



SAILORS Whalers FANTASTIC Sea Voyages

An **Activity Guide** to
North American Sailing Life



VALERIE PETRILLO

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whalers
FANTASTIC
Sea Voyages

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V A L E R I E P E T R I L L O



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With love to my home crew: to Hank, my patient, encouraging husband, who now knows more about whaling than the Red Sox (well, almost). To my kids who lived with harpoons in the kitchen, lobscouse for supper, icebergs in the freezer, and a shortage of clean towels. Love and thanks to Mike, who offered artistic help and guidance; Nick, who cheerfully kid-tested the activities; and Noelle, the other writer in the family, who always liked Mom's stories best. And, finally, to my sister Norma, who listens and makes me laugh.

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Time Line



4,000 years ago

Native Americans catch whales that wash ashore and use canoes to capture whales along the shallow coastline.

1620

Mayflower lands at Plymouth Rock. Settlers hunt whales right from shore.



1750

Tryworks first used onboard a whaleship.

1784

The *Empress of China* enters the anchorage of Whampoa to trade with the Chinese.

1793

Pacific whaling begins when the *Rebecca* rounds Cape Horn to deliver a full cargo of sperm whale oil home to New Bedford.



1640

First organized whale fishery, Long Island, New York.

1712

Sperm whaling begins off the coast of Massachusetts.



1776

America declares independence from England. British blockade colonial ports during the Revolutionary War and bring whaling to a halt.



1802

First steamboat launched in England.

1808

Congress outlaws American participation in the African slave trade.

1818

The first American packet ship, *James Monroe* of the Black Ball line, sails from New York to Liverpool.



1845

The *Rainbow*, the first American clipper ship, is launched.

1856

Harpoon gun is invented.



1859

Petroleum oil discovered in Pennsylvania. Kerosene begins to replace whale oil for lighting fuel.

1869

First transcontinental railroad is complete.

1871

Thirty-three whalers lost, trapped in Arctic ice.

1924

On August 25 the last whaler, the *Wanderer*, sails out from New Bedford, Massachusetts.



1812

War of 1812. British impress American ships and force crews into naval service. Americans respond by recapturing ships and crippling the British fleet.

1841

Fresnel lighthouse lens is used.

1848

Gold discovered in California.

Lewis Temple invents toggle iron harpoon.

Whalers enter Bering Sea, Arctic.

1854

Clipper ship *Lightning*, built by Donald McKay, sets a world record by traveling 436 nautical miles in one day.



1861

Civil War devastates whaling and merchant fleet.

Confederates burn and sink 40 ships.

1925

Final whaling voyage concludes with the return of the *John R. Manta*.

Introduction

Imagine yourself at the bow of a sailing ship, the ocean spray on your face and the endless blue horizon ahead. You are a sailor beginning a three-year deepwater journey across the world. What will you take with you? Who will you leave behind? Do you think you'll return alive?

The seafaring life was a challenging one in the 19th century—whaling ships searched the seven seas for whales that yielded precious oil and bone. Merchant ships, with their tall sails and sleek shapes, rushed to trade cargo from foreign ports to America's shores.

Maritime history covers many subjects: naval history, fishing, inland waterways, commerce, exploration, adventure, and whaling. *Sailors, Whalers, Fantastic Sea Voyages: An Activity Guide to North American Sailing Life* takes you on a journey to learn about North America's deepwater sailors: whalers and merchant seamen who made their living from the sea, and whose jobs took them away for months and years at a time.

