



Day 15-16 Age of Exploration Unit
90 - 120 Minutes

Sea Dogs and Pirates of the Caribbean

SEA DOGS / ENGLISH PRIVATEERS – TWO-DAY DIFFERENTIATED LESSON PLAN (GRADES 3–9)
45–60 minutes each day

TITLE:

The Sea Dogs of the Age of Exploration: Drake, Hawkins, Raleigh, Frobisher, and the Role of Queen Elizabeth I

CENTRAL QUESTION:

How did the English Sea Dogs shape the Age of Exploration—and why did Queen Elizabeth I support them?

OBJECTIVES:

Students will be able to:

- Explain who the Sea Dogs were and why Queen Elizabeth I supported privateering.
- Identify major Sea Dogs and describe their achievements.
- Explain the difference between explorers, privateers, and pirates.
- Analyze different perspectives: England's view versus Spain's view.
- Demonstrate understanding through differentiated reading, writing, and creative tasks.

MATERIALS:

- Sea Dogs article
- Sea Dogs PowerPoint presentation
- Reading comprehension options (Queen Elizabeth I, Sir Francis Drake, John Cabot, Captain James Cook, Northwest Passage)
- Interactive Pirates of the Caribbean Map
- Writing sheets or notebooks

DAY 1 — Introduction

1. Warm-Up Activity (10 - 15 minutes)

Prompt: "What is the difference between an explorer, a pirate, and a privateer?"

Don't answer the question directly, but rather distribute the Pirates vocabulary activity. Students will likely not be able to match all of the vocabulary with their definitions, which is fine. When students are done, go over the answers with them and define each term using the answer key.

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/explorers-and-the-age-of-exploration/explorers-games-and-fun-stuff/pirate-themed-vocabulary-printable>

2. Direct Instruction with PowerPoint (20 minutes)

Teacher presents key slides summarizing:

- Why England supported Sea Dogs
- The role of Queen Elizabeth I
- Drake, Hawkins, Frobisher, and Raleigh
- Impact on Spanish power and English expansion

Grades 3–5: Emphasize the main points - English privateers helped make their queen rich

Grades 6–9: Emphasize the impact English privateers had on the Age of Exploration and empires of Spain and England. Compare and contrast the accomplishments of the Sea Dogs.

You can also use our Sea Dogs Article at:

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/admin/pages/american-history/explorers-and-the-age-of-exploration/unit-and-curriculum/the-sea-dogs-of-the-age-of-exploration>

Optional: Dig into the stories of individual British privateers:

Sir Francis Drake | Sir Henry Morgan | Sir Walter Raleigh

3. Pirates of the Caribbean Interactive Map and Scavenger Hunt (25 minutes)

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/explorers-and-the-age-of-exploration/pirates/pirates-of-the-caribbean>

Project the map to the whiteboard and explain to students they can learn about the important geographical locations to English Sea Dogs and Pirates of the Caribbean by clicking on the points of the map. Click on any point and read it aloud to students so they understand. The map has great historical information, stories, and legends about places like Havana, Port Royal, Granada, and others. Then, distribute the printable scavenger hunt to students and tell them they will have to do some reading to find the answers. Give students about 20 minutes and then review answers using the answer key. Elaborate where possible. Ask students what point

they found most interesting and why.

DAY 2 — Pirate Fun

1. Warm-Up Discussion (5 minutes)

“How might the English describe the Sea Dogs? How might the Spanish describe them?”

2. Interactive Activity: Create a Letter of Marque (15–20 minutes)

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/explorers-and-the-age-of-exploration/explorers-games-and-fun-stuff/make-your-own-pirate-license-letter-of-marque>

Students design their own “Letter of Marque” pirate license by building a custom pirate portrait, flag, and parrot using draggable stamps, drawing tools, colors, textures, and symbols. They then create a pirate identity by choosing a pirate name, naming their ship and parrot, writing mission orders, and signing with a real signature pad. When they’re finished, students can save or print a polished, landscape license as a keepsake or assessment artifact.

You can also use the printable activity version:

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/explorers-and-the-age-of-exploration/explorers-games-and-fun-stuff/letter-of-marque>

3. Pirates in Popular Culture: Design a “Pirate-themed” Logo on a Football Helmet (15 minutes)

This fun activity discusses pirate-themed mascots in sports and then challenges students to design a new pirate logo on a football helmet. This activity will activate imagination and creativity.

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/explorers-and-the-age-of-exploration/explorers-games-and-fun-stuff/designing-a-pirate-mascot>

3. Pirates of the Caribbean Scavenger Hunt (15 minutes)

Students complete your printable scavenger hunt based on the “Myths and Wonders of the Age of Exploration” article, which includes:

- Sea Dogs
- Navigation tools
- Caribbean ports
- Treasure routes
- Myths such as St. Elmo’s Fire, Seven Cities, Fountain of Youth

Grades 6–9: Add challenge responses such as:
“What geographic features made Spanish treasure routes vulnerable?”

4. Math or Language Arts Extensions (15-25 minutes)

For students in grades 3-6, we offer some really fun pirate-themed math games including:

Place Value Pirates:

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/explorers-and-the-age-of-exploration/explorers-games-and-fun-stuff/place-value-pirates>

In Place Value Pirates, students must use their place value skills to dispatch of the wretched pirate Sir Francis Place Value and his horrible band of place value pirates! Simply read the prompt that appears at the top of the game and click or touch the pirate with the number that matches the prompt. For example, a prompt might read "'7" in the thousands place. Scan the pirates and dispatch of the one with the number that contains a "7" in the thousands place. The game consists of five rounds; each round more challenging than the last. For computer versions, users can earn codes after each round so they never have to start all over again. In addition, the game can be played with or without decimals.

Decimals of the Caribbean:

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/explorers-and-the-age-of-exploration/explorers-games-and-fun-stuff/decimals-of-the-caribbean>

You play the role of a 17th century Caribbean Buccaneer who sails from port to port looking to steal from Spanish treasure ships. Read the decimal message that appears at the top of the screen. Then, shoot the boat that matches the decimal message (that has the numerical version of the message) with your decimal cannonball by clicking on it. You move from round to round by destroying all of the ships. After each round you successfully pass, you can obtain a special code that will take you to that round each time you play. Decimals of the Caribbean hits multiple Common Core standards as it can be played with or without decimals. Yes — there is a version of DECIMALS of the Caribbean without decimals :)

5. Reading Comprehension and Literacy Options (20 min.)

[LearnAboutAmerica.com](https://www.learnaboutamerica.com) offers many reading comprehension and literacy options to reinforce comprehension, vocabulary, and history. Use your discretion to choose any of the options that suit your class or classes.

- [Queen Elizabeth I](#) - Printable or Online Lexile 750 - 950
- [The Plunders of Sir Francis Drake](#) - Printable or Online Lexile 750 - 950
- Sir Francis Drake - [Online](#) | [Printable](#) Lexile 1200
- [Sir Henry Morgan Online Reading Comprehension](#) - Lexile 1100
- Sir Walter Raleigh - [Online](#) | [Printable](#) - Lexile 980
- [Sea Dogs and Pirates of the Caribbean Super Cloze Series](#)

6. Optional - Sea Dogs Correct-me Passage (10 min.)

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/explorers-and-the-age-of-exploration/unit-and-curriculum/sea-dogs-correct-me-passage>

In this activity, you'll read a short paragraph about Sea Dogs of the Age of Exploration that contains **10 hidden factual errors**. Click on any word or phrase you think is wrong, choose the correct answer from four options, and keep fixing until the entire paragraph is accurate!
