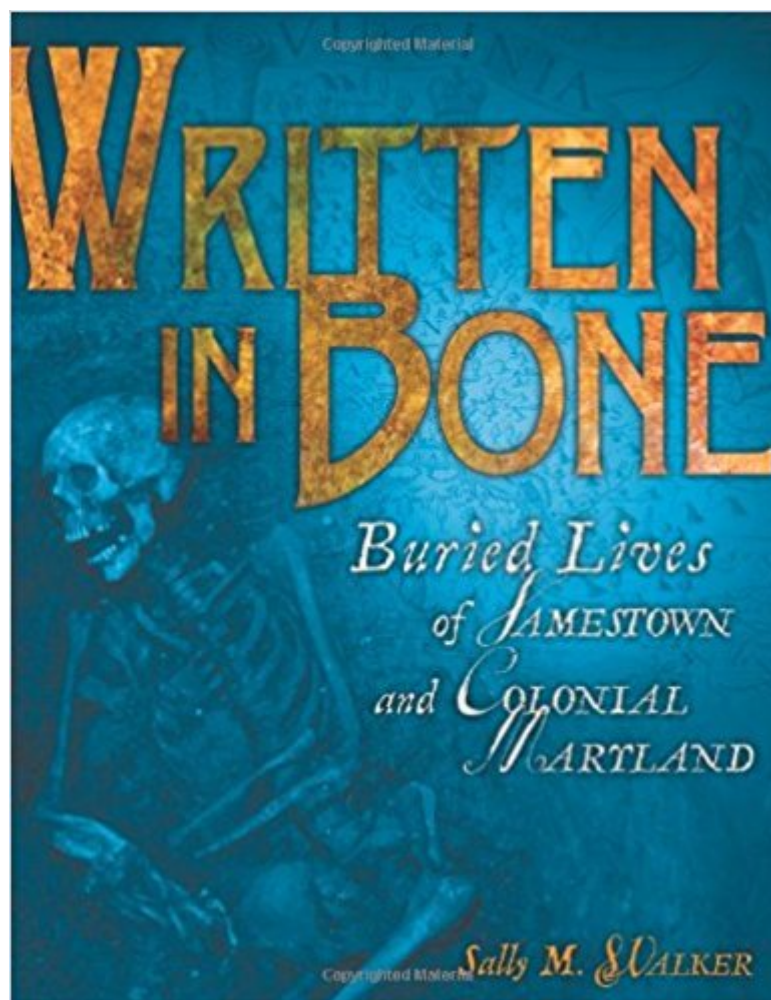




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# Written In Bone: Buried Lives Of Jamestown And Colonial Maryland (Exceptional Social Studies Titles For Intermediate Grades)



## Synopsis

How did the colonists of Jamestown and Maryland live and die? Forensic anthropology provides an incredible array of answers. Scientists can look into a grave and determine the skeleton's gender, age at time of death, nationality, and sometimes even economic standing within minutes. Laboratory studies can provide cause of death information. Once these details are known, some skeletons can even be matched with a name via the historical record. Sibert-winning author Sally M. Walker worked side by side with archaeologists and forensic anthropologists in her research for this uniquely appealing book.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 10 - 13 years

Grade Level: 5 - 8

## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Grade 6-8 • Walker takes readers on an archaeological investigation of human and material remains from 17th- and 18th-century Jamestown and colonial Maryland, while addressing relevant topics in forensic anthropology, history, and archaeology. The excavations encompass burial sites of colonists from various backgrounds, including a teenage indentured servant hastily buried in a trash pit, a grouping of prominent colonists laid to rest in lead coffins, and a woman of African heritage who likely toiled as a slave. Answers concerning the

identity and fate of the uncovered remains are realized only after various specialists combine their findings to re-create relevant historical circumstances. In one instance, anthropologists provide anatomical details of a recovered skull to artists, who then use the data to produce the first sculpture of an American colonist of African ancestry. The text succinctly explains complex forensic concepts, such as determining the gender and age of a skeleton, or whether a skull represents a person originating from Europe or Africa. Captioned, full-color photographs of skeletal, dental, and artifactual remains shed light on colonial life. Historical documents, illustrated maps, and anatomical drawings complement images of various specialists at work in the field. Photographs of reenactors performing period tasks, such as grinding corn, provide insight into the daily life of the recovered individuals. Though other recent volumes discuss forensic anthropology, such as James M. Deem's *Bodies from the Ice* (Houghton, 2008), *Written in Bone* casts a magnifying glass on the hardships and realities of colonial life so often romanticized in American lore. —Jeff Meyer, Slater Public Library, IA Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