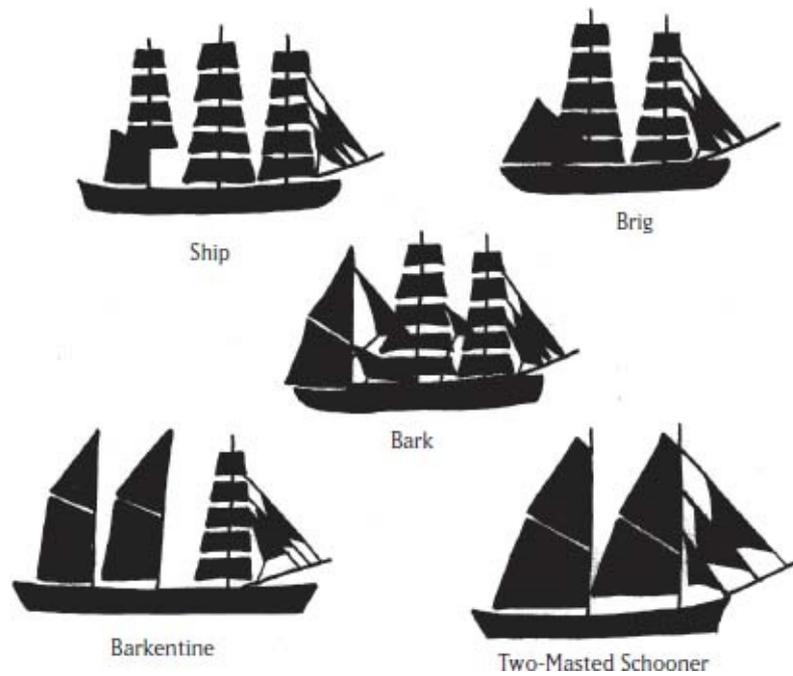
Our story begins with the daily life of the sailor. We sail with him as we learn about the clothes he wore, the food he ate, and the superstitions he held—about everything from sailing on Friday to losing a bucket overboard. Then we'll make some sailor's crafts, from shadow box ships to sea chests. We'll hear stories about children who grew up on sailing ships and take a peek in the *galley*, the ship's kitchen. We'll even try our hand at making *dandyfunk*, a sailor's snack.



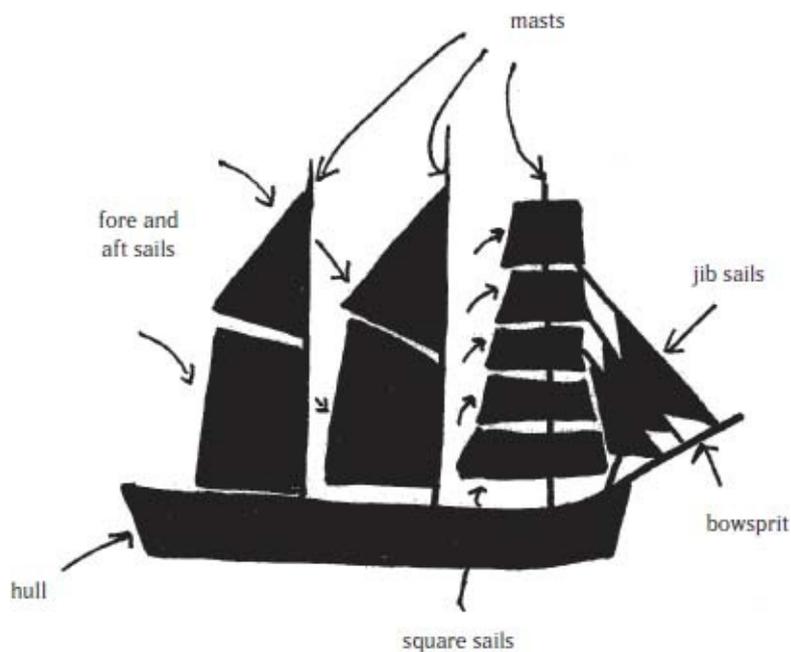
Clipper ship *Three Brothers*, 2,972 tons (2,696 metric tons). *Library of Congress*

In [Chapter 2](#) we move on to the life of the whalers and experience the heart-pounding excitement of the whale hunt. We'll watch as a sailor goes from *greenhand*, a

new recruit, to *old salt*, an experienced sailor. You'll see why the whale was so valuable in early America and how its oil lit the lamps of the world. Along the way you'll see how whaling progressed from coastal whaling in canoes to deepwater whaling in large wooden sailing ships. Then we'll join the crew to mold a set of whale stamps, which the whalers used to record their sightings, and stroll into port with a whalebone walking stick.



Types of Sailing Ships



Parts of a Sailing Ship

The sea traders follow in [Chapter 3](#)—you'll explore the lives and work of America's merchant sailors. We'll accompany them as they sail across the oceans in magnificent

clipper ships in search of all that the world has to offer. Our trip takes us from China for silk, tea, and porcelain to seeking bird's nests in the cliffs of Borneo. We'll come face to face with real pirates; eat *lobscouse*, an authentic sailor's dinner; and make a sewing palm for mending sails.

