

## READING SELECTION 1

## HISTORY

## A Pirate's Life For Me!

Trade and economics in the Atlantic world of the early 1700s was done through seafaring. This required the labor of sailors. Sailors knew the five power nations were constantly at war with each other. They understood these wars were mainly fought over wealth. Wealth came about through trade the sailors were engaged in, such as gold, fish, slaves, sugar, and tobacco. Sailors knew they were the machines that made trade work. They understood when you controlled the seas, you controlled trade. When sailors turned to piracy, they were able to have a share in the wealth. They worked for themselves. Life at sea gave them a life of liberty.

One thing that attracted many sailors to pirate life was the issue of self-governing. For a pirate, it was not so much about greed as it was that the authority belonged to the crew as a whole. They divided their booty into shares. A portion of each booty would be set aside to take care of those who were maimed or had long-lasting disabilities. They elected representatives to arbitrate differences between the captain and his crew. At the beginning of each voyage, or when a new captain was elected, articles or compacts were drawn up. Items such as discipline, food, resources, allocation of authority, and division of plunder were agreed upon. The only time the captain was completely in charge was when the ship's crew was engaged in battle. Otherwise, pirates considered themselves to be under their own authority.

Most sailors who turned to piracy were privateers, merchant sailors with permission to attack enemy ships during the War of Spanish Succession. These pirates said they never agreed to the Articles of Peace. At first, they followed the way of life of the buccaneers and formed themselves as a community based in the Bahamas. They continued to attack French and Spanish ships. The West Indies was the focus of their piracies. Later, pirates began attacking Dutch and English ships. Over time, piracy expanded to the coasts of North America, West Africa, Madagascar, and the Indian Ocean.

Eventually, pirates became the enemies of all trading nations. They disrupted intercolonial trade by attacking in strategic trading areas. Governments focused on ridding themselves of the pirates. In 1717, Woodes Rogers was appointed by the British Crown to be the first governor of the Bahamas. The former privateer's mission was to get rid of the pirates. Knowing the plan of the British government, most pirates surrendered and were pardoned. The ones who didn't were either killed during battle or sent to the gallows. Their dead bodies were placed on display to discourage further piracy. By 1730, Rogers had broken the pirate's stronghold in the Bahamas. The Golden Age of Piracy had come to an end.



Calico Jack Rackham was eventually hanged by the British.

**COMPREHENSION TEST****HISTORY**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**A Pirate's Life For Me!****Directions:** Fill in the bubble next to the correct answer for each multiple-choice question.

1. What is the purpose of paragraph two of the selection?  
☐ a. explains the effect privateers had on the War of Spanish Succession  
☐ b. describes the self-governing lifestyle of pirates  
☐ c. describes the life of Governor Woodes Rogers  
☐ d. explains the importance of sailors to the economy in the Bahamas
2. **They elected representatives to arbitrate differences between the captain and his crew.**  
Which is the best definition of arbitrate as it is used in the sentence above?  
☐ a. choose  
☐ b. mediate  
☐ c. judge  
☐ d. decide
3. The articles drawn up by a pirate crew at the beginning of a voyage included all of the following, except  
☐ a. discipline.  
☐ b. allocation of authority.  
☐ c. battle strategies.  
☐ d. division of plunder.
4. From this selection, the reader can conclude pirates  
☐ a. had their own code of conduct.  
☐ b. mostly attacked Dutch and English ships.  
☐ c. obeyed the laws established by their captain.  
☐ d. never attacked French and Spanish ships.
5. Describe the self-governing lifestyle of a pirate. Use details from the selection to support your answer.

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