

1 Piracy has been around for many hundreds of years. In fact, there are still pirates sailing the seas today. However, when people think of pirates, their minds often go back to the Caribbean in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, when many sailors became pirates because of cruel trading laws.

2 The Spanish used to own colonies throughout South America. This was an area rich in silver. Pirates stood to make a fortune by either capturing the silver, or by picking off trading vessels that supplied the colonies. Some pirates also worked for other countries, such as England and France, who wanted to steal from the Spanish.

3 It is no surprise then that a pirate's life was filled with danger. Living such a life made pirates rough and desperate. However, they still had to maintain order and did this through establishing their own laws. Most ships had articles of agreement that each pirate had to sign. Any pirate found breaking these rules would be punished harshly.

4 A pirate could be punished in many different ways. The government punished pirates as criminals. Other times their fellow pirates punished them because they broke an oath.

5 Pirates caught by the authorities could be publicly hanged. This led to a slow and horrific death. One method of hanging was to put a hangman's noose around the pirate's neck, then throw the rope over a beam on the dock and lift the pirate up. This did not break the pirate's neck; instead he was left to choke slowly. The condemned pirate was sometimes marched through the street on public display before the hanging and many people would watch and cheer at these public executions.

6 After death from hanging, a pirate's body could be taken and hung up in chains to swing in the wind for public exhibition. The body would be left hanging until there was nothing left of it. If authorities wanted the body of a famous pirate to last longer, it would be painted in tar. This served as a warning to all would-be pirates.

7 Pirates found guilty of breaking their own code of conduct could be marooned. Marooning means to leave somebody on a desolate island with no hope of finding food or water. Sometimes offending pirates were left with a

bottle of rum and a pistol with one shot. This meant the pirate could shoot himself to avoid the agony of starving to death. However, many pirates believed if they took their own life, they would go to Hell, so they were left in an awful situation no matter what they did. This cruel punishment was for the severest of crimes, such as murder.

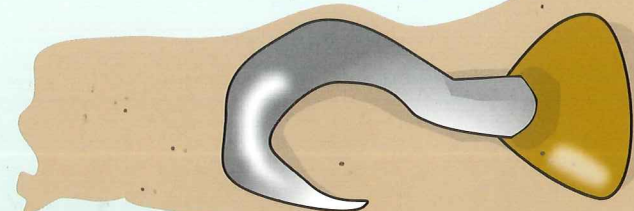
8 People often think of walking the plank as a famous pirate punishment. However, there doesn't seem to be any real evidence of plank walking. Pirate movies and novels may have created this. In these stories, pirates were blindfolded and forced to walk along a plank of wood until they fell into the water. They were left there to drown or be eaten by sharks.

9 The bloodiest, most painful punishment was the cat-o'-nine-tails. It involved being lashed with a whip that had nine, knotted leather straps. Normally the quartermaster, the sailor in charge of steering the ship, would give the pirate the number of lashings demanded. Salt or seawater may have been thrown onto the wounds to make it more painful. Many sailors died after this punishment because of infections caused from the cat-o'-nine-tails and the severe wounds it inflicted. This punishment was also common in the navy.

10 Pirates shuddered at the threat of being keelhailed. First, a rope was passed under both sides of the ship. The offending pirate was then tied to the rope and thrown over the side of the ship. Next, the rope was pulled from the other side of the ship and the offender would be dragged underwater and scraped against barnacles on the ship's hull and keel. A pirate could be pulled out of the water and dragged

back under several times. This often led to the pirate drowning or dying from infection. Again, this punishment was more common in the navy.

- 11 These punishments may sound brutal, but just think about a pirate's normal life — they faced starvation, disease and horrible injury on a day-to-day basis. If the punishments weren't worse than their lifestyle, pirates wouldn't obey their own laws.



Questions

- The articles of agreement were
 - a set of stories about pirates.
 - a set of rules to abide by.
 - an explanation of pirate punishments.
- Marooning means
 - to take your own life.
 - to be left on a desolate island.
 - to hang in chains.
- Who would usually give the cat-o'-nine-tails punishment?
 - the quartermaster
 - another pirate
 - the captain
- They hung pirates in chains after death to
 - encourage other pirates.
 - honour the pirates.
 - discourage people from becoming pirates.
- After keelhauling, people often died through
 - having a heart attack.
 - infection and drowning.
 - barnacle cancer.
- Hanging was a slow and horrific death because
 - the noose was loose.
 - lots of people cheered.
 - it did not break the pirate's neck, so he choked.

Vocabulary

Find words in the text that match the meanings below. The word is in the section shown in brackets.

- A shiny metal (2)
- Sentenced or destined (5)
- To have covered a person's eyes (8)
- Shellfish that attach themselves to ships (10)
- Cruel and atrocious treatment (11)

Grammar

Find an **adjective** (a word to describe a noun) in these sentences.

- Sailors became pirates due to cruel laws.
- The bloodiest punishment was the cat-o-nine tails.
- This led to an horrific death.
- They faced starvation, disease and horrible injury.

Back To The Text...

- Is it fact or opinion when the author writes 'Pirates shuddered at the threat of being keelhauled,' in section 10?
 - fact
 - opinion
- In which part of the library would you find this text?
 - fiction
 - non-fiction

18 What would be a good sub-heading for section 6?

- Plank Punishments
- Left Hanging

Cloze

The Jolly Roger

Choose **five** of the following words to complete this cloze passage.

most seas world pirate

ship attacked killer black

At one time the *Jolly Roger* was the most feared flag in the 19. The sight of a skull and cross bones on a 20 background was often the last warning an unsuspecting ship received. It was first seen in this form in 1700, when Emanuel Wynne hauled it up the 21. Many other versions of the flag existed, including the *Old Roger*. This design was used by the 22 John Quelch and showed a spear piercing a heart. Some say 'Old Roger' was another term for the devil. You were certainly in for a devil of a time if you were 23 by pirates.

Challenge Option

Research: How many names of real pirates can you list?

