

## BLACKBEARD AND THE PIRATES OF THE ATLANTIC COAST

(Flesch-Kincaid Reading Grade Level = 5.3)

Step I. Discuss or review the following skills covered in this lesson.

- Finding evidence to support a position
- Recognizing information
- Making value judgments regarding ideas and materials
- Recalling information
- Generalizing from given facts (data)
- Identifying the main idea or ideas in a written or verbal communication

**Note:** A description of the skills is found on pages 9-13.

Step II. Have the students read the narrative either silently or orally establishing purpose for reading.

Step III. Discuss any difficult words in the word list. Find synonyms, etc.

### Vocabulary Development

**HMS** – his majesty’s ship (These belong to the King of England.)

**mounted** – fixed on top of something

**abandoned** – left, no longer wanted or taken away

**anchored** – fastened to the bottom by a large weight

**cargo ships** – ships that carry freight or supplies

**glass chimney** – a tube put around a candle

Step IV. Have students respond to the questions following the narrative.

Step V. Discuss the responses given by various students. See if they can defend their answers.

Step VI. Discuss any confusing aspects of the narrative.

Step VII. Provide individualized feedback based on students’ oral and written responses.

Step VIII. Challenge students to describe situations that will require the thinking skills emphasized in the narrative and the questions that follow.

Step IX. Use enrichment activities.

### Answers and/or Suggested Answers to Questions

1. (*Sample answer*) a, d, f, h, i, j.

2. (*Sample answer*) Some pirates began raising animals and selling the meat.

3. (*Sample answer*) No. It pretended to be something that it wasn’t.

4. (*Sample answer*) They dried the meat or salted the meat.

5. (*Sample answer*) He sent a battleship to capture Blackbeard.

6. (*Sample answer*) They gave him a gun and powder, water, and bullets.

7. (*Sample answer*) They were considered more valuable than regular crew members.  
8. (*Sample answer*) They didn't think sickness came from being in battles. They may have thought that sickness was a person's own fault.  
9. (*Sample answer*) Rum didn't spoil, and it kept the crew happy.  
10. (*Sample answer*) Drunken crewmembers would not be much help in battle.

#### Relation of Questions to Bloom's Taxonomy and Educational Standards

##### Question 1

Measures "recognizing information" (**Knowledge** level of Bloom's Taxonomy)

##### Questions 2, 5, and 6

Measure "finding evidence to support a position" (**Analysis** level of Bloom's Taxonomy)

##### Question 4

Measures "recalling information" (**Knowledge** level of Bloom's Taxonomy)

##### Question 3

Measures "making value judgments regarding ideas and materials" (**Evaluation** level of Bloom's Taxonomy)

##### Questions 7, 8, and 10

Measure "generalizing from given facts (data)" (**Synthesis** level of Bloom's Taxonomy)

##### Question 9

Measures "identifying the main idea or ideas in a written or verbal communication" (**Comprehension** level of Bloom's Taxonomy)

### Follow-up Activities

1. Most captains of pirate ships were elected by the crew members. Why might this help? (*The captain would be more popular. The crew members could elect someone else captain later if things went badly, etc.*)
2. Why is it probably better to have a plan for dividing up treasure ahead of time? (*There would probably be many misunderstandings and quarrels if there were no plan.*)
3. Pirates were criminals. We still have criminals today. How are we better off than the early people who faced pirates? (*We have many ways of getting help. We have police officers to help us. We have very effective ways of tracing and arresting criminals.*)

#### Write Your Own Activity

Product

##### 1. Evaluation

## BLACKBEARD AND THE PIRATES OF THE ATLANTIC COAST



Blackbeard was probably the fiercest looking pirate of all times. He carried six pistols, a sword and a dagger. He stuck lighted matches under his hat. Smoke and fire surrounded his face. It is a wonder that he did not burst into flames.

Blackbeard ruthlessly attacked boats. He killed the sailors that resisted him. He hid along the Atlantic Coast and pounced upon ships that sailed by. He destroyed many sailing ships. The settlers along the coast finally demanded that the government stop him. The governor of Virginia sent a battleship, the HMS Pearl, after Blackbeard. The ship's crew captured him near the coast of North Carolina. On November 18, 1718, they surrounded the fierce pirate and killed him. He fought to the end. He had twenty-five wounds when he finally fell. His attackers took his head back to Virginia. They mounted it on a pole so that everyone could see that Blackbeard was dead.