In [Chapter 4](#), foreign ports beckon. This chapter is about the sailor on *liberty*—free time during which the sailors were allowed to leave the ship. Join the sailors as they see the sights, taste the foods, play the games, and experience the cultures of different seaports around the world. Sailors were also tourists, buying or trading for native crafts that they brought home. Make an English pedlar (that's how they spelled it!) doll, or a Maori grass skirt from the Bay of Islands; join in the Hawaiian game of kimo, or test your visual skills with Chinese tangrams.

[Chapter 5](#) ends this book and focuses on the sailor coming home. It was quite an event when deepwater sailors returned from sea, for they had often been gone for two or three years! This chapter lets us in on the life of the sailor at home. You'll learn some of the many old-fashioned American games he played, such as fox and geese, dominoes, ropewalk, and jack straws. You'll also learn about the crafts of the seaport: sail making, barrel making, and figurehead carving.

Throughout the book you'll find interesting facts about seafaring life kept safe inside a treasure chest. What really happened to Captain Cook and why sailors didn't believe in learning to swim are some of the treasure in this chest.

You'll also find an extensive resource section so you can learn more about seafaring life. There is a glossary of nautical words, a list of maritime museums and historic lighthouses you can visit, a listing of seafaring Web sites, and even a list of seaworthy movies.

Now off we go to our high sea adventures!

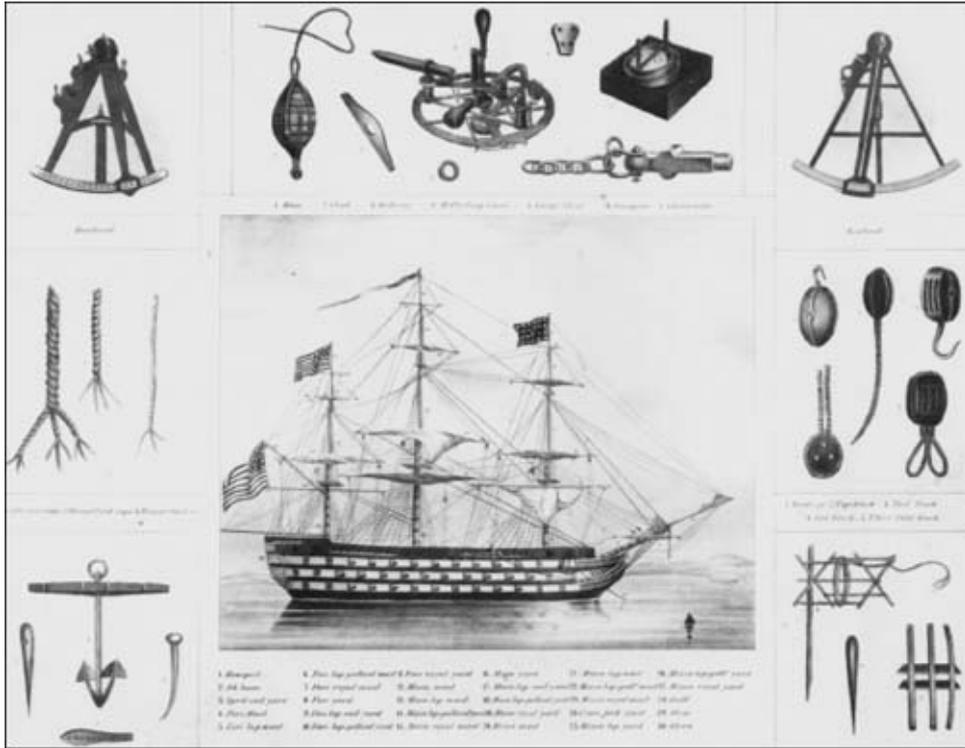


1

A Sailor's Life for Me!

What was it like to be a sailor? This chapter will give you a chance to climb onboard a sailing ship and experience life through the eyes of a greenhand. The daily life of a deepwater sailor was passed down from generations of men who made their living from the sea. Join us on our voyage as we learn to talk like sailors, eat sailor's grub, sing sea chanteys, and dance the sailor's hornpipe. We'll hear the story of a mutiny, make a ship's anchor, and take a turn as a lookout. When we cross the equator, King Neptune will visit us. Then we can relax in our bunks, maybe get a sailor's tattoo or make a squeezebox to play.

