

8TH GRADE LESSONS/ACTIVITIES: SHIPWRECKS

Shipwrecks (Reading Level 8.2)

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

Essential Standard 8.G.1.1 Explain how location and place have presented opportunities and challenges for the movement of people, goods, and ideas in 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.E.1.1 Explain how conflict, cooperation, and competition influenced periods of economic growth and decline (e.g. economic depressions and recessions).

Shipwrecks

The waters off North Carolina's Outer Banks are called the Graveyard of the Atlantic because of the over 2000 ships that have wrecked here. The Outer Banks jut out into the Atlantic Ocean and lie between the mainland and the sea. A product of rising sea levels and storms, the sand banks are in an area known for its changing environment.

A variety of natural forces come together off these islands where the Gulf Stream meets an extension of the Labrador Current. Historical shipping followed the flow of the Gulf Stream to reduce the length of a voyage. This brought ships from across the globe to the area.

At Cape Hatteras, when winds are blowing from the northeast or the southwest, they form longshore currents that carry sand and deposit it at the Cape to form Diamond Shoals. Shoals can extend 30-50 meters or more into the Atlantic Ocean. These sandbars create lengths of water where it is dangerous to travel. The shallow areas presented a danger to passing ships.

Strong storms occur at the coast and can produce powerful winds and waves that can move a ship onto shoals.

Charting a course around or straight through the shoals, crews hoped they could reach deep water before a storm broke. In an area ripe with storms, many a ship was caught in nature's grasp and pushed onto a shoal. Ship's sails were torn, masts were snapped and anchors dragged. The ships eventually sank into the sea or beached on the sand. Together shoals and storms have caused the end of many a ship and sailor. Yet, shipwrecks also helped the island economy. Auctions were held to sell goods from the ships, and ship timbers were used to build island homes. Islanders were able to gain items to which they normally didn't have access. Local men earned a living as surfmen, people who risked their lives to save sailors on shipwrecked vessels.

Piracy added to the number of shipwrecks off the coast mostly during the early 1700s. North Carolina did not have a developed government during that period, and pirates could walk freely among the people. War was also a factor in causing wrecks. In World War I and II German submarines, called U-boats, sank many ships, and several German submarines also were sunk. Ships traveling in war times might travel without lights in order to not be discovered. Under cover of fog, they could come across one another too late to avoid a crash. Hatteras Islanders told of closing the shutters on their windows so as not to be a target for the submarines cruising offshore, and they saw violent explosions and lived with beaches

coated in oil. They felt a general sense of fear in their everyday lives. The action off the coast hampered fishing, the island's livelihood, but it also brought with it more shipwrecks and therefore more goods washing ashore.

Questions

1. What role did the Gulf Stream play in historic shipping?
2. Cape Hatteras juts out into the Atlantic Ocean. When winds blow from the northeast and also from the southwest, they form what kind of currents, and what is the result of these currents at the Cape?
3. Storms form offshore the North Carolina Outer Banks. How did they affect maritime traffic using the traditional shipping lanes that passed by the area?
4. Why would a shoal or sandbar be a hazard to shipping?
5. How did shipwrecks improve the island economy? Why was this improvement welcomed despite the loss of life and ships?
6. What form of illegal activity played a role in causing shipwrecks and why was it able to get a foothold along the North Carolina coast?
7. Why would ships travel without lights after dark during the 1940s?
8. How do you think U-boat action affected the Outer Banks and American economy in a negative and a positive way?

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 and length 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, stickers, 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.