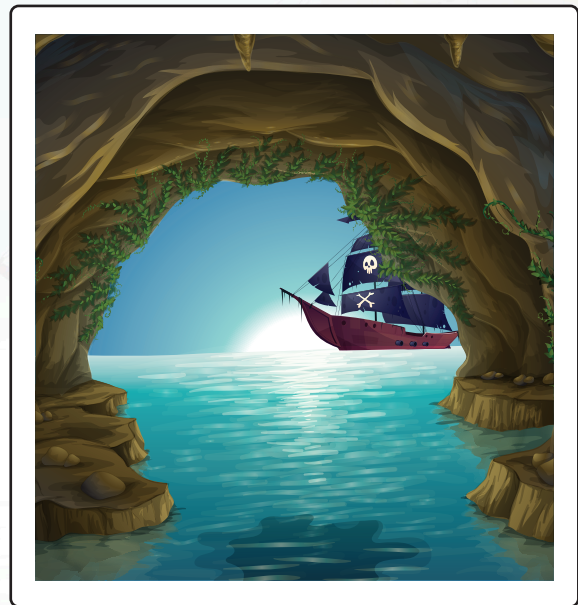


Pirates have existed throughout history. Pirates have travelled over the oceans and seas for hundreds of years and have caused terror in search of treasure and wealth. What image do you conjure up when you hear the word pirate? Often, it is of an eye-patched man who makes prisoners walk the plank and who uses a treasure map to find hidden wares. Whilst there is some exaggeration in books and films, pirates did circumnavigate the globe stealing from others and gaining great wealth. There are many myths and legends surrounding the life of a pirate and we hope to debunk some of those myths here.

Famous pirates

Edward Teach, better known as Blackbeard, is arguably the most infamous pirate in the world. Before capturing a ship, he would weave hemp into his beard and then light it on fire as an intimidation tactic to make him look like a demon. Shiver me timbers!



Although people think he was a vicious and fearless fighter, many witnesses recall him not ever actually fighting apart from in his last fatal battle. He left the fighting to his crew! A number of ships he and his crew captured were slave ships. Upon capture, a large proportion of slaves joined the pirates, but some were taken to the mainland and sold at auction.

Pirate ship life

Every pirate ship would have its own set of rules that all pirates had to agree to before joining the crew. This included how the loot would be divided, who had

what chores, and what type of behaviour was expected from each pirate. This helped them keep everything in order on board.

Pirate flags

Pirate crews would specially design their own flags and would get a sail-maker's widow to make them in exchange for some brandy. Blackbeard had his own black flag featuring a skeleton with horns. The skeleton held an hourglass in one hand and a spear pointing to a heart dripping with three drops of blood in the other.

Hiding their treasure

It is commonly thought that pirates would hide their treasure, mark it on a map and return to it at a later date. In reality though, they would take any treasure they got to a pirate-friendly port and spend it all as quickly as they could on whatever they wanted.

Women pirates

Women were not allowed on board pirate ships. However, some women were lured by the idea of adventure and wealth. Famous female pirates include Mary Read, Anne Bonny and Ching Shih. These women would dress up as men and would not shirk their responsibilities or fighting. They were fierce and brave.

Did you know?

Pirates loved to drink grog, which was a mixture of rum, water, lemon juice, and sugar.



Pirate language

If you read any books or watch any films, pirates often say things like "Ooh arrrr me mateys" and other phrases. They had particular ways of speaking, but the phrases we associate with pirates today are actually made up by film and literature only.

Walking the plank

Although walking the plank is very common in pirate stories and folklore, most pirates just killed people straightaway and did not draw out their death.

Keelhauling, which is when you drag a tied sailor in the water from the back of the ship, was one form of torture that pirates would use.

One last thing, it is **true** that some pirates kept parrots as pets on board!



Did you know?

Pirates wore eye patches as it helped them to keep one eye adjusted to night vision, so they could see below deck.

