



Shipwreck Center

***Piracy: A Continuing Problem* | Grades: 9-12**

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Overview:

This lesson asks students to compare and contrast piracy in its "golden age" with modern piracy. They will find out where piracy is practiced today and write reports pretending they are on an international anti-piracy commission, describing the similarities and differences between modern and historical piracy and proposing some solutions to modern piracy problems.

Connections to the Curriculum:

Geography, world history, apply geography to interpret the past

Standard 18: "How to apply geography to interpret the present and plan for the future"

Time:

Three to four hours

Materials Required:

- Computer with Internet access
- Blank outline maps of the world
https://www.eduplace.com/ss/maps/pdf/world_phys.pdf, one for each student

Objectives:

Students will

- discuss what they already know about pirates and piracy;
- read an article about modern piracy, and answer questions about what they have read;

- discuss, research, and take notes on the similarities and differences between historic and modern piracy; and
- write reports from the perspective of a United Nations anti-piracy council, comparing and contrasting historic and modern piracy and reporting on the status of piracy today.

Geographic Skills:

Acquiring Geographic Information
Organizing Geographic Information
Analyzing Geographic Information

S u g g e s t e d P r o c e d u r e

Opening:

Ask students to define the words "pirate" and "piracy." Then ask them to describe the things they already know about piracy. What role did pirates play in the Atlantic trade between 1500 and 1800? What areas were the most heavily frequented by pirates? How were pirates punished?

If students need to review the basics of piracy in historical times, they can read the encyclopedia article at [ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA](#).

Development:

Ask students if they think piracy has been completely eradicated. Have they heard any news reports of piracy in modern times?

Have students read the CNN article, [“Turkish sailors kidnapped by pirates off Nigeria's coast.”](#)

Ask them to answer these questions:

- Where was this act of piracy located, and how common is piracy in this area?
- What did the pirates want, and what might have been the underlying factors contributing to this and other pirate attacks in the region?
- What was done to combat this act of piracy?
- What other measures are being taken to combat piracy?

Ask students what they think might be the similarities and differences between piracy today and in historical times. Do the modern pirates they have read about sound like they have motives similar to pirates in the "olden days?" Do they think pirates today operate in the same waters as pirates in past centuries? Why or why not?

Have students make charts with two columns, labeled "Historical piracy" and "Modern piracy." The charts should also contain four rows, labeled with these questions:

- In what types of places do pirates prefer to operate?
- Where are the "hot spots" for piracy around the world?
- What factors motivate pirates?
- What measures are being taken to curtail piracy?

Have students go to the following Web sites to look for information about historical and modern piracy to put into their charts.

[CNN.com](#) [Note: Have students search for articles on piracy; they should make sure to define "piracy" narrowly, as the capturing and robbing of boats, as opposed to the broader definition that includes the piracy of intellectual property, etc.]

[The International Maritime Bureau Piracy Reporting Centre](#)

[The Golden Age of Piracy](#)

[Piracy](#)

["Turkish sailors kidnapped by pirates off Nigeria's coast"](#) [Note: Students have already read this article, but they should click through to the related stories.]

Closing:

Discuss what students think are the major similarities and differences between piracy today and in past centuries. Then discuss what they think are the best strategies for dealing with piracy today. Are these the same strategies that were tried during piracy's "golden age"?

Suggested Student Assessment:

Ask students to pretend they have just been elected to a United Nations anti-piracy council. Their first task is to issue a report to the general public on the status of piracy today and the council's recommendations for eradicating piracy. Since most members of the general public think of pirates as patch-wearing buccaneers, your students need to compare and contrast today's piracy with the old-fashioned kind and inform people about piracy concerns of today.

Students should be sure their reports include:

- a map of current piracy "hot spots" (provide students with blank [world outline map](#));
- a comparison of the motivations of pirates today with pirates in past centuries;
- a comparison of the consequences of piracy then and now (e.g., the effects of piracy on trade);
- an overview of solutions used to curb piracy in previous centuries;
- an overview of solutions that have been tried or proposed to curb modern-day piracy; and

- their opinion as to the two or three most important steps that should be taken to eradicate modern piracy; students should mention the locations where they think the greatest anti-piracy resources should be devoted and explain why these areas are particularly important.

Extending the Lesson:

Have students research and report on the anti-piracy tactics of the [International Maritime Bureau](#). They should offer their opinions on how effective they think these tactics are and provide suggestions for other strategies that might work.

Related Links:

[National Geographic: When Not Treasure Hunting, Pirates Practiced Democracy](#)

[The Golden Age of Piracy](#)

[The International Maritime Bureau Piracy Reporting Centre](#)