Who were the sailors? The majority were young. Some shipped out in their teens, but most were in their early twenties when they headed out to sea. Shipping accounts reveal that half of most crews were first-time sailors as opposed to the old salts we often think of from folklore. For many of these men, shipping out to sea was the first time they had been away from home. They struggled with terrible homesickness as they dealt with the tremendous physical and emotional demands of becoming a sailor.



A ship and its furniture. *Library of Congress*

The young seamen were seeking adventure and employment, and trying to prove themselves as men. As for the old salts, they simply saw no other way to make a living, so as soon as one voyage ended they shipped out on another. These men's wives lived as widows and their children grew up without fathers. There were so many female-run businesses in the seaport of Nantucket, Massachusetts, that one street was nicknamed *Petticoat Row*. And when the children of these old salts followed their fathers to the call of the sea, it was their mothers and grandmothers they pined for.

Build a Shadow Box Ship

The ship was the sailor's entire world for months and years at a time. It was his home, his transportation, his shelter from the mighty ocean, his workplace, and his place to socialize. Of all sailors' hobbies, the building of model ships was the most popular. They carved model ships out of wood, whalebone, or ivory, and sewed the sails with scraps of canvas tied with rope and string. The sailor used whatever materials were available to him.

The shadow box was a popular 19th-century art form, and ship models were often displayed this way. Make a model of the ship known as a bark. This type of ship was commonly used for whaling.

What You Need

A grown-up to assist

Blue construction paper

Scissors

Sturdy shallow box, 13 inches (33.02 centimeters) high by 15 inches (38.1 centimeters) wide or larger

Glue stick

Pencil

1 white 12-inch (30.48 centimeters) by 18-inch (45.72 centimeters) by 2-millimeters-thick craft foam sheet (available in craft stores)

Hole punch

4 wooden dowels, ¼ inch (6.35 millimeters) thick by 12 inches (30.48 centimeters) long (available in craft stores)

Knife (for adult use)

Sturdy string (such as kite string)

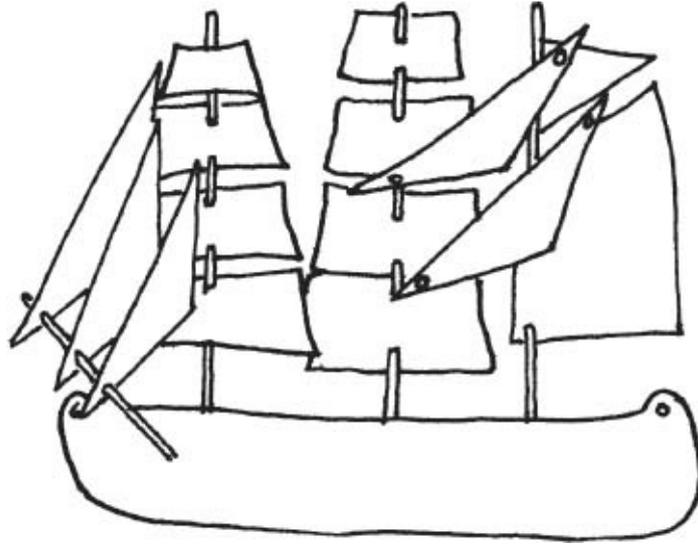
Glue

1 black 12-inch (30.48 centimeters) by 18-inch (45.72 centimeters) by 2-millimeters-thick craft foam sheet

Pen

2 brass fasteners

What You Do



1. Cut the construction paper to fit the inside bottom of the box.
2. Glue the paper down with the glue stick.
3. Pencil the shapes from the templates below onto the white foam and cut out. You will need two each of the square sails in the first column, one each of the sails in the middle column, and five of the long triangular sails in the last column.
4. Punch holes where shown.
5. Weave the dowels through the top and bottom of each sail to match the picture.
6. Ask an adult to cut the fourth dowel in half. Use one of the pieces as a *bowsprit* (the sideways spar).
7. Tie the triangular sails to the dowels with the string.
8. Glue the dowels to the construction paper. Do not glue down the sails or string.
9. Pinch the top and bottom of the sails together so that they billow out away from the box. Let dry.
10. Cut a 15-inch (38.1-centimeter) by 2½-inch (6.35-centimeter) piece of black foam for the bottom of the ship. Lay the foam across the bottom of the box and push each side in about 1 inch (2.54 centimeters) so that it pops out.
11. With the point of a pen, push a hole through the top inside left corner of the foam and the box underneath. Do the same to the other side.
12. Attach to the box with the fasteners. Display upright.

