

4TH GRADE LESSONS/ACTIVITIES: SHIPWRECKS

Shipwrecks (Reading Level 4.5)

Essential Standards 4.G.1 – Understand how human, environmental and technological factors affect the growth and development of North Carolina.

Essential Standard 4. E. 1 – Understand how a market economy impacts life in North Carolina

Essential Standards 4. E. 2 – Understand the economic factors when making personal choices.

Shipwrecks

The waters off North Carolina's Outer Banks are called the Graveyard of the Atlantic. Over 2000 ships have wrecked here. The Outer Banks stick out into the Atlantic Ocean. They lie in an area known for storms.

Off the Outer Banks, the Gulf Stream meets the Labrador Current. Many ships followed the flow of the Gulf Stream. It was a busy trade route. Following the Gulf Stream reduced the length of their trip.

At Cape Hatteras, when winds are blowing from the northeast or the southwest, they form currents. These currents carry sand and place it at the Cape to form Diamond Shoals. The sandbars or shoals extend far into the Atlantic Ocean. They create lengths of water where it is hard to travel. The shallow areas were dangerous to sailing ships.

Sailors traveling around or straight through the shoals hoped they could reach deep water before a storm broke. But that wasn't always possible. Storms with strong winds and waves would move a ship onto a shoal. It was dangerous to be stuck on a shoal. A storm could make the ship moves in ways it wasn't designed to move.

Storms tore apart sails, masts were snapped, and anchors dragged. Ships were damaged or sunk into the sea. Together shoals and storms have caused the end of many ships and sailors.

Pirates were known to take over and even sink ships that weren't of use to them. War also caused shipwrecks along the coast. In World War I and II German submarines sank many ships. Several German subs also were sunk. Ships traveling in fog in war times without lights could crash into each other.

Shipwrecks also helped the island people. Auctions were held to sell goods from the ships. Islanders were able to have things they usually didn't have. Many a ship's timbers were used to build homes. Local men were able to work as surfmen, people who risked their lives to save sailors on shipwrecked vessels.

Questions

1. What brought so many ships past the Outer Banks?
2. How did the Gulf Stream help sailors?
3. Many natural factors helped to cause shipwrecks. Name two of them and explain them.
4. How is Diamond Shoals formed?
5. Why are shoals dangerous to sailors?

6. What kind of criminals caused shipwrecks off the coast?
7. How did war cause shipwrecks?
8. How were shipwrecks helpful to the island people?

Activity

Repurposing Objects. (Adult Supervision Required)

Purpose: Reinforce the history and resourcefulness of islanders using wood and materials from shipwrecks as building materials.

Project: Use found objects or recyclable materials to create a useful or decorative object.

Materials: Anything safe you normally would throw away or recycle such as cardboard, colored paper, magazines, wood dowels, Styrofoam, beads, buttons, old frames or mechanical clocks, boxes, wood, sticks, cloth, contact paper, paper towel rolls and found objects such as sticks, shells, rocks, feathers, etc.

Also needed: glue, scissors, paint and brushes, crayons, markers, tape, string, twine, wire, wire cutter, and hole punch.

Suggestion 1: Create a mobile using two sticks, string and found objects. Secure the sticks in an "X" pattern with string. Tie found objects to string and fasten them at varying lengths and distances along the sticks. Feel free to paint any objects and the sticks unless you want a natural look.

Suggestion 2: Cut two pieces of cardboard the same shape and size suitable for the cover of a scrapbook. Punch holes along the spine. Line up 10 sheets of paper slightly smaller in width than the cover and cut holes along one side to match the holes on the cover. Line up the holes of the paper with the cover. Using string, tie them all together to form inside pages. Decorate the cover with crayons, paint or markers, or glue down cloth or adhere contact paper. Tape flat keepsakes such as photographs inside.

Suggestion 3: Create a sculpture by attaching found objects together with tape, glue or wire. Use something firm and steady as a base such as a weighted shoe box, Styrofoam or a wood block. Paint your sculpture with solid colors or cover it in a variety of designs.

Suggestion 4: Measure a strand of twine about the length to make a long necklace. Add beads and shells with holes in them (you can easily find these along the shore) in any order you desire. You can add knots in between each addition if you like. Put a slip knot at the end so you can wear it around your neck.