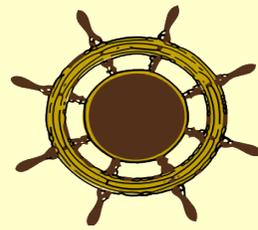


# Beware of Pirates!



Black Bart was one of the most successful pirates of his time, with the capture of over 400 ships and over 50 million pounds of loot. Unlike other pirates, he encouraged prayer, drank a lot of tea instead of alcohol, and forbade drinking and gambling. He preferred to wear fancy gentleman's clothes: a rich crimson waistcoat and breeches, a hat with a red feather, and a diamond cross hanging from his neck.

Born John Roberts in Little Newcastle, southern Wales about 1682, Black Bart was the last great pirate of the Golden Age and had no equal in his day. While working as a third mate on the British slaver *Princess*, he was captured to be a slave - forced hand by noted pirate Howell Davis in June 1719 and elected captain when Davis was killed in attack on *Principe*, off the Guinea coast. Roberts leveled the town in retribution.

Growing tired of the pickings around Guinea, Black Bart sailed to the Brazilian coast, took several good prizes, and in early 1720 went northward for some rest at Devil's Island. His reputation arrived in the Caribbean before him, where he quickly exited and sailed north to New England to sell what he had accumulated.

Summertime 1720 was very successful in Newfoundland with many captures, most notably the plunder and sinking of all but one of 22 merchant ships in the Bay of Treffisi when the crews fled to shore just at his arrival. The spared ship was a French brig he named the *Royal Fortune*, which Black Bart added guns to and sailed to the Caribbean after a failed attempt to sail to Africa.

In the fall of 1720, Captain Roberts began a six-month tear through the West Indies. With the almost unchallenged captures of 100 ships or more, he angered the provincial governors, one of whom he hanged after taking his warship. With shipping coming to a standstill, he went to Africa in the spring of 1721, where he learned to profit from the sale of slaves off the ships that got in his way. After careening and trading for several weeks in Sierra Leone, Black Bart headed east in August of 1721 toward Liberia, where the capture of the Royal Africa Company's *Onslow* became the last *Royal Fortune*.



A legendary 30-month career came to an end on February 10, 1722, when the warship HMS Swallow captained by Challoner Ogle caught up with Black Bart off the coast of Cape Lopez (now Gabon). It is uncertain whether he was trying to escape or size up the opponent, but the grapeshot killed him either way. His crew threw his body overboard as he had always requested, and they eventually stopped their disheartened resistance.

After being thrown into prison under the Cape Coast Castle in West Africa, those who remained were given the largest pirate trial and execution of the time on March 28, 1722. 54 were hanged, 37 received prison or hard time, 70 African pirates were sold into slavery, and the rest were acquitted.



Answer the following questions:

- 1) Do you like stories about pirates? What do you particularly like about them?
- 2) Do you consider pirates bad people who have no right to live (considering the things they did) and should be put to death?
- 3) Would you have liked to be a pirate? Explain your answer.

4) Was Black Bart special in comparison to other pirates? In what way?

5) What should have been the right punishment for pirates who plundered and killed people?

Do you know other famous pirate stories? Tell your family and find the most interesting pirate story.

## **Pirate facts!**

- the Jolly Roger flag, with its black background and white skull and crossbones, was designed to be scary. This flag was not used by all pirates, usually it was only flown by those sailing in the Spanish Main.
- pirates believed that wearing pierced earrings would improve their eyesight.
- they probably didn't have talking parrots.
- although pirates have been around since the 15th century, most pirating happened between 1690 and 1720.
- they believed that having women on board their ship was bad luck. They also believed that whistling on a ship would cause the weather to turn stormy.
- ships sailing on their own often sailed close to warships or joined other convoys of ships to protect themselves from pirates. Pirates could only attack one ship at a time,

so if the sailors traveled in groups there was less chance of their boat being the one that was attacked.

- almost all pirates stole their ships because they couldn't buy ships in case they got caught and sent to jail. Once they had taken over a ship they had to convert it for pirate life, this usually meant making more room for sailors to live on board and strengthening the decks to hold the weight of the heavy cannons.