, the "Cherokee Mountains." He was generally well liked by the native peoples he encountered during his travels. One Indian leader, Cow Keeper, even gave him the name "Puc-Puggy" meaning "Flower Hunter." As a Quaker, Bartram wrote about the inherent goodness and equality of all people and that man and nature have a special interconnection.

It is exciting to know that we can visit the same places today that Bartram traveled over 230 years ago. Much of Bartram's trail is now covered with modern roads and bridges or is privately owned, but there are historical markers all over Georgia noting the importance of his work. Today, you can hike and camp along 37 miles of Bartram's trail.

The trail is maintained in the Chattahoochee National Forest in northwestern Georgia. This trail stretches from the North Carolina/Georgia state line, over the top of Rabun Bald of the West Fork of the Chattahoochee River. Rabun Bald is the second highest point in Georgia.

As Georgians we should take pride in the fact that Bartram spent so much time in our state gathering important information on the vast species of wildlife, plant life, and the environment. There are several species of plants that are now extinct except for the specimens that Bartram and his father cataloged and grew. It is easy to forget that we live in such a rich and diverse ecosystem here in Georgia. William Bartram reminds us of the beauty of Georgia even to this day.



Franklinia Alatomaha

From *Travels*

Teaching Tips

1. Using a modern map of the United States, ask students to locate and mark the eight states visited by Bartram on his travels in the 1770s.
2. Using primary and secondary sources, investigate travel conditions in America in the 1770s. Compare and contrast the conditions, dangers, and inconveniences of traveling by boat down the east coast of America, versus riding on horseback and staying in inns and eating in taverns.
3. Find out more about the Georgia Assembly, which was in session in Savannah during Bartram's visit. Look at historic maps to find out where the Assembly met. Does this building still exist today? Visit Reynolds Square on Abercorn Street in downtown Savannah and read the historical marker that describes Savannah as the colonial capital of Georgia and tells about the Georgia Assembly.
4. Make a visit to Liberty and McIntosh Counties, south of Savannah, where Bartram traveled. Visit historic Midway Church and the Midway Museum. Continue to Darien, which was once a major port in Georgia. Read the historical markers in each location. Where possible, ask a guide to explain each location.
5. Investigate Savannah during the American Revolution. What were the major sites and people associated with the Tories and with the Liberty Boys? Visit the Georgia Historical Society for a guided tour of an exhibit entitled "Georgia and the Revolution."
6. Find out more about the Quakers. What were the particular features of their religious beliefs?

Vocabulary:

schooner – a fast sailing ship with at least two masts and with sails set lengthways (fore and aft)

horticulture – the science, skill, or occupation of cultivating plants, especially flowers, fruit, and vegetables, in gardens or greenhouses

excavate – to dig in a place carefully and methodically, taking notes about procedures, conditions, and finds, with a view to uncovering objects of archeological interest

ferry – a boat used to transport passengers, vehicles, or goods across water, especially one operating regularly across a river or narrow channel.

Bartram as a Quaker in the American Revolution

William Bartram and his father were devout Quakers. Bartram stated that his “chief happiness consisted in tracing and admiring the infinite power, majesty and perfection of the Almighty Creator.” He also stated, “I profess myself of the Christian Sect of the People called Quakers, & consequently am against War & violence, in any form or manner whatever.” However, it is believed and documented that William Bartram did participate in the American Revolution opposing the British and gathering intelligence for his friend General Lachlan McIntosh. Bartram had many friends in leadership positions in the Revolution, including Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson.

In January 1776, Bartram returned to Savannah. The Revolutionary War had started. Quakers who opposed war no longer had an option to remain neutral. Although there is no account in Bartram’s journal entries, private papers were found that revealed he was involved in a dispute with a British soldier and Indian allies at the Florida border.

There is more evidence claiming Bartram conducted intelligence work. It is believed McIntosh could not have picked a better person. No one would expect Bartram, a Quaker and naturalist, to spy while collecting seeds and roots. In the summer of 1776, there was an encounter with a Seminole who vowed to kill the first white man he met. The Seminole was so moved by Bartram’s mild Quaker manner that the two men shook hands and went their separate ways. Bartram who normally carried a “fusee” to kill alligators and wild turkeys was unarmed that day, making it more believable that he was only gathering seeds. Was he actually scouting the British forces?

