

Pirates

Grades 4-6

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Pirate Pete's Reading Card #1

An Introduction to Pirates

When you hear someone talk about pirates today, your mind turns to daring adventurers braving the "Seven Seas", mighty sailing ships flying the pirates' flag, the skull and crossbones and one-eyed captains pacing the deck on a wooden leg with a parrot on his shoulder and a sword in his belt.

Over the centuries the lives of the 17th century buccaneers and pirates have often been made more glamorous in both books and in the movies.

The "swashbuckling" pirate swinging through his ship's rigging, swooping down on his enemies and fighting at least five or six at a time, is the sort of feat that high adventure books and movies portray. But in actual fact, these pirates were often cut-throat characters with little regard for danger, running from the law and often attacking innocent sea-travelers for whatever "booty" they could steal!

There have been several names used in association with these sea-going "adventurers". Pirate, buccaneer and privateer are the most common.

Pirate seems to be the title that all ocean-going robbers are grouped under while buccaneer applies to those pirates that specifically raided Spanish ships and settlements in the West Indies and the term privateer actually meant a licensed pirate.

In addition to the many stories of their exploits, pirates also have been associated with lost or buried treasure. The search for the buried treasure of Jean Lafitte, Blackbeard and Captain Kidd cause many would-be fortune seekers to spend many years and many dollars looking for gold coins, jewels, bars of silver and other "booty" that the pirates so carefully hid away from prying eyes!



Pirate Pete's Reading

Activity Card #1

Read Pirate Pete's Reading Card # 1 called "An Introduction to Pirates".

Complete the following activities.

1. In the story it mentions that the pirates sailed "the seven seas". Where does that expression come from and what does it mean?
2. A pirate's wooden leg was often referred to as a "peg-leg". Why do you think it was given that name?
3. What is the difference between a buccaneer and a privateer?
4. If you were to describe the perfect pirate what **characteristics** would you give him?
5. Pirate captains faced many dangers. Make a list of things that they would have to be careful of and in a second column write solutions or suggestions for solving those difficulties.





Pirate Pete's Reading Card #2

Captain Kidd - A Pirate's Pirate!

Legend tells us that Captain William Kidd was THE PIRATE of all times! The search for his treasure began in the 1930's when written proof appeared in Great Britain that Kidd may have in fact buried at least some of his accumulated wealth.

Historians tell us that Captain Kidd was probably born in Scotland about 1645. But it is not until some forty-four years later that his name surfaces in New York. Kidd married a wealthy widow named Sarah Dort in 1699 and his name appears in the church register as "William Kidd, Gentleman". This title, Gentleman, was commonly used to describe a person who was wealthy but held no real job as one could describe. But it is known that he was an owner-captain of a trading ship that often sailed in the West Indies.

Captain Kidd's name next appears in 1691. As a privateer, licensed to seize enemy ships in wartime, Kidd most likely made quite a lot of money during those years.

In 1695, with a commission from the King of England, William the Third, Captain Kidd sailed to the Indian Ocean with orders to clean up the area of pirates who were attacking the British ships in that part of the world.

Captain Kidd had the support of many powerful men in England. They financed his voyage in return for a cut of the pay, but they too would get a percentage of all the "treasure" they captured.

Kidd sailed to the island of Madagascar, famous as a pirate **haunt**, aboard his ship Adventure Galley. He did not find any pirates there and continued on to the coast of India where he hoped to capture some treasure-laden French Vessel (Britain and France were at war).

Kidd's crew were getting very angry, it was now over a year and they had yet to get any treasure at all. Of course, they mutined! The leader, a man named Moore, threatened Kidd, who reacted by striking the man over the head with a bucket,

killing him! The **mutiny** quickly ended. Kidd, as a commissioned captain of the King was correct in his actions.

Kidd soon attacked the ship belonging to the ruler of India, the Great Moghul, saying that it sailed under the protection of the French. However, instead of escorting the ship and its treasure to a British port, he instead sailed it to a pirate haven in Madagascar. Here he abandoned his old ship, except for the guns which he now installed on the *Queda Merchant*, the Moghul's ship! He sailed to the Dutch East Indies where he learned that the British had labeled him a pirate and there might be a price on his head!

The next time that Kidd appeared was in the West Indies, a half a world away, where he eventually abandoned his ship and went back to New York to talk to the Royal Governor, Lord Bellomont, in order that he might clear his name with the British authorities.

Though Bellomont promised Kidd protection, the pirate decided to bury part of his treasure on Gardiner's Island in the harbor of New York. Kidd was to discover that his suspicions about Bellomont were correct; the governor had him arrested, dug up his treasure and sent the unfortunate pirate back to Britain.

Kidd stated that he had the proof that the ships he attacked were actually under the French government's protection but he was unable to produce this evidence. The powerful people who had supported his voyage soon disappeared, afraid that they too would be arrested for associating with an infamous pirate!

Captain William Kidd was tried and convicted of piracy and the murder of seaman Moore. He was executed in Newgate **Gaol** in 1699.

Before he died, Kidd wrote a letter to the authorities stating that if given a chance he would lead them to a fortune of one hundred thousand pounds which would probably equal two to three million dollars today! He also told them that if he failed to locate it, they could execute him on the spot. The authorities ignored him and his secret went to the grave with him!

The proof that Kidd needed, the papers confiscated by Bellomont and returned to London before the pirate's trial, were actually discovered in the late 1960's in the Public Record Office.