

The Life of a Pirate

Life on a Pirate Ship

Many pirate ships were small and fast so they could chase and catch other ships. Many merchant ships were larger and slower than pirate ships. Life as a pirate wasn't easy. The work was dangerous and the conditions on board a pirate ship were tough. Pirates were often cold and wet and didn't sleep in comfortable conditions. Pirates often got sick. One of the reasons for this was because of the food they ate. Pirates didn't have much fresh food on board. The meats they ate were salted so they could last a long time at sea. Pirates also ate hard biscuits, bone soups and anything else they could steal from other ships.



Rules

Pirates had rules they had to follow. These rules were to make sure everything ran as smoothly as possible. The crew were expected to keep their cutlass and pistol clean and ready to use. It was forbidden for pirates to play dice or card games for money. Pirates were not allowed to steal from one another, nor could they fight each other whilst on board to solve disagreements. Attempting to escape the ship was strictly forbidden.

Punishments

There was a long list of punishments at the ready to make sure the crew obeyed the rules. Mast heading was a punishment for more minor crimes. The pirate was tied to the top of the mast and had to endure the cold, uncomfortable conditions. Flogging was a very common form of punishment. Some pirates who refused to follow the rules were sold as slaves. For the most serious crimes, a pirate might have been marooned. This means they were left to die on a deserted island with little, or no, food or water.

1. Why were pirate ships usually quite small?

2. Why did pirates often get sick?

3. Why do you think a pirate might have wanted to escape the ship?

4. What was mast-heading?

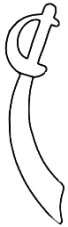
5. List three foods pirates ate.

6. What do you think the hardest thing about being a pirate would have been? Explain.

The Life of a Pirate Answers

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1. Why were pirate ships usually quite small?

Pirate ships were usually small so they could catch and capture larger ships.

2. Why did pirates often get sick?

Answers may vary. Eg. Pirates often got sick because they didn't have fresh food and the conditions were cold.

3. Why do you think a pirate might have wanted to escape the ship?

Answers may vary. Eg. The conditions would have been very tough. The work was dangerous. Pirates might have become scared during a fight.

4. What was mast-heading?

Mast-heading was a punishment whereby a pirate was tied to the head of a mast.

5. List three foods pirates ate.

Pirates ate bone soup, hard biscuits and salted meats.

6. What do you think the hardest thing about being a pirate would have been? Explain.

Answers will vary.