
An illustration showing four sailors in period clothing working on a wooden deck. One is leaning over a cannon, another is standing nearby, and two others are further back. The scene is set against a blue sky.

A Sailor's Life for Me!

A small, fluffy yellow dog is standing on the deck, looking up at the sailor. It has a black collar.

Welcome aboard
shipmate! Are you ready
for a seafaring
adventure?

Old Ironsides Activity Book

USS Constitution Museum, Boston



USS Constitution
Museum

This activity book is made possible by a grant from the
Institute of Museum and Library Service



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A Sailor's Life for Me!

Old Ironsides Activity Book



Illustrations by Stephen Biesty

Text by Richard Platt and the USS Constitution Museum

A project of the USS Constitution Museum, Boston

2020

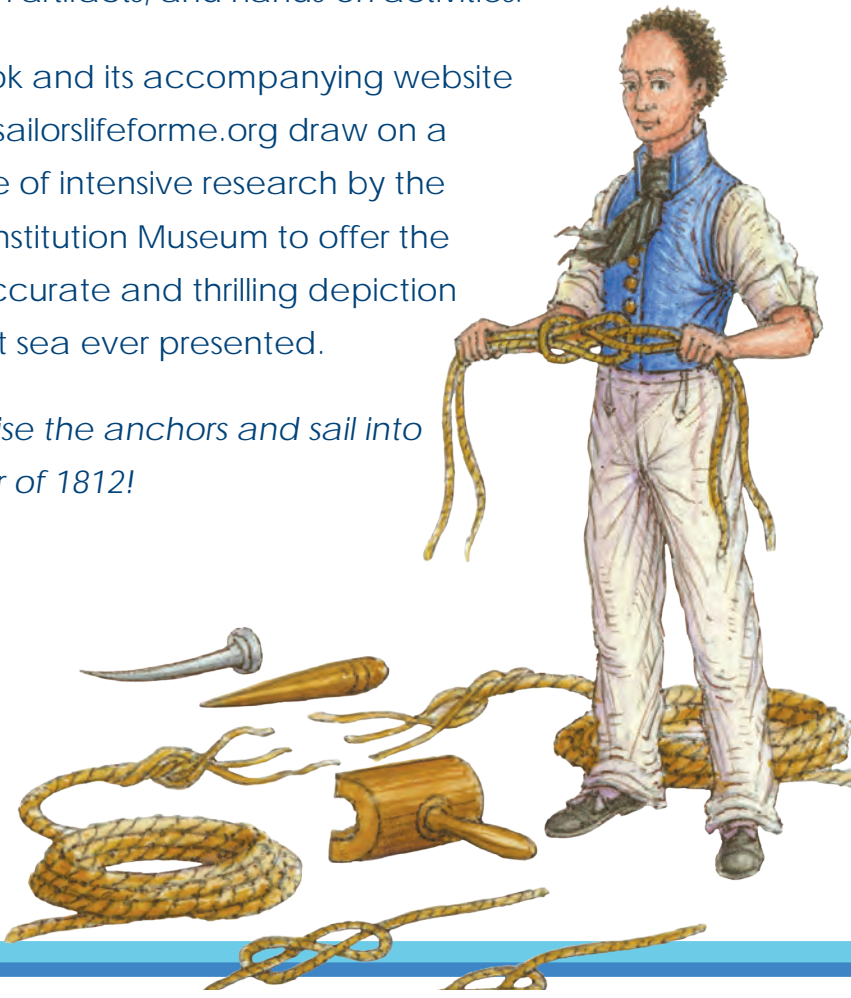
Welcome aboard!

Prepare to set sail on a seafaring adventure. Explore the life of a young sailor on board *USS Constitution*, "Old Ironsides," during the War of 1812 from recruiting to battle to victorious homecoming. Tie a knot, try a sailor's recipe, and test your courage in battle.

Meet the crew and discover life on board *Constitution's* crowded decks through vivid, detailed drawings, lively text, museum artifacts, and hands-on activities.

This book and its accompanying website www.asailorslifeforme.org draw on a decade of intensive research by the USS Constitution Museum to offer the most accurate and thrilling depiction of life at sea ever presented.