Bartram appreciated the freedom brought about by the Revolution. He admired Franklin, Washington, Mifflin, and Jefferson who made that freedom reality. As soon as Bartram was able to do so, he returned to his father’s home in Pennsylvania. He spent eight months with his father before John Bartram’s death.

Teaching Tips

1. Conduct further investigation into the beliefs and customs of the Quakers. Why are they pacifists and under what if any conditions will they engage in warfare?
2. Explore the role of spies in the American Revolution. What were some of the ways in which spies for both the British and the Americans carried secrets across enemy lines?
3. Find out more about Bartram's relationship to leaders in the American Revolution. On what occasions and how often did Bartram meet Thomas Jefferson? Benjamin Franklin? George Washington?

Vocabulary

fusee – (fyu-‘zE); noun; 1622; 1: a conical spirally grooved pulley in a timepiece from which a cord or chain unwinds onto a garrel containing the spring and which by its increasing diameter compensates for the lessening power of the spring. 2: a red signal flare used especially for protecting stalled trains and trucks.

franklin altamaha – Franklin Tree

pinckneya braltea – Georgia bark

Sources

Billy Bartram and His Green World, by Marjory Bartlett Sanger, 1972

William Bartram and the American Revolution on the Southern Frontier, by Edward J. Cashin, 1997

“William Bartram (1739 – 1823),” *The New Georgia Encyclopedia*

“William Bartram and the American Revolution”, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 97, No. 5, October 1953 by Francis Harper.

Celebrations of Travels 1791, 1991

The Bartram Trail

Perhaps to a grateful mind, there is no intellectual enjoyment, which regards human concerns, of a more excellent nature, than the remembrance of real acts of friendship. The heart expands at the pleasing recollection. (Travels, Chapter 1, page 15.)

We are, all of us, subject to crosses and disappointments, but more especially the traveler; and when they surprise us, we frequently become restless and impatient under them: but let us rely on Providence, and by studying and contemplating the works and power of the Creator, learn wisdom and understanding in the economy of nature, and be seriously attentive to the divine monitor within. (Travels, Part II, Chapter 1, Page 55)

William Bartram's Travels

William Bartram began his travels at the request of Dr. John Fothergill. Dr. Fothergill was the agent in England for William's father, and he was passionately interested in natural history. Dr. Fothergill was also quite impressed with drawings that William had made while on expedition with his father, John Bartram, the official botanist to King George III. Dr. Fothergill asked William to explore the southeastern colonies and to collect and preserve unique specimens of plants. William was to ship the plants to him in England along with drawings of some of the plants and animals that he discovered. He offered to pay William £50 per year plus his expenses and additional compensation for each drawing. William had failed at a recent business venture and was happy to have an opportunity to be paid to engage in the two pursuits he loved: botany and travel.



Map courtesy of the Bartram Trail Conference

On his expedition, Bartram traveled through both the cities and wilderness of the Southeast. Sometimes companions joined him, but most of the time he was alone. He traveled on horseback, by boat, or simply on foot. When he visited cities and towns, he always met the most important people of the day in those areas. Everyone was interested in his trip and eager to help him.

Bartram began his trip in March 1773 and did not return home until January 1777. The first year was spent mostly in coastal Georgia. He arrived in Savannah from Charleston. He then traveled to Midway, Sunbury, and Darien, where he stayed at the plantation of Lachlan McIntosh. He also journeyed to Sapelo Island, Brunswick, St. Mary's, and the Okefenokee Swamp.

After spending time on the coast, he decided to move inland. In 1774, he explored northern Florida and then returned to Charleston before heading north up the Savannah River to Augusta. Bartram spent much of his time in Georgia. His route from Savannah to Augusta took him through Ebenezer, Hilltonia, and Sardis.

From Augusta, he launched his expedition to the mountains of north Georgia and North and South Carolina. The first stop was Cherokee Corners near Athens. Bartram then went on to explore the area around what is today Thurmond Lake. Bartram also journeyed into areas of north Georgia that we know as Clayton, Mountain City, Dillard, and Sky Valley.

