



Shipwreck Center

Pirate Archaeology | Grades Level 6-8

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Shipwreck Center Educators Guide

Overview:

This lesson reviews students' understanding of where pirates worked and what their motivations were. It asks students to consider where they might look for sunken pirate ships and what they would expect to find on such ships. Students will pretend to be archaeologists seeking funding for expeditions to search for pirate ships and write up their plans.

Connections to the Curriculum:

Geography, world history, apply geography to interpret the past

Time:

Four to five hours (the reading can be assigned for homework to cut down on the class time required)

Materials Required:

- Computer with Internet access
- Blank [outline map of the world](#), one for each student
- Writing and drawing materials (or access to a software program such as PowerPoint or Hyperstudio if students prefer to do multimedia presentations)

Objectives:

Students will

- discuss what they already know about pirates;
- read and answer questions about pirates and the areas where piracy was the most common;
- read an article about the [Whydah](#);

- conduct research to fill in charts that show where they might find sunken pirate ships, how these ships can be located and explored, and what they might find on such ships; and
- write plans as if they are archaeologists seeking funding to search for sunken pirate ships.

Geographic Skills:

Acquiring Geographic Information

Analyzing Geographic Information

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

Opening:

Discuss what students know about pirates. What parts of the world did pirates frequent and why? What were pirates' lives like? What would they expect to find if they discovered a sunken pirate ship?

Development:

Have students search the Internet about pirates and answer these questions either in a class discussion or in writing:

- During what period of history were pirate ships the most active? Why were they particularly active during this time?
- In what parts of the world were pirates most likely to threaten trade ships? Why did pirates choose these areas?
- Why did pirates target Spanish ships in the Caribbean?
- Why did pirates turn to North America as a target for their activities?

Discuss students' responses to the above questions, focusing on the second question. Why did pirates tend to choose certain areas over others? Ask them to consider how trade patterns would have affected the places pirates chose to frequent.

Inform the class that, in recent years, two sunken pirate ships are believed to have been discovered off the United States coast: the [*Whydah*](#), captained by Sam Bellamy, and [*Queen Anne's Revenge*](#), captained by the infamous Blackbeard. Have students read "[The Pirate Crew](#)." Ask them to consider what it might be like to discover a sunken pirate ship.

Ask students to create charts with three columns, labeled "Locations," "Methods," and "Findings." Have them begin filling in their charts with the information they have already learned about the places they might expect to find sunken pirate ships, the methods that are used to locate and explore these ships, and the things that have been found on newly discovered pirate ships.

Have students go to the following websites to gather more information to put into their charts:

[The Whydah Project](#)

["The Pirate Crew."](#)

[The Golden Age of Piracy](#)

[*Queen Anne's Revenge*](#).

[Treasure Hunt: Aye, There Be Pirates Here](#)

Closing:

Ask students to look at their charts and explain in a class discussion the places they would look if they wanted to find sunken pirate ships. Then have them discuss the things they'd expect to find if they actually discovered such a ship.

Suggested Student Assessment:

Ask students to pretend they are archaeologists who want to spend some time searching for and exploring sunken pirate ships. They need funding to move ahead with their explorations.

Have students write plans, either on paper or in multimedia presentation programs, to convince potential sources of funding (either the government or private foundations) that they should support explorations for sunken pirate ships. The students' plans should include

- a blank [outline map of the world](#) showing the locations that they plan to search;
- an explanation as to why they think these areas are likely to have sunken pirate ships;
- a description of the methods they will use to locate and retrieve the ships; and
- a description of the things they expect to find and the reasons why these items are important for archaeologists like themselves to study.

Extending the Lesson:

Have students conduct research to find out where piracy is a problem today. They can find information on this topic at “[Piracy in the 21st century.](#)”

Related Links:

[*Queen Anne's Revenge*](#)

["The Pirate Crew"](#)

[The Golden Age of Piracy](#)

[Treasure Hunt: Aye, There Be Pirates Here](#)