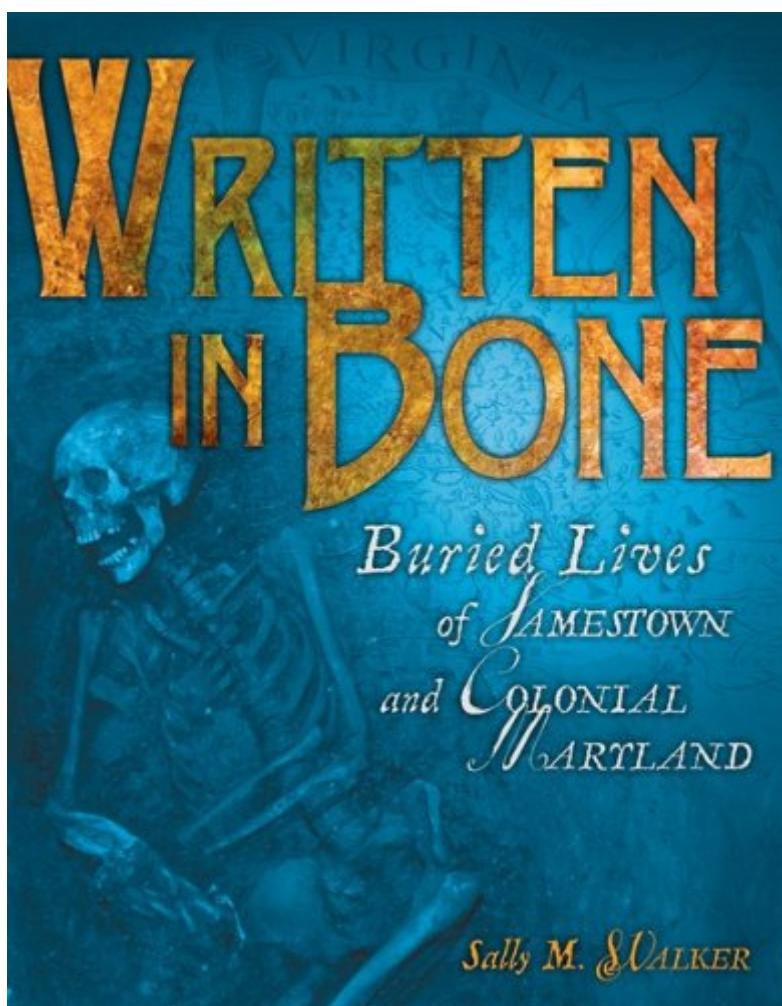


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# Written In Bone: Buried Lives Of Jamestown And Colonial Maryland (Nonfiction - Grades 4-8)



## Synopsis

Bright white teeth. Straight leg bones. Awkwardly contorted arm bones. On a hot summer day in 2005, Dr. Douglas Owsley of the Smithsonian Institution peered into an excavated grave, carefully examining the fragile skeleton that had been buried there for four hundred years. "He was about fifteen years old when he died. And he was European," Owsley concluded. But how did he know? Just as forensic scientists use their knowledge of human remains to help solve crimes, they use similar skills to solve the mysteries of the long-ago past. Join author Sally M. Walker as she works alongside the scientists investigating colonial-era graves near Jamestown, Virginia, as well as other sites in Maryland. As you follow their investigations, she'll introduce you to what scientists believe are the lives of a teenage boy, a ship's captain, an indentured servant, a colonial official and his family, and an enslaved African girl. All are reaching beyond the grave to tell us their stories, which are written in bone.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

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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