**\*Starred Review\*** This unusual volume, suggested to Walker by a scientist at the Smithsonian Institution, dips into American history to introduce the work of forensic anthropologists. Focusing on colonial-era sites in the Chesapeake Bay region, the large-format book provides detailed discussions and intriguing close-up views of the grave excavations at Jamestown, Virginia, as well as in three Maryland locations: Providence, St. Mary's City, and Harleigh Knoll. With precision of her own, Walker describes the meticulous work of the archaeologists and other scientists who study skeletal remains, using physical clues as indicators of a skeleton's sex, age, birthplace, station in society, and length of time in the colonies. They combine trained observation, background knowledge, and scientific expertise with detective skills to illuminate facets of our history; the final chapter discusses how forensic anthropology has contributed to historians' understanding of colonial times. Nearly every page carries at least one illustration, usually a color photo but sometimes a helpful diagram, a map, or a period document or print. Back matter includes source notes, a source bibliography, a time line, and lists of recommended books and Internet sites. The reading level is relatively high and the quantity of detailed information is not for everyone, but those intrigued by forensics and history will find this absolutely fascinating. Grades 7-11. --Carolyn Phelan

It's said that history is the most hated subject taught in school. To the extent that's true, it's probably

because it tends to be taught in a very dry way as just a list of names, dates and facts to be memorized long enough to be regurgitated on the test. To be truly interesting and memorable, history needs to be brought alive as the story of actual people - people who went before us and made the world what it is today, for better or worse. It also needs to be connected to other subjects, not just studied in a vacuum. This book accomplishes both objectives. Author Sally Walker follows a team of scientists led by forensic anthropologist Doug Owsley as they excavate and study ancient gravesites around the Chesapeake Bay area - the site of the early Jamestown colony. The team couldn't know for certain, but they hoped to find the remains of some of the earliest settlers in the "New World" in order to add to the very sparse written record available. Working meticulously, archeologists plot areas for excavation and begin to dig, sifting the soil for even tiny artifacts that may provide clues about the identity of any human remains found and the time in which it was buried. Geologists study the soil looking for different types of soil and "soil stains" which add more clues. Forensic anthropologists study the skeleton to look for clues to the gender, age and height of the person, as well as signs of illness and the type of life he or she led. Other scientists use various instruments and tests to determine other aspects of the person's life. For instance, carbon-13 testing can determine how long the person was likely living in the New World based on the difference in emissions between the wheat and barley based diet of England and the corn based diet of the New World. Piece by piece the various team members assemble information about the person to give a real sense of who he or she was, what his or her place in society was and what type of life he or she led. Historians can then cross-check this information with the available written record to possibly identify the person by name and thus combine historical and scientific knowledge. Using this painstaking, suspenseful method, we meet a teenage boy who likely fought and died at or near James Fort, one of the earliest colonial structures in the New World; a ship captain, possibly Bartholomew Gosnold; a teenage indentured servant boy hastily buried and hidden in the basement trash dump of his master's house; prominent colonial citizens Phillip and Anne Wolsey Calvert who were luxuriously buried in rare lead coffins, and a young woman of African descent buried in a long-forgotten cemetery. Reading about these discoveries and excavations is as enthralling as a good episode of CSI or other crime scene TV show or movie. Kids who think history is "boring" will probably be riveted by this book. The book is also beautifully made. It's a nice, large hardcover book with thick, glossy pages made to look like ancient parchment. Each page has at least one, often several pictures showing actual photos of the discovery process and other images related to the text. I read this book in just three nights (less than an hour each night). In fact, I was annoyed when I had to put the book down - I wanted to just keep reading and find out

more. This book has given me a taste to find out more about colonial life and more about archeology in general. Hopefully, it will have the same effect on kids, especially those not otherwise interested in history. I highly recommend this book for high school and possibly even junior high students, not to mention adults.

Learned a lot of interesting differences between bones of different ethnic groups that I didn't know existed. The investigations on the skeleton remains that they found was very thorough and amazing. A good book for anyone interested in forensics.

One of the worst books I've ever read. Sheer torture. I wouldn't recommend it to anyone. It wasn't interesting in the slightest.

Good book used for a school report. Enjoyed reading as did my daughters, education and was able to keep their attention .

Downloaded the kindle edition for school and can't read it. Looks like it was scanned from the book. Do not waste your money. Go to the book store and buy your copy.

The school library in which I work has a copy of this book, so I knew what I was buying. Forensic archaeology is fascinating to me, and this volume taught me more than I expected about the history of Jamestown and the people who lived there. There is even a facial reconstruction (I really enjoy these) of an African-born person. I hadn't realized there were African Americans that early in our history. Wonderful for budding archaeologists and anyone else interested in forensic archaeology and/or American colonial history. Highly recommended.

Bought for my granddaughter. It was a book they had to read over the summer.

My daughter loves this book

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