Now raise the anchors and sail into the War of 1812!



Did you know?

USS Constitution is the oldest commissioned warship afloat in the world. Launched in Boston in 1797, she saw service in the Quasi War with France, the Barbary Wars, and the War of 1812, emerging with an undefeated record. In 1997, in honor of the 200th anniversary of her launch, *Constitution* sailed under her own power for the first time in 116 years. She was made America's Ship of State in 2009. Today, you can visit *USS Constitution* in Boston, MA year round!



Visit the Ship's website at:

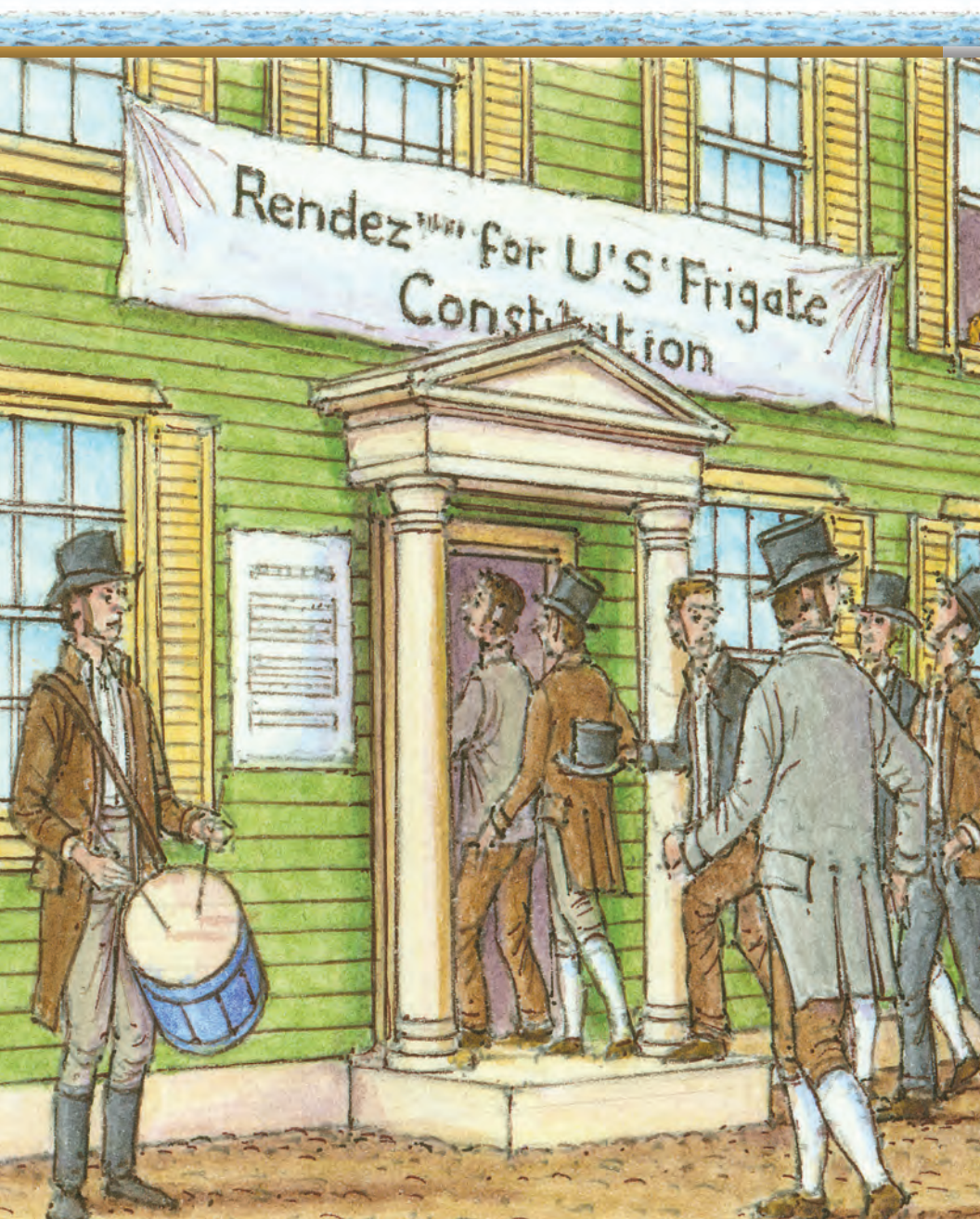
www.navy.mil/USS-CONSTITUTION/

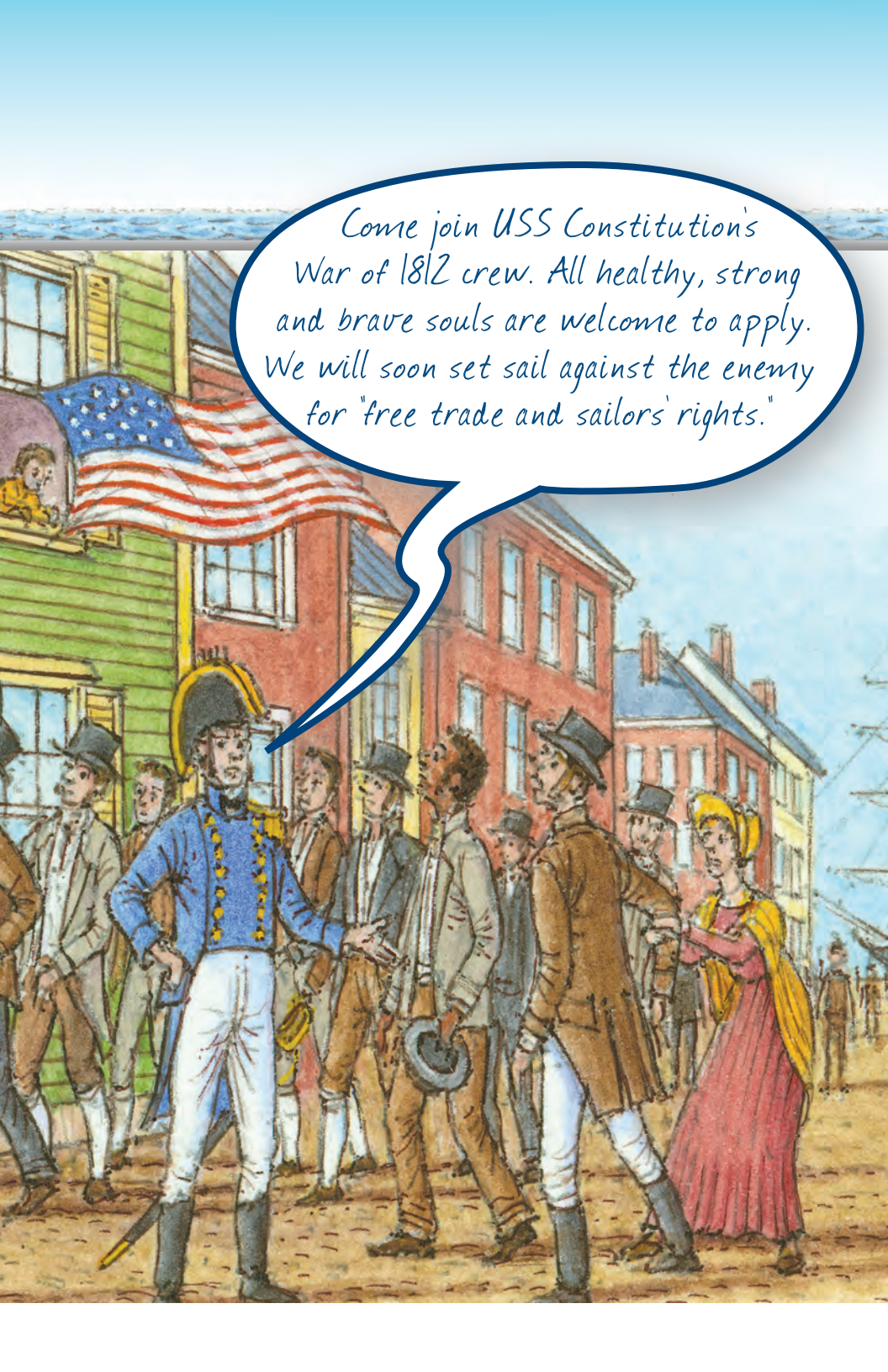


The **USS Constitution Museum** is an award winning museum that invites visitors of all ages to participate in the story of "Old Ironsides" through hands-on exhibits and dynamic programming. Come fire a

cannon, furl a sail, or scrub a deck to see if a sailor's life is for you. Located next to *USS Constitution* in Boston.

