



A Sailor's Life

Unit 7: Dangers of the Sea

Key Stage 2

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The Full English Extra

The Full English Extra was an initiative to preserve and promote the folk arts, building on the success of EFDSS' flagship project The Full English, which created the world's largest digital archive of folk songs, dances, tunes and customs, and a nationwide learning programme that reached more than 16,000 people. The project was led by the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS), funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The Full English Extra saw the collections of Mary Neal, suffragette, radical arts practitioner and founder of the Esperance Girls Club, and folk dance educator Daisy Caroline Daking added to the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library online archive (www.vwml.org), alongside its collection of 19th century broadside ballads and songsters.

The Full English learning programme worked with three national museums – the Museum of English Rural Life at the University of Reading, the National Coal Mining Museum for England near Wakefield in West Yorkshire and the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, London – combining folk arts and museum education to provide powerful new learning experiences for schools and music hubs.

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Unit 7: Dangers of the sea



Dangers of the sea

A career at sea was a dangerous job. Sailors ran the risk of injury, disability or death. Dangers included:

- **Scurvy:** Scurvy is a painful and gruesome illness caused by a lack of Vitamin C. Many sailors contracted scurvy due to a lack of fresh fruit and vegetables which contain Vitamin C. Scurvy caused skin to blacken, teeth to fall out, gums to swell and could even result in death. The Royal Navy issued lemon juice rations to try to prevent outbreaks of scurvy.
- **Dangerous working conditions:** Many sailors had to do back-breaking work on-board the ships. Those working on the rigging or stationed in the crow's nest were most at risk of falling overboard or falling on the deck below causing severe injury or even death.
- **Battle:** During time of war men of all rank were in great danger of getting injured or being killed by sword, gun fire or cannon blast. If a sailor's ship was badly damaged then they may even sink with the ship to the depths of the sea.
- **Stormy weather:** One of the greatest dangers for seamen was the sea itself. Stormy weather would create large powerful waves and bad visibility resulting in many shipwrecks.

Battle of Trafalgar

This picture of the Battle of Trafalgar was painted by the famous British artist Joseph Turner. In the painting you can see Nelson's ship *Victory* stacked with rows of cannons. The air is filled with smoke from cannon and gun fire.

Whilst Britain defeated the French and Spanish in the Battle of Trafalgar led by Admiral Lord Nelson, this painting shows that it was not easily won. Instead it highlights the struggle, suffering and sacrifice the British Navy made during the battle.

Imagine you were one of the figures in the painting. Describe your experience. What would you see and hear? How would you be feeling?

Activity: Write a short story about your experience as a sailor on board *Victory* during the battle of Trafalgar. Illustrate your story by drawing your own picture of the battle.

Song 9 - The Ship in Distress

The text for this song is from "Real Sailor Songs" by J.Ashton, 1891. The tune came from Mr. H. Akhurst, from Lower Beeding, Sussex, and was collected by George Butterworth in June 1907. It is a narrative song and tells the story of a ship which experiences bad weather away at sea. As a result, they run out of food and have to eat the cats and dogs on the ship! After that, one man volunteers for them to eat him, but they see the coast of Lisbon and are saved! It's a very dramatic story, and great as a listening and comprehension song.

Lyrics

1. You seamen bold that plough the ocean
See dangers lands men do never know.
Some do gain glory and some promotion;
No tongue can tell what we undergo.
Through bitter storms in the height of battle,
Now mark you well what I do say,
Where thund'ring cannons loudly rattle,
There's no back door to run away.
2. A merchant ship, under Divers, captain,
A long time had they been bound to sea.
The weather proved to them so uncertain,
Which brought them to extremity.
Nothing was left poor souls to nourish
Nor to strengthen their feeble arms.
The whole ship' crew was nearly starving,
The men were nothing but skin and bone.

3. The cats and dogs how they did eat them,
Hunger proving to them severe.
Captain and men of one direction,
They all of them went equal shares.
At length, at length, the hour came on them,
The hour came on them most bitterly.
Poor fellows all stood titter totter,
Casting lots which of them should die.

4. The lot it fell on one poor fellow,
Who had a wife at home on shore.
But to think of eating our fellow creature,
It was that which grieved us ten times more.
I am willing to die, this young man answered,
But to the top mast haste away,
For perhaps some help you may discover,
While I unto the Lord do pray.