He then traveled through Alabama, northwestern Florida, Mississippi, and Louisiana before returning to Savannah, and then home to Pennsylvania. Once Bartram returned to Philadelphia in 1777, he never again traveled and remained at home for the rest of his life.

The Bartram Legacy

How would you like to walk in the footsteps of William Bartram and see some of the places that he visited on his travels? Thanks to the hard work and dedication of many people, you can. In 1976 a group of historians and preservationists gathered together and established the Bartram Trail Conference. The goal of this group was to locate and mark the route of William Bartram's travels through eight southern states: North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana.

The Conference did not want to create a connected, continuous trail such as the Appalachian Trail, which follows the Appalachian Mountains from Maine to north Georgia. Such a trail would not be practical because although Bartram's route wanders through some mountain wilderness, it also passes through some very large and developed cities such as Myrtle Beach, Charleston, and Savannah. What the conference decided to do was to interpret the trail broadly. Rather than sticking to Bartram's specific path, the Conference thought it would be more meaningful if a user of the trail could have, "Bartram like" experiences seeing the southeastern landscape in its eighteenth century context" (Spornick, pg. xiii).

The Bartram Trail is actually a series of Bartram memorials including trails, Bartram heritage sites, gardens, heritage centers, and heritage cities. The Bartram Conference organization has worked with trail societies and garden clubs who have built and marked hundreds of miles of trails for hiking and canoeing. The conference has also identified more than fifty Bartram heritage sites in seven states. Many of these sites are marked with a Bartram Trail historical marker. Bartram gardens and memorial parks have also been established in Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi. The Bartram Trail Conference works to highlight natural areas and culturally significant locations along Bartram's route.

The Bartram Trail Conference encourages the study, preservation, and interpretation of William Bartram's life and contributions. The Conference hosts a biennial meeting of members at locations along the Bartram trail corridor.

The Bartram Trail Conference has marked several sites and trails in Georgia that follow Bartram's path. There is a marker on Savannah's River Street at River Front Plaza to commemorate William Bartram's arrival in Savannah in 1773. Augusta's Canal Trail and Riverwalk wander eight miles through what is now downtown Augusta. The trail closely follows what is thought to be Bartram's route through this area. In north Georgia, there are several miles of marked trail along the Chattooga River and trail segments near Pinnacle Knob and Courthouse Gap just outside of Clayton, and Rabun Bald and Estatoah Falls near Sky Valley.

The Bartram Trail Conference has also marked miles of trail in the North and South Carolina mountains and in other states in an effort to recreate and preserve as much of Bartram's route as possible on land near the original path. Over 200 miles of marked trails offer the traveler an opportunity to see spectacular natural sites in much the same way that Bartram did. The trail is composed of hiking, canoeing, and horseback riding segments.

If you are interested in following the Bartram Trail, there are several wonderful guides and maps that you can use to assist you with your adventure. One of these guides is *An Outdoor Guide to Bartram's Travels*. This book suggests trails, walking tours, and site visits in the places Bartram visited. It has maps, and very specific directions to Bartram trail locations. Another helpful resource is the *Guide to William Bartram's Travels: Following the Trail of America's First Great Naturalist*. This guide has a detailed chronology of Bartram's journey, as well as biographical information about Bartram. The book also contains maps and suggestions for site visits along the route that he followed.



From Bartram's Travels

Teaching Tips

1. On a map of Georgia, locate the places William Bartram visited in 1773. If possible, visit these places in person to discover their historical importance. Read historical markers found in these places, and do additional research at the school library, the public library, and the Georgia Historical Society.
2. Trace the Bartram Trail on a map. If possible, walk parts of it with the help of documentation available from the Bartram Trails Conference.

Vocabulary

compass – a device for determining directions by means of a magnetic needle pointing to magnetic north

map legend – an explanatory list of the symbols on a map or chart
Map Scale – an indication of the relationship between the distances on a map and the corresponding actual distances

expedition – a journey or excursion undertaken for a specific purpose

Sources

Bartram, William. *Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida*, A facsimile of the 1792 London edition. Savannah: The Beehive Press, 1973.