Go to www.usscm.org to plan your visit.





*Come join USS Constitution's
War of 1812 crew. All healthy, strong
and brave souls are welcome to apply.
We will soon set sail against the enemy
for "free trade and sailors' rights."*

Answer the recruiter's questions

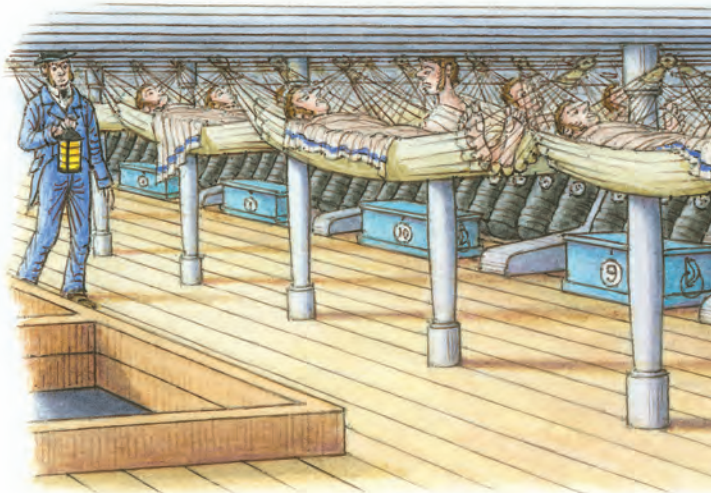
to see if a sailor's life is for you. On a separate piece of paper, keep a tally of your "yes" answers, and then see where you rank in *Constitution's* crew.

1 & 2: Have you ever swung in a hammock? Are you willing to sleep next to 200 of your closest friends who badly need baths?

Ships are crowded places. There is no way to escape the sounds and smells of your shipmates.

3 & 4: Do you have all of your teeth? Do you have all your fingers and toes?

A sailor must move quickly and learn to tie many knots – hard to do without fingers and toes.





5: Are you willing to eat biscuit as hard as a brick?

At sea, sailors eat hard bread called ship's biscuit. They dunk it in their stew to make it easier to chew.

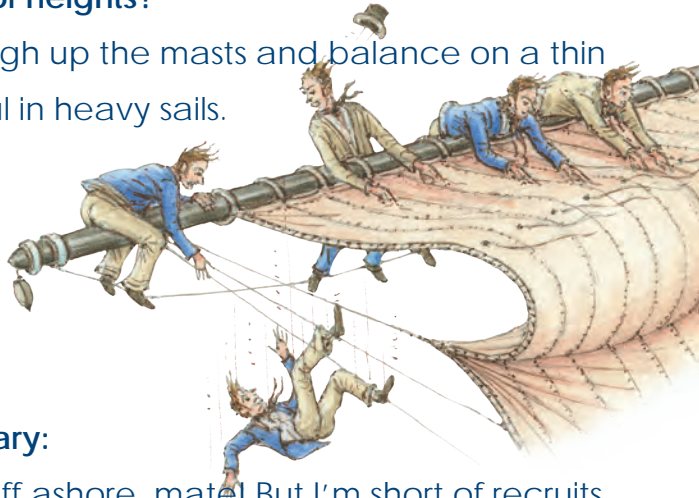
6: Are you healthy and free from scurvy, rickets or gout?

There is no place in the Navy for sick sailors. Yet the lack of fresh food on board makes many of them ill.



7: Are you afraid of heights?

Sailors must climb high up the masts and balance on a thin rope while they haul in heavy sails.



Quiz scoring summary:

0-2: You're better off ashore, mate! But I'm short of recruits, and I will take you on if you promise to shape up.

