

READING SUCCESS

Second Edition

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⁶ **cross-bones** two bones placed across each other

⁷ **widespread** very common; spread out greatly

¹⁷ **ransom** money demanded by someone for the release of another

²⁴ **fight off** to use a lot of effort to defeat something

Pirates



Pirates are robbers who attack ships and steal from them anything they can find of value. There have been pirates as long as ships have carried cargo. Not only do they steal, but they sometimes kill the crews of ships that they have robbed. In story books, the flag of a pirate ship is the skull and **cross-bones**.

Piracy was very **widespread** during the 15th and 16th centuries. During this time the ships of European explorers such as Christopher Columbus were often loaded with treasure stolen from other countries. Sir Francis Drake, a very famous English sailor, was often a kind of pirate. He attacked ships belonging to foreign countries and stole their treasure for his queen.

There are still pirates in some parts of the world. The most dangerous area is off the coast of Somalia, where fishermen have become pirates because they can no longer make a living from fishing. These pirates do not steal from ships, however. They capture them and demand a **ransom** from the owners. These ships are often very large and are carrying very valuable cargo, usually oil. These ships and their cargo are worth many millions of dollars. The owners usually pay a ransom of a few million dollars to get their ships back.

Pirates are able to capture ships nowadays because merchant ships do not carry guns. The crews of these ships are unable, therefore, to **fight off** the pirates.

Reading Time _____ minutes _____ seconds 239 words



Vocabulary Review

■ Fill in the blanks.

sailors

merchant

ransom

1. The owner of the ship paid the pirates a _____ of a million dollars.
2. Pirates are _____ who rob ships.
3. A _____ ship is one that carries cargo.

Reading Comprehension

■ Choose the best answer.

1. Why do pirates sometime attack ships?
 - a. They are angry with the sailors.
 - b. They want to hold the ships to ransom.
 - c. They know that all ships do not carry guns.
 - d. They want to join the crew of the ships.
2. Why do some fishermen become pirates?
 - a. They want to be sailors.
 - b. They are not fishermen.
 - c. They come from Somalia.
 - d. They cannot earn a living from fishing.
3. Where are there pirates today?
 - a. Everywhere
 - b. Off the coast of Somalia
 - c. European waters
 - d. Where there aren't any fish
4. A 'crew' is _____.
 - a. a kind of hair cut for pirates
 - b. a group of people working together
 - c. a person who pays a ransom
 - d. someone who robs ships

Summary

■ Fill in each blank with the correct word.

merchant

ransom

coast

robbers

cargo

There have been pirates for thousands of years. They are the 1 _____ of the sea. They attack 2 _____ ships and either steal the 3 _____ or demand a 4 _____. Some places have more pirates than others. Nowadays one of the most dangerous seas is off the 5 _____ of Somalia.