Sanders, Brad. *Guide to William Bartram's Travels: Following the Trail of America's First Great Naturalist*. Fevertree Press, 2002.

Spornick, Charles D. *An Outdoor Guide to Bartram's Travels*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003.

Bartram and Nature



From Bartram's *Travels*

To begin to understand William Bartram and the importance of his work, it would be most helpful to go outside for a short walk. Choose a place with trees and lots of shrubbery. If at all possible go to a park or a nature trail.

Take the opportunity to relax in this setting for a few minutes, and then begin to look intently at the trees, shrubs, and flowers that are around you. Look more carefully; notice how these plantings are different. Examine the leaves, the bulbs, and the roots. Try to count how many different types of plants you see.

the descriptions of what you have seen in a journal and perhaps you may want to add a detailed drawing of the different plants, trees and shrubs that you have seen. This will probably become a difficult task and one that will take a long time to complete.

Now try to describe all of this to a friend or family member in detail. You may want to write

Come back to study William Bartram. Bartram was passionate about nature. He studied nature and then organized it for us. He wrote about it in great detail and did wonderful drawings that are published in books. Even though this work was completed in the 1700s, we can still read books by him and look at his drawings of different aspects of nature. Bartram made it easier for us to understand the vast world of nature. Those of us who live in the United States, especially in the Southeast, should understand and appreciate the life and work of William Bartram.

William Bartram was born in Kingsessing, Pennsylvania (now a part of Philadelphia) in 1739.

He had a twin sister, named Elizabeth, and six brothers. His parents were John Bartram and Ann Mendenhall Barton. He had the opportunity for a good education which was very helpful to him throughout his life.

William's father John was known as a naturalist – a person who studies animals and/or plants. John Bartram was the founder of a famous botanical garden near Philadelphia.

This is where William spent his years growing up. More than any of his siblings, William wanted to follow in his father's footsteps as a naturalist. As early as age fourteen, he began to draw birds and then began to draw maple trees and other plants.

However, his father was concerned that perhaps William could earn a better living for himself doing another type of work. William had offers to study printing, medicine, surveying, and engraving. He turned down these opportunities, but did attempt to become a merchant. William worked as a merchant in Philadelphia and in North Carolina with his uncle.

While he worked as a merchant, he still made illustrations of plants and animals. His father John sent these drawings to London. William's drawings of birds and turtles were used in publications in 1758.

Remember that during this time period, America was still under British rule. William's father John worked as the botanist (someone who studies plants) to King George III, who wanted to learn as much as possible about this country. John's father went to visit William in North Carolina and allowed William to serve as his assistant on an expedition to Florida to study nature.

During this trip in 1765, William learned to travel in the wilderness and to study nature in a more careful way while making his drawings. At the end of the trip, William decided to stay in the St. John's area of Florida to raise indigo and rice. Growing these crops could be very difficult, and when William was not successful, he returned home to Philadelphia for few years. In Philadelphia he still earned a little money by drawing for royalty, this time for the Duchess of Portland. This is how he met the kind and intelligent Dr. John Fothergill.

Dr. Fothergill was interested in William and recognized that he was a "genius." William was still not making enough money to support himself and moved once again to North Carolina. But Dr. Fothergill gave him the best opportunity yet. Dr. Fothergill offered to pay William to return to Florida and study the area's plants, animals, and people in great detail. Dr. Fothergill wrote many instructions as to how William was to work while on this trip. He was to collect and ship plants as well as to make drawings of plants and shells.

The most important work of William Bartram in nature was done on this famous trip from 1773-1777. These are the years that Bartram traveled in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Tennessee. In 1791 he published the story of his journey in a book entitled *Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida, the Cherokee Country, the Extensive Territories of the Muscogulges or Creek Confederacy, and the Country of the Choctaws*. Today this book is usually referred to by its

abbreviated title, *Travels*. It contains Bartram's own writings taken from the journals he kept from 1773-1777. These writings are very valuable to us. It is from this expedition that we truly see how very much Bartram loved living in nature.

Even though Bartram had received instructions on specific duties that he was to perform during this trip, he did much more for us. Besides drawing, collecting, and writing about plants and shells, he studied all of nature. He described the soil, the water, the weather, the bugs, the reptiles, as well as the American Indians he encountered. He carefully observed and recorded all of his observations in writing.