3-5: I've seen worse, so welcome to the Navy. Be sure not to step out of line, though.

6-7: Hey, you are a natural sailor! Are you sure you have never been to sea before? I'm proud to have you aboard.

How do YOU compare to the average sailor in 1812?

- **How tall are you?**

The average height was 5' 6".

- **How old are you?**

The average age was 27 but a few were under 15 and over 50.

- **What color are your eyes?**

The most typical eye color was gray (shade of blue).

- **What color is your hair?**

The majority of sailors had brown hair worn short or tied back in a short queue (braid).

- **Are you African American?**

7-15% of sailors were free men of color.

- **Do you have any tattoos?**

5-10% of sailors had tattoos. Designs often included initials, anchors, hearts, or a cross.

- **Do you have any marks?**

A seafaring life left many sailors with scars, burns, and missing fingers.



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Did women join the crew?

Women were not allowed to join the Navy in 1812, but they did help in other ways, like supplying hand-sewn clothing needed for the ships' crews.

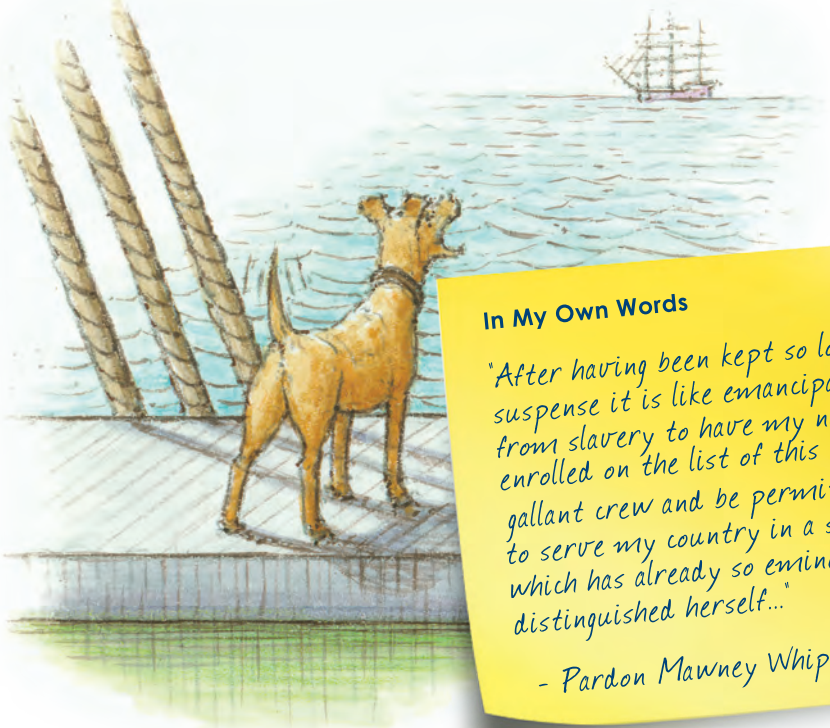
Despite being officially banned from American warships, there is evidence of a few cases of women on board Navy vessels.

- In 1803, there were at least five women on board USS *Chesapeake* - the wives of some of the junior officers, including the Captain of the Forecastle, the Gunner, the Boatswain, the Carpenter, and the Marine Corporal. One of them gave birth to a son in the Boatswain's storeroom.
- Two women, Mary Allen and Mary Marshall, were on board USS *United States* as nurses in May 1813.
- Surgeon Usher Parsons discovered a woman among the crew of USS *John Adams* in 1812 - she was disguised as a man!

Why did men join *Constitution's* crew during the War of 1812?

