

# *Pocahontas*

*A childrens film haunted with colonialism, violence, and sadness.*

Hannah Feist

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# *Land Acknowledgement*

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Thompson Rivers University Kamloops campus is located on the Tk'emlúps te Secwepemc territory within the unceded ancestral lands of Secwepemcúl'ecw (Secwepemc Nation)

# Key Insights



Historical Innuacuacies & Whitewashing

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Violence Against Women

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Disneys Approach

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*“The life of Pocahontas was filled with sadness and is not one that should be seen as a love story. The romanization of Pocahontas’ life is extremely problematic, as it veils many of the harsh realities Indigenous peoples faced at the time. The true story of Pocahontas strays far from her seemingly perfect life.” – The Indigenous Foundation, 2022*

# *Key Insights*

## Historical Inaccuracies & Whitewashing –

There are many historical inaccuracies that follow this film, for example, whitewashing, many may know this historical figure, and Disney character as Pocahontas, but to family and those around her, she was known by two different names. Her name at birth was Amonute, and her second name was Matoaka, meaning “flower between two streams.” The life of Pocahontas was heartbreaking, a story of tragedy and violence - a young girl who was brutally assaulted, kidnapped, and allegedly murdered by those who were meant to keep her safe. Historically, she marries John and has her name changed to Rebecca, to make her a more modern woman, completely stripping her of any heritage or ancestral being.

## Violence Against Women & Girls –

Disney’s version of the film centers itself around John Smith, the man Pocahontas supposedly fell in love with. They portray her as around 18 in the film, with John being 20. In reality, Smith came to her town when she was between 10-12 years old, while he was in his late 20’s. This is incredibly concerning as this instills the imagery that it is okay to have young girls married off. Also accepting the themes of child marriage and child grooming is something else we as the viewers found disturbing.

## Disney's Portrayal –

In comparing the portrayal of Pocahontas through the lens of Disney as opposed to the accurate historical accounts, there is an extreme difference. Not only has Disney inaccurately portrayed the life of Pocahontas. They have also romanticized her life, and in extension, glazed over the trauma Indigenous peoples faced through colonization.

# *Discussion Question*

Why might companies, such as Disney, and Universal Studios avoid showing the true story, and finding a more family-friendly alternative?

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*Thank You*