Let's take a look at a few of Bartram's descriptions during his travels. The following descriptions are excerpts from *Travels*. Notice how carefully and beautifully—even poetically—Bartram wrote in his journals:

About the bears

(p vii) “When traveling on the East coast of...Florida...in a canoe...we observed numbers of deer and bears, near the banks, and on the islands of the river, the bear were feeding on the fruit of the dwarf creeping *Chamerops*.... We saw eleven bears in the course of the day....”

About the ocean at night

(p 2) “...the seas themselves, in a tempest, exhibit a tremendous scene; where the winds assert their power, ...seem to set the ocean on fire. ...The gentle moon rising in dignity from the east,...when all the waters seem transmuted into liquid silver; the bands of ...porpoises,...squadrons of sea fowl sweeping through the air....”

About the alligator

(p 81) “The alligator when full grown is a very large and terrible creature, and of prodigious strength, activity, and swiftness in the water. I have seen them twenty feet in length, their body is as large as that of a horse, their shape resembles that of a lizard, ...The head of a full grown one is about three feet, and the mouth opens nearly the same length,...the nostrils are large,...the creature of a frightful appearance; when they clap their jaws together it causes a surprising sound. But what is yet more surprising to a stranger, is the incredible loud and terrifying roar....”



About the papaya tree

(p 83) “This admirable tree, is certainly the most beautiful of any vegetable production I know of; the towering Laurel Magnolia, and exalted Palm, indeed exceed it in grandeur and magnificence, but not in elegance....it rises erect....to the height of fifteen or twenty feet...It is always green, ornamented at the same time with flowers and fruit, which like figs come out singly from the truck or stem.”

About the soft shelled tortoise



(p 114) “They are flat and thin, two feet and a half in length, ...very much resembling the sea turtle....connected at each end with a back shell...the head is large and clubbed.... They are seen to raise their heads above the surface of the water, causing a faint puffing noise, somewhat like a porpoise.... We had a large and fat one served up for our supper....”

About the Seminole (Bartram wrote Siminole)

(p148) “...the White King’s arrival in town was announced; a messenger had before been sent in to prepare a feast, the king and his retinue having killed several bears. A fire is now kindled in the area of the public square; the royal standard is displayed and the drum beats to give notice to the town of the royal feast. “The ribs and the choice pieces of the three great fat bears already well barbecued or broiled; are brought to the banqueting house in the square, with hot bread; and honeyed water for drink.”

Teaching Tips

1. Work with students, outdoors if possible, to develop their skills of observation. Ask them to describe in great detail the world they see around them. As appropriate, ask the students to record their observations either in writing or in original pictures what they observe.
2. Using Bartram’s written descriptions, ask students to envision the plants, animals, and people described in Travels. Once students have created a mental image and have discussed their impressions of the written descriptions, show students the drawings that correspond with the written descriptions. Ask students to compare their mental images with those from Bartram’s book.

Bartram and the American Indians

William Bartram got his interest in nature from his father, John Bartram, America’s first professional botanist. Though their personalities were very different, John and William shared a great love of the country’s flora and fauna. William had a passion for nature, and embraced all that nature could show him.

There were many different groups of Native Americans throughout the colonial territory in the time of William Bartram. Sometimes tension between Native Americans and European settlers led to violence. In fact, William Bartram’s grandfather, also named William, was killed in an Indian raid when John Bartram was young. Perhaps for this reason, John Bartram was very suspicious of Indians and even described them as, “lazy, jealous, skulking, barbarous, treacherous, and sly.”



Frontispiece from Bartram's *Travels*

However, this opinion of American Indians did not transfer to John's son, William Bartram. Though William met Indians on his 1765 journey with his father, it was not until he set out on his own that he really got to know and understand the culture of the Native American communities that he encountered.

When William Bartram arrived in Georgia in March 1773, he learned of an important meeting that was to take place shortly in Augusta between residents of the Georgia colony and representatives of the Creek and Cherokee nations. William thought that this would be an interesting and important way to learn about the region's Indian communities, so he traveled with John McIntosh, the son of his friend Lachlan McIntosh, to Augusta to observe the meeting. During his time in Augusta, Bartram also visited the Quaker village of Wrightsboro. Bartram wrote in his journals that the Quakers had a great impact on the Indians.