5. I think I spy a sail to windward,
About a league from us or more.
Then signals of distress were fired
And soon for us away she bore.
Captain and men, in one connection
All sorts of food denied us not,
And by this great an friendly action,
Safe into Lisbon harbour got.

The Ship in Distress



You sea-mean bold that plough the o-cean, See dan-gers lands-men do



ne-ver know, Some do gain glo-ry and some pro-mo-tion, No



tongue can tell what we un-der-go. Through bit-ter storms in the



height of bat-tle, Now mark you well what I do say, Where



thund'-ring can-nons do loud-ly rat-tle, There's



no back door to run a-way.



Glossary

- Top mast: one part of the mast of a ship. It carries the top sail.

Comprehension Questions

Listen to the song.

- 1) Can you tell us what happens in the story?
- 2) Why do they run out of food?
- 3) What do they eat?
- 4) What land to they see at the end of the song?

Activity:

- TASK – Listen to the song
- TASK - Can you write out the story in your own words?

Song 10 - High Barbaree

This is an old sea shanty set on the coast of High Barbaree, the riff coast of North Africa. Sea shanties were work songs usually sung in the merchant navy, and they were rhythmic so they could accompany specific activities on a ship. This works well as both a narrative song for listening and comprehension, and also as a fun song to sing.

High Barbaree

There were two loft - y ships from__ old__ Eng - land came,__ Blow
high,__ Blow low,__ and so__ sailed we,__ One was the Prince of
Lu - ther the o - ther the Prince of Wales,__ A -
sail - ing down a - long the coast of High Bar - ba - ree__

Lyrics

1. There were two lofty ships from old England came,
Blow high, blow low, and so sailed we;
One was the Prince of Luther, and the other Prince of Wales,
Sailing down along the coast of the High Barbaree.
2. "Aloft there, aloft!" our jolly boatswain cries,
Blow high, blow low, and so sailed we;
"Look ahead, look astern, look a-weather and a-lee,
Sailing down the coast of the High Barbaree."
3. There's nought upon the stern, there's nought upon the lee,
Blow high, blow low, and so sailed we;
But there's a lofty ship to windward, and she's sailing fast and free,
Sailing down along the coast of the High Barbaree.
4. "Oh, hail her, Oh, hail her," our gallant captain cried,
Blow high, blow low, and so sailed we;
"Are you a man-o'-war or a privateer," said he,
"Sailing down along the coast of the High Barbaree."
5. "Oh, I am not a man-o'-war nor privateer," said he,
Blow high, blow low, and so sailed we;
"But I'm a salt-sea pirate a-looking for my fee,
"Sailing down the coast of the High Barbaree."
6. Oh, 'twas broadside to broadside a long time we lay,
Blow high, blow low, and so sailed we;
Until the Prince of Luther shot the pirate's masts away,
Sailing down along the coast of the High Barbaree.
7. "Oh, quarter, Oh, quarter," those pirates then did cry,
Blow high, blow low, and so sailed we;
But the quarter that we gave them – we sunk them in the sea,
Sailing down along the coast of the High Barbaree.

Glossary

- **Bosun/Boatswain:** seaman who superintends sails, rigging, cordage, anchors and cables, and who also pipes the hands to their duties
- **Stern:** back part of a ship
- **Lee:** the side opposite to that from which the wind is blowing, i.e opposite to the weather side.
- **Man of war:** was a British Royal Navy expression for a powerful warship or frigate from the 16th to the 19th century
- **Privateer:** a privately owned vessel commissioned into war by a government
- **Broadside:** the side of a ship, often with all the cannon on.

Comprehension Questions

Listen to the song.

- 1) **What happens in the song?**
- 2) This song is a traditional song that sailors would have sung at sea – **does anyone know the name for that type of song?** (sea shanty)
- 3) Sea shanties are always very rhythmic, you could easily tap your foot along to the beat! This is because they were sung by a group of sailors whilst doing a job such as hoisting a sail, or hauling the anchor. **Why do you think it would be good to sing a rhythmic song whilst doing these jobs?**

Activity: Singing the song

- **Don't forget your warm ups!** See p7
- **TASK** – Learn the refrain lines of the song: 'Blow high, blow low, and so sailed we' and 'sailing down along the coast of High Barbaree' and sing along with the track
- **EXTENSION** – Divide into groups and learn the verse lines
- **EXTENSION 2** – Write your own verses telling a story you know about sailing the seas

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Blow High, Blow Low, and so sailed we!

.....

Sailing down along the coast of High Barbaree!



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