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The Golden Age of Pirates

When you think of pirates, you might imagine an eye-patched seafarer with a cutlass in hand, sailing the high seas in search of treasure. But did you know that these swashbucklers actually existed? The birth of piracy was over 2000 years ago! In Ancient Greece, sea robbers began lurking around trading routes. They challenged anyone who passed by and mercilessly looted their ships. This marked the birth of piracy. But it wasn't until the period between 1620 and 1720—the so-called “golden age of piracy”—that pirates truly thrived.



Although there were many pirates, the main pirates were the Privateers, the Buccaneers and the Corsairs. The Privateers were lawful pirates and authorized by their governments to attack and plunder enemy ships. In return, they shared their loot with their home country. Sir Francis Drake, England's most famous privateer, even received knighthood for his services. The Buccaneers operated from bases in the West Indies, Buccaneers targeted Spanish ships in the Caribbean. Armed with swords and pistols, they were small but swift—able to take on larger, better-armed vessels. The Corsairs were Christian or Muslim pirates who operated in the Mediterranean, Corsairs were equally daring. They sought riches and adventure on the open seas.

Pirates dreamed of wealth and a better life, but they faced strict rules enforced by their captains. Breaking these rules meant death. Innovative tactics helped them succeed: jamming victim ships' rudders, using grappling hooks to board, and wielding pistols, daggers, and cutlasses for hand-to-hand combat.

Pirates created smoke screens by lighting yellow sulfur, and they even made homemade hand grenades using liquor bottles filled with gunpowder. Merchant seamen tried to prevent pirates from climbing aboard by greasing their decks or scattering dried peas and broken glass. When you hear of tales of pirates, remember that these real-life adventurers once roamed the seas, seeking fortune and leaving their mark on history!

1. *Read the reading passage thoroughly.*
2. *Underline any word or sentence you don't understand.*

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Answer according to the reading passage:

- 1. What marked the 'golden age of piracy'?**
 - a. The Middle Ages
 - b. 1600s-1700's
 - c. Ancient Greece

- 2. What type of pirate operated from bases in the West Indies?**
 - a. Privateers
 - b. Corsairs
 - c. Buccaneers

- 3. What did Buccaneers primarily target?**
 - a. Spanish ships in the Caribbean
 - b. English merchant vessels
 - c. Dutch explorers

- 4. What innovative tactics did pirates use to succeed?**
 - a. jamming victim ships' rudders
 - b. greasing their own ship's deck
 - c. using grappling hooks

- 5. Which pirate received knighthood for their services as a Privateer?**
 - a. Captain Kidd
 - b. Blackbeard
 - c. Sir Francis Drake

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Open Response Questions

Open response questions for thinking skills:

1. Inferring
2. Making Connections
3. Summarizing
4. Visualizing

1. Why do you think pirates became legendary figures in history and popular culture?
 2. Why do you think men wanted to become pirates?
 3. Retell this reading passage in your own words in 5 sentences.
 4. Describe what a pirate would look and act like.
- If you were a pirate, what would be your most prized treasure and why?
 - Research a famous pirate and share interesting facts about him.
 - Describe your life as a captain of a pirate ship.
 - Could pirates still exist today? Explain.
 - Explain how you would feel if you were the captain of a ship that was seized by pirates. What would you do?