Since the official record of the Augusta meeting was lost, William Bartram's account provides the most detailed and accurate account of the meeting. The meeting dealt with Indian land cession. This meant that representatives of the Creek and Cherokee nations agreed to give up over two million acres of their territory in inland sections of Georgia to the colonists in return for the forgiveness of debts. Bartram decided to accompany a surveying party to explore the new territory gained by the Georgia colony as a result of this meeting. This gave Bartram an opportunity to learn a great deal about the Native American communities in these areas.

During his great adventure, Bartram encountered many different peoples. Most were friendly and greeted him in peace. In fact, he describes only one unpleasant episode with a Native American during his travels. This involved a Seminole warrior whom Bartram encountered in the forest. Though Bartram tried to avoid the Indian's notice, he was discovered. A tense encounter followed, with Bartram sure that the warrior was planning to harm him. Instead of running, however, William Bartram extended his hand in friendship to this unexpected stranger. After a few moments of uncertainty, the Seminole grasped Bartram's outstretched hand and the tension subsided. Both men went on their separate ways.

In addition to the Seminoles, Bartram observed communities of Cherokee, Chickasaw, Upper and Lower Creek, Shawnee, and others. Perhaps the American Indian communities that he encountered saw in him a curious observer who simply wanted to record what he saw and tell the rest of the world about their traditions and culture. Bartram was very interested in the lives of the Native Americans he encountered. He admired and respected their way of life, noting that they lived closely with nature. He went to great lengths to describe their traditions in positive terms.

In fact, Bartram noted in his writings that the American Indians might not benefit from European civilization. He felt that their own traditions seemed sufficient for their needs, and that their reactions to events were in keeping with their own legitimate and moral culture. He observed that “as moral men they certainly stand in no need of European civilization.”

William Bartram gained the respect of many of the tribes he encountered throughout his journey. In one community, after showing his bravery by killing a deadly snake, he was given the name, *Puc-Puggy*, which means “Flower Hunter” in the Seminole language.

Though it upset some of his readers, Bartram consistently described Native Americans in positive terms. Fortunately, his views survived virtually unedited, leaving a valuable and fascinating look into the American Indian communities that William Bartram encountered during his travels. Throughout his writings he describes the farming practices, family roles, government and community organization, art, and architecture of these eighteenth-century communities.

Bartram also described the results of interaction with the European colonists on the native communities. Specifically, he addressed the shift in the Indian economy from subsistence agriculture and hunting to commercial trade. He also observed the effects of imported goods on Indian culture.

Though William Bartram was originally commissioned to study and gather samples of plants, animals, and shells, he realized that there was more to be learned about the American Southeast than just plants and animals. Fortunately his patron in England, Dr. John Fothergill was also interested to hear about the Native American civilizations of the region. William Bartram was therefore able to expand his own interests and record a complete picture of the world around him. The result is one of the most important records of Southeastern Indian culture in the eighteenth century.

Teaching Tips

1. At the library or online, find accounts of interactions between European settlers and Native American peoples. Find stories of both positive and negative meetings.
2. Map Bartram’s journey to Augusta. Ask students to find both Augusta and Savannah on a map. What is the distance between these two cities?
3. Do further research into the similarities and differences between the Creek and Cherokee nations. Where did each group live? Approximately how many Creeks were there when Bartram was in Georgia? How many Cherokees? What happened to these two Native American nations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? Are there still members of the Creek and Cherokee nations living today? Where do they live?
4. Ask students to reenact the meeting between William Bartram and the unknown Seminole.

5. As appropriate, discuss with students the positive and negative outcomes that are possible when very different groups of people come together. Are all customs and traditions easily transferable from one civilization to another?

