

Reader's Theater

Act I characters

Sir Humphrey Gilbert
 Sir Edward* (Member of the Royal Court)
 Martin Frobisher
 Stockholder 1*
 Stockholder 2*
 Stockholder 3*

Act II characters

Richard Hakluyt the Elder
 Richard Hakluyt the Younger
 Sir Walter Raleigh

ACT I

Scene 1

London, 1576. Sir Humphrey Gilbert is speaking to Sir Edward, a member of the British Court of Queen Elizabeth I.

Gilbert I know that we can find a passage through North America that will bring great wealth to England and our beloved queen.

Edward What makes you so sure? The Spanish and French have failed to find a passageway.

Gilbert I have studied maps of the continent and there are great rivers that cut across the continent. Just think of the wealth we will have with a short and safe route to China.

Edward But, Sir Gilbert, no one has been able to find a passage either from the northern or southern seas.

Gilbert We, the English, are far better seamen than the French or Spanish. With our skill we will find that passage way. I just need our great queen to give me her support and I can raise the funds for a voyage.

Edward You must know that Martin Frobisher has organized a stock company to pay for a voyage of discovery.

Gilbert Yes, he is a good sailor and I'm sure that he will prove that I am right. There is a passage through the continent.

* Fictitious characters.

Scene 2

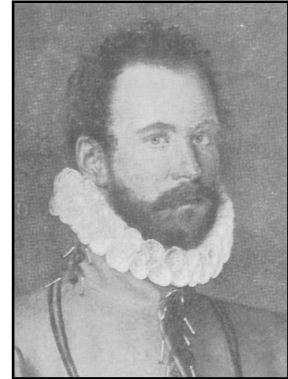
London, 1577, Martin Frobisher has just returned from North America and is reporting to the stock company that paid for his voyage.

Frobisher We sailed by the coast of Greenland and found a strait that I named for myself. Frobisher Strait leads to an outlet that will prove to be the long searched for Northwest Passage. I sent some of my crew to explore the area and they reported seeing many deer, wild birds, bears, rabbits, and foxes. The land is fertile and will provide all the food that we should ever need.

Stockholder 1 Martin, this is a great discovery! What do you need to get ready for another voyage?

Frobisher I will need ships, more men, and mining equipment. We believe there is gold in the mountains around Frobisher Strait. If you can provide the money we need for one or two more voyages we will return with our ships loaded with gold.

Stockholder 2 We will raise all the money you need for two more voyages. Take some men experienced in mining with you. Make all preparations to sail again as soon as possible.



Martin Frobisher

Scene 3

London, 1580, Stockholder's Meeting two years after Frobisher's third voyage. For two years the rocks that Frobisher brought back have been examined and proved to be completely worthless.

Stockholder 1 What are we to do with the more than 200 tons of worthless rock that Frobisher brought back from America?

Stockholder 2 We gave him all the money he asked for and what do we have in return? Tons of rocks and no passage way to China! We will have to declare bankruptcy.

Stockholder 3 How could we have been fooled? The land he described as being so rich is actually worthless. We let our desire to make great profits blind us, we should have known better.

Stockholder 1 We all know how much gold the Spanish are mining in their colonies. It was only logical for us to believe Frobisher. How did we know that all these sparkling rocks that he brought home were nothing other than "fool's gold?"

Stockholder 3 I understand that Martin is doing better now that he has decided to spend his time raiding Spanish ships. Maybe our stock company should have just bought a fleet of pirate ships to steal Spanish gold!

Stockholder 2 Oh, if we had only known.

Act II

Scene 1

London, 1580. A scene in the home of Richard Hakluyt the elder. He is talking to his younger cousin also named Richard Hakluyt.

Hakluyt I think England should begin to set up colonies in this new land. We can not let Spain take possession of all this land.

Richard Of course you are right. But what can we do? It seems like Queen Elizabeth is too distracted by other problems than to encourage settlement of North America.

Hakluyt There are but three goals of colonization. First, and most important, we must establish colonies in order to convert the pagans who live there. Second, we need to develop trade. To meet these two important goals, we must also conquer the land.

Richard But, how can we convince our government to act?

Hakluyt One of the things we should do is to point out all the crime in London that is caused by so many poor people and orphan children with no way of supporting themselves. If we would set up colonies in America these poor people could be sent there to farm and learn to provide for themselves.

Richard That would help solve the problem of so many poor beggars in London. Our prisons are filled with criminals. Wouldn't it be better if we sent them to farm in America rather than execute them for stealing to keep alive?

Hakluyt Richard, you are well educated and know the power of the pen. Write about the importance of establishing settlements in America and how it will help solve the problem of crime in London. Explain to anyone willing to read how important it is that we begin to set up colonies.

Richard Yes, but remember Frobisher's voyages. Who will put up the money needed to set up colonies after his failure?

Hakluyt The stockholders who put up money for Frobisher were misguided. We need to make sure that people recognize the three goals I have stated. And always remind people how important it is to solve the crime problem caused by poor beggars in London and our other large cities.

Richard Walter Raleigh, a favorite of Queen Elizabeth, is a friend of mine. Maybe he can help win approval from the queen to set up colonies in America.

Hakluyt Richard, why not write a pamphlet explaining how important it is to colonize and present it to your friend Raleigh.

Scene 2

1584, Home of Richard Hakluyt the Younger. The younger Hakluyt is seated at his desk. Walter Raleigh is standing looking over his shoulder as Hakluyt finishes writing.

Richard Walter, it is finally finished. Will you give copies of this to our beloved queen and to important members of the Court?

Raleigh Of course, Richard. You have done a great service to our country. I am sure that Queen Elizabeth will be very impressed with this book that explains how important it is for us to compete with Spain in the Americas. You have explained better than anyone how important colonies will be for England. Your cousin should be very proud of you as you have written for all to understand what he has been saying for years.

Richard If only the queen will agree. I regret that your half-brother Sir Humphrey Gilbert was lost at sea last year on his return from his second voyage to find the Northwest Passage. I fear that this great loss will cause Queen Elizabeth to ...

Raleigh Don't be concerned, the Queen has already told me that I could continue my brother's work.

Richard I know that you are planning a voyage soon and I wish you luck.

Raleigh Richard, I don't think you realize how important you are in this effort. You are more important in this task than any ship captain. Continue to write about the richness of America and we will succeed in becoming a great and wealthy country.



Sir Walter Raleigh