There was a range of motivations, including:

- The need for a job
- Advance wages
- Limited options ashore
- Owing money to someone, such as a landlord
- Livelihood interrupted by the War
- Prize money (extra pay for successful battles)
- Desire for adventure and an active life
- Family tradition
- Buddies signing on
- Reputation of the Captain
- Patriotism



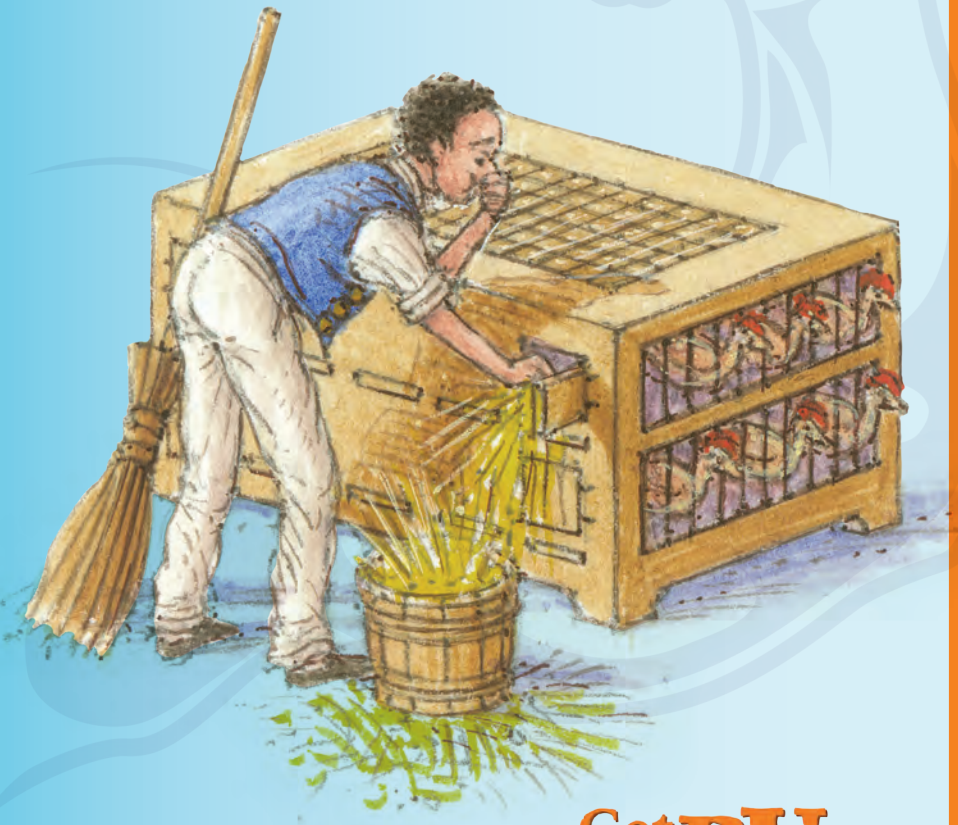
In My Own Words

"After having been kept so long in suspense it is like emancipation from slavery to have my name enrolled on the list of this gallant crew and be permitted to serve my country in a ship which has already so eminently distinguished herself..."