Vocabulary list

botanist – somebody with an expert scientific knowledge of, or a strong interest in, plants

flora – plant life, especially all the plants found in a particular country, region, or time regarded as a group

fauna – the animal life of a particular region or period, considered as a whole

cession – the ceding or giving up of something, especially land, property, or a right

Quaker – a member of the Society of Friends, a Christian denomination founded in England in the 17th century that rejects formal sacraments, ministry, and creed, and is committed to pacifism

Sources

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Harper, Francis, ed. *The Travels of William Bartram: Naturalist Edition*. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998).

Waselkov, Gregory A. and Kathryn E. Holland Braund, eds. *William Bartram on the Southeastern Indians*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995).

Georgia Performance Standards Correlations

Grade 2

Historical Understandings

SS2H2 The student will describe the Georgia Creek and Cherokee cultures of the past in terms of tools, clothing, homes, ways of making a living, and accomplishments.

- a. Describe the regions in Georgia where the Creeks and Cherokees lived and how the people used their local resources.
- b. Compare and contrast the Georgia Creek and Cherokee cultures of the past to Georgians today.

Geographic Understandings

SS2G1 The student will locate major topographical features of Georgia and will describe how these features define Georgia's surface.

- a. Locate all the geographic regions of Georgia: Blue Ridge Mountains, Piedmont, Coastal Plain, Valley and Ridge, and Appalachian Plateau.
- b. Locate the major rivers: Ocmulgee, Oconee, Altamaha, Savannah, St. Mary's, Chattahoochee, and Flint.

Grade 4

Historical Understandings

SS4H1 The student will describe how early Native American cultures developed in North America.

- a. Locate where Native Americans settled.
- b. Describe how Native Americans used their environment to obtain food, clothing, and shelter.

SS4H2 The student will describe European exploration in North America.

- b. Describe examples of cooperation and conflict between Europeans and Native Americans.

SS4H4 The student will explain the causes, events, and results of the American Revolution.

- c. Describe the major events of the American Revolution and explain the factors leading to American victory and British defeat; include the Battles of Lexington and Concord, Saratoga, and Yorktown.
- d. Describe key individuals in the American Revolution with emphasis on King George III, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Benedict Arnold, Patrick Henry, and John Adams.

Geographic Understandings

SS4G2 The student will describe how physical systems affect human systems.

- a. Explain why each of the Native American groups (SS4H1a) occupied the areas they did, with emphasis on why some developed permanent villages and others did not.
- b. Describe how the early explorers (SS4H2a) adapted, or failed to adapt, to the various physical environments in which they traveled.

- c. Explain how the physical geography of the New England, Mid-Atlantic, and Southern colonies helped determine economic activities practiced therein.

Grade 8

Historical Understandings

SS8H1 The student will evaluate the development of Native American cultures and the impact of European exploration and settlement on the Native American cultures in Georgia.

- b. Evaluate the impact of European contact on Native American cultures; include Spanish missions along the barrier islands, and the explorations of Hernando DeSoto.
- c. Explain reasons for European exploration and settlement of North America, with emphasis on the interests of the French, Spanish, and British in the southeastern area.

SS8H2 The student will analyze the colonial period of Georgia's history.

- a. Explain the importance of James Oglethorpe, the Charter of 1732, reasons for settlement (charity, economics, and defense), Tomochichi, Mary Musgrove, and the city of Savannah.
- b. Evaluate the Trustee Period of Georgia's colonial history, emphasizing the role of the Salzburgers, Highland Scots, malcontents, and the Spanish threat from Florida.

SS8H3 The student will analyze the role of Georgia in the American Revolution.

- b. Analyze the significance of people and events in Georgia on the Revolutionary War; include Loyalists, patriots, Elijah Clarke, Austin Dabney, Nancy Hart, Button Gwinnett, Lyman Hall, George Walton, Battle of Kettle Creek, and siege of Savannah.

Geographic Understandings

SS8G1 The student will describe Georgia with regard to physical features and location.

- a. Locate Georgia in relation to region, nation, continent, and hemispheres.
- b. Describe the five geographic regions of Georgia; include the Blue Ridge Mountains, Valley and Ridge, Appalachian Plateau, Piedmont, and Coastal Plain.
- c. Locate and evaluate the importance of key physical features on the development of Georgia; include the Fall Line, Okefenokee Swamp, Appalachian Mountains, Chattahoochee and Savannah Rivers, and barrier islands.