Pirates needed food. Often they could find fruits on trees along the shore. However, it was hard for them to hunt animals. Soon a few sailors abandoned their ships. They began raising animals and selling meat around Tortuga in the Cayman Islands. Passing ships anchored nearby. The men on shore rowed out with their knives to sell their dried and salted meats. It was not long before some of the meat cutters decided to use their knives to capture the visiting ships instead. The meat cutters captured many ships around Tortuga. Soon the region became known as the Pirate Republic. Cargo ships were warned to stay away from the area.

We think of pirates as being wild and lawless. However, they had strict rules among themselves. They could not survive very long if they were killing each other. A pirate would be afraid to sleep. He might think someone would shoot him during the night. He would also be afraid to eat. He might think his shipmates were planning to poison him.

Pirates had to depend on each other during battle. They often had rules about being loyal and faithful. If a pirate ran away, they punished him. They left him on an island or shoreline with a bottle of gunpowder, a bottle of water, a small gun, and some bullets. If a crewmember signed an agreement to join another ship without permission, they punished him, too. Pirates clearly had to be loyal to their shipmates in order to survive.



Pirates had to guard against fighting among themselves and stealing from each other. If a crewmember stole things of real value, he was shot or left behind on the shore. If he hit a fellow crewmember, he was given 39 lashes with a whip.

Pirates had to keep things safe. The ships carried a lot of dangerous gunpowder. If men were not careful, the powder could blow up and sink the ship. Crewmembers were required to have a cap on the pipes they smoked. They had to have a glass chimney on any candles they carried below deck (where the powder was stored). They had to keep their guns clean so they wouldn't blow up in battle. If they failed to obey the safety rules, they were whipped.

A few of the rules had to do with dividing treasure. The captain often received one and a half times as much as an ordinary crewmember. The first mate, the ship's carpenter, and the gunner usually received one and a quarter times as much as the regular crew. Sometimes the captured treasure included jewelry and precious stones. It must have been difficult for the pirates to know how much they were really worth.

Finally, the pirates had rules regarding wounds suffered in battle. If a crewmember lost a finger or a toe, he received a small amount of money. If he lost an arm or a leg, he would receive twice as much money. However, there was no reward for those who simply got sick.

Normally, pirates carried barrels of rum on their ships. They could not drink the seawater. Fresh water in barrels would spoil quickly in hot weather. Rum would not spoil. It kept the men happy.

You have probably heard that pirate ships often flew a flag with skull-and-crossbones. It was called a "Jolly Roger". The skull-and-crossbones was used many years before the pirates sailed the seas. It was used to warn people of death during a terrible sickness. It told visitors that someone inside a building was extremely sick. The skull-and-crossbones warned people to stay away.

Pirate ships flew the skull-and-crossbones to frighten peaceful ships. It let law-abiding ships know that there were tough and mean outlaws onboard the pirate ships.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Blackbeard and the Pirates  
of the Atlantic Coast**

**Questions**



1. Which of the following were mentioned in the article? Circle the letters.

- a. Blackbeard stuck lighted matches under his hat.
- b. Blackbeard set his beard afire.
- c. Blackbeard was captured off the coast of Massachusetts.
- d. Some pirates abandoned ship and became meat salespersons.
- e. All peaceful ships fly the skull and crossbones.
- f. Pirates had rules about being loyal and faithful.
- g. All pirates were paid equally.
- h. Pirates were paid for losing fingers and toes.
- i. Pirates had to have caps on their pipes.
- j. Fresh water spoiled quickly in warm weather.

2. What evidence was there in the article that getting food was a problem for the pirates?

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3. If a pirate ship wished to capture a friendly ship, the pirate ship might take down its skull and crossbones flag. Do you think it is fair to act like a friendly ship if you are really a pirate ship? Why or why not?

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4. Meat can easily spoil. What does the article suggest the meat cutters did to keep their meat from spoiling?

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5. What evidence is there in the article that shows that the governor of Virginia took responsibility for the citizens of Virginia?

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6. If a pirate ran away, the captain might leave him on an island. What evidence is there that the captain didn't want the crewman to die?

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7. The captain, first mate, ship's carpenter, and gunner received extra pay. What can we conclude (generalize) from this information?

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8. Crewmembers that lost fingers or toes and arms or legs in battle received money. People who got sick got no reward. What can we conclude from this information?

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9. Pirates drank rum on the ship. What was the main purpose or idea behind drinking rum instead of water?

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10. Pirates never knew when they might have to fight. How could the rum play a part in their fights?

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