



Shipwreck Center

A Pirates Life | Grades Level K-2

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Overview:

This lesson introduces students to some basics about pirates, including what they wore, where they worked, and why they did what they did. Students will use what they have learned to design realistic pirate costumes.

Connections to the Curriculum:

Geography, world history, apply geography to interpret the past

Time:

Two hours

Materials Required:

- Computer with Internet access
- Drawing materials

Objectives:

Students will

- discuss what they know about pirates;
- view pictures of pirates, and describe their clothing, accessories, and settings;
- read and answer questions about pirates;
- view and discuss this [clip](#) of divers working underwater on the Whydah site;
- view and write words describing pictures of the Caribbean and North American coast, where pirates practiced during the "golden age";
- discuss what life might have been like on pirate and trading ships; and
- design realistic pirate costumes, including also a background setting for the pirates.

Geographic Skills:

Acquiring Geographic Information

Organizing Geographic Information

Analyzing Geographic Information

Suggested Procedure

Opening:

Ask students to contribute words describing what they know about pirates. Show students some pirate pictures from [Beej's Pirate Image Archive](#). What do they notice about the pirates' clothing and accessories and the places where the pictures are set?

Development:

Read to the class, or have them read the first part of the [Pirates of the Caribbean](#) page (at least through "True Pirates"). Then discuss the answers to these questions as a class, helping them understand what this page is saying:

- Where were the ships going from and to? (from the Caribbean or North America to Europe; have students locate these places on a map)
- What were the ships carrying with them? (goods such as gold, tobacco, and spices)
- Why did the pirates bother the ships? (to steal these goods from them)
- What did their flags look like?

Now that students understand the basics of the "golden age" of piracy, introduce them to the *Whydah*, explaining that this was a pirate ship that sank in 1717 and has recently been found underwater off the coast of Cape Cod, Massachusetts. Explain that the discovery of the [Whydah](#) helped people learn more about what it

was like to be a pirate.

Have students look at the pictures of some of the *Whydah* discoveries at the [Pirate Ship Whydah](#) page, and help them understand what these pictures show. What new things can they learn about pirates from looking at these artifacts? Have them list words that describe some of these new things.

Have students go to some or all of these Websites to look at pictures of the Caribbean and North Atlantic, where pirates spent a lot of their time between 1500 and 1700. Ask them to write words describing what these places look like. They should comment on the weather and climate and the natural features they see (e.g., beaches).

[Biscayne National Park](#)

[Cape Cod National Seashore](#)

[Cape Hatteras National Seashore](#)

[The St. John Photo Album](#)

[Virgin Islands National Park](#)

Closing:

Discuss what life may have been like for people on trading and pirate ships in the golden age of piracy. What types of scenery would people on the ships have seen? What would people on the trading ships worry about? What would people on the pirate ships have been thinking? What types of things would the pirates have had on board their ships, and how would they have used these things?

Suggested Student Assessment:

Ask students if they have ever dressed up as a pirate for Halloween. Why do they think kids like to dress up as "bad guys"?

Have students return to [Beej's Pirate Image Archive](#) to see the pirate pictures again. Ask them to notice the specifics of what the pirates were wearing and the

accessories they carried.

Have students design their own pirate costumes on paper, incorporating some of the things they've learned about pirates, the places pirates worked; and the things they kept on board their ships. They should also draw background scenes, based on the scenes of the Caribbean or North Atlantic and the pirate ships they've seen. Have students write sentences describing their costumes and scenery.

Extending the Lesson:

Share with the class some of the people who took part in piracy on the [Whydah](#) site. Then discuss the reasons why people became pirates. What were their goals? Did they all start out as pirates, or did they have more traditional occupations before becoming pirates? Have students write paragraphs explaining why they think some people chose to become pirates.

Related Links:

[Beej's Pirate Image Archive](#)

[Pirates of the *Whydah*](#)

Project-based Learning Ideas

Make Your Own Telescope

Make Your Own Concretion

Make Your Own Pirate Treasure Map