

8TH GRADE LESSONS/ACTIVITIES: PIRACY

Piracy (Reading level 8.9)

Essential Standard 8.G.1 - Understand the geographic factors that influenced North Carolina and the United States.

Essential Standard 8.E.1 Understand the economic activities of North Carolina and the United States.

Essential Standard 8.H.2 – Understand the ways in which conflict, compromise and negotiation have shaped North Carolina and the United States.

Essential Standard 8.H. 3 – Understand the factors that contribute to change and continuity in North Carolina and the United States.

Piracy and the Outer Banks

Piracy occurred off the North Carolina Outer Banks since the late 1500s. In 1585, English explorers came to the area under orders from the queen to set up a military colony to rob Spanish ships. This was a period when England wanted to gain strength over Spain. During the last decade of the 1600s North Carolina began to attract the attention of freelance pirates.

The Outer Banks was a perfect getaway for outlaws. Despite being off the beaten track, the waters offshore the Outer Banks grew into a well-used trade route due to the nearness of the Gulf Stream. Its speed allowed sailors to gain time on their voyage. It brought in traffic perfect for pirates to rob.

Shallow waters filled with hard-to-see sandbars also worked to a pirate's advantage. Using boats that could sail through shallow waters, pirates could move through inland water ways to the sea, rob ships, and then move back to their island hideout. Larger vessels couldn't follow them without getting stuck on the sandbars.

Remote areas also allowed pirates the chance to avoid large ports where they would be forced to pay taxes on their goods. In an isolated area they could safely make repairs and clean the bottom of their ships. Using the tides, they would tip the ship to one side in order to scrape barnacles off the bottom. Marine growth would slow the speed of the ship. Fast ships allowed for quick getaways.

The coast was sparsely populated during the late 1600s and early 1700s. Smuggling was considered a legitimate form of business. Pirates walked freely among the people. There was little form of government at the North Carolina coast. It became a safe refuge for the outlaws.

Maritime trade was not as developed in North Carolina as it was for the settlers in South Carolina. Colonists enjoyed having the goods the pirates brought to sell. They also appreciated the money they spent.

In 1718, pirates fled to the North Carolina coast in greater numbers following the outing of them in the Bahamas and New Providence. The outing was done by Captain Woodes Rogers under orders of the king of England.

Stede Bonnet is a name that pops up as a pirate who appeared off the North Carolina coast during this period. Recorded history also tells us that a pirate crew operating under the command of John Cole

captured the ship, *Expedition*, October 29, near Hatteras the same year Rogers caused the exodus of pirates from New Providence.

The pirate, Edward Thatch or Teach, aka Blackbeard, used Ocracoke Island as a hide-out. In November of 1718 he met his end when South Carolina's Governor Spotswood hired two British war ships, *Lyme*, under the command of Captain Ellis Brand, and *Pearl*/captained by Lt. Robert Maynard, with the intention of arresting Blackbeard and his crew. The pirate and some of his crew were killed in battle at Ocracoke.

While piracy quieted down following the death of Blackbeard, William Fly took the sloop *John and Hannah* off Hatteras in 1726. Although his reign of terror was brief before being captured, he was known for his brutality. Fly instigated a mutiny on board the ship where he was working as a legitimate boatswain. The captain and another member of the crew were murdered. Fly took over the ship and sailed to the Hatteras coast where he plundered and sunk the *John and Hannah* before being captured. (Source: The Carolina Pirates and Colonial Commerce, Shirley Carter Hughson) See Related History, Piracy, in the Education Manual for more information on Blackbeard and the Queen Anne's Revenge.

Questions

1. Name and explain three reasons why pirates were drawn to the North Carolina coast.
2. What role did the Gulf Stream play in piracy?
3. What was the motivational difference between the early pirates from England and freelance pirates?
4. Do you think the ousting of pirates in the Bahamas and New Providence affected North Carolina? Explain.
5. What financial impact did piracy have on coastal living? Was it positive or negative? Explain.
6. What capabilities were important for a pirate ship or boat to have? Explain.
7. What natural cause could slow down a ship, and what had to be done to rectify this?
8. Why do you think a South Carolina governor sent ships to capture Blackbeard on a North Carolina Island?
9. Research the relationship England had with her North Carolina colony during the late 1600s and early 1700s and show how the relationship affected piracy.

Activity

Locating Pirate Hideaways

Purpose: Reinforce the lesson on piracy on the Outer Banks by searching for other areas on a map that might have similar characteristics as the Outer Banks and therefore make a good hideout for pirates.

Project: Using a world atlas, research barrier islands and chose an area that appears to be good for piracy. Research the area to see if there is any piracy in its history or to discover why it may or may not work as a suitable hideaway for water-bound criminals. Create a report using a map and any other illustrations you create or are available to you that would help present your idea to the class.

Materials: World Atlas, Internet, books, paper, art supplies, digital imagery.