- Pardon Mawney Whipple, 1813

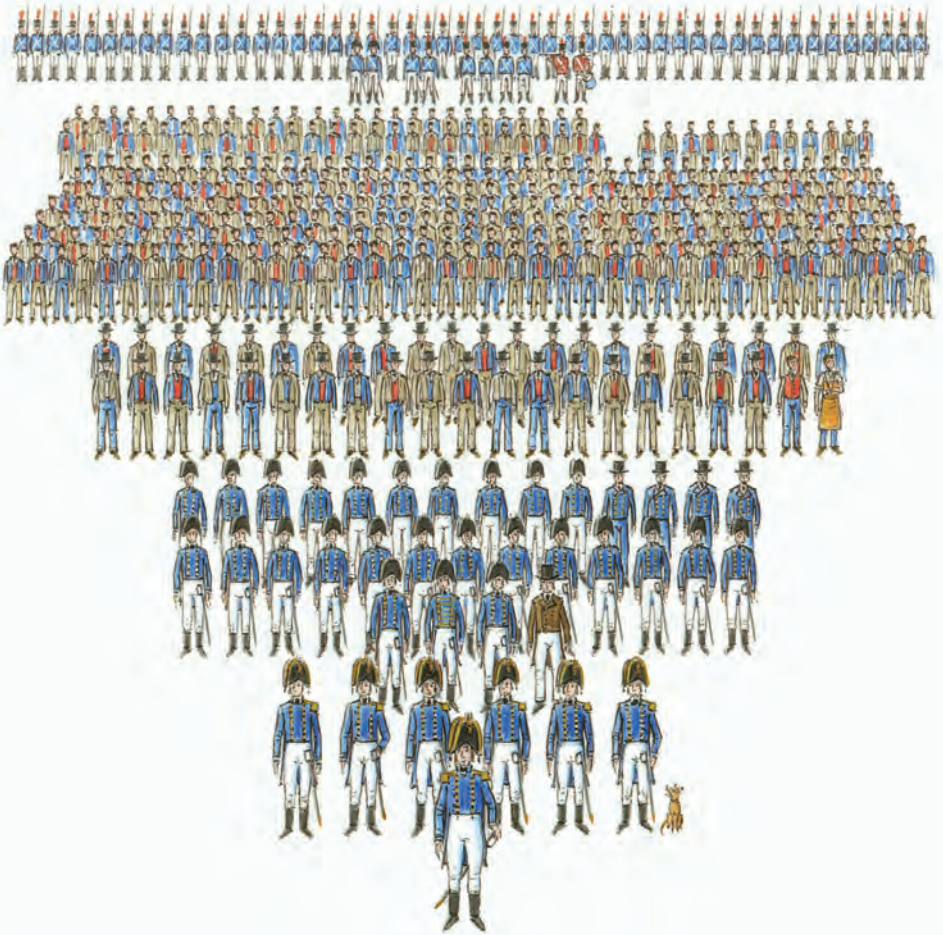
Animals On Board *Constitution*

While officers brought chickens and goats for fresh eggs and milk, the sailors often took dogs and cats to sea. Occasionally there were even more exotic animals like squirrels, a raccoon, and at least one troublesome monkey who bit a sailor on the nose.



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Ship's Company



Constitution was a massive and complex fighting machine, and it took 450 - 500 men to keep her at sea. Two thirds were sailors, and another 60 were Marines — naval soldiers.

The rest of the crew were officers. Just seven of them, the “commissioned” officers, were gentlemen-sailors who commanded the Ship. “Warrant officers” were naval tradesmen with special skills. Their assistants were called “petty officers.”



Command the Crew

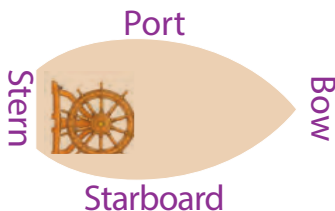
Try your hand at commanding a crew like Captain Hull.

How to play:

- Choose one person to be the Captain.
- Use tape or other objects to make a large outline of the deck of *Constitution* (see below).
- The Captain calls out commands from the list below that his or her crew must quickly follow. Crewmembers who don't follow the command are out!
- Go over all the commands before starting to make sure everyone knows what to do.

Commands:

- **"Captain's Coming!"**: The crew stops where they are and stands at attention with their feet together, arms at their sides, and standing up straight
- **"Man Your Boats!"**: The crew lines up single file in the middle of the ship area and pretends to row
- **"At Ease!"**: The crew stands with their feet apart and hands clasped together behind their backs
- **"Holystone the Deck!"**: The crew gets on their hands and knees and pretends to scrub the floor
- **"Seagull!"**: The crew ducks and covers their heads
- **"Crew to . . ."**
 - » **Starboard** (right) side
 - » **Port** (left) side
 - » **Bow** (front of the ship)
 - » **Stern** (back of the ship)



- **Add other commands, like "salute," "look through a telescope," "climb to the sails," etc. Be creative!**

Did you know?

A Sailor:

- Enlists for two years
- Joins a specific ship
- No height requirement
- No age restriction
- Must know how to hand, reef and steer
- Must buy own clothes
- Pay for Ordinary Seaman: \$8-10/month
- Pay for Able Seaman: \$12/month



Which would you rather be?



A Marine:

- Enlists for five years
- Joins the Corps of Marines
- Must be 5 ft 6 in or taller (except musicians)
- Must be between 18 and 40
- A soldier at sea, doesn't need sailing experience
- Receives an eye-catching uniform
- Pay for Marine Private: \$6/month



March Like a Marine

To be effective in battle, Marines learned to work and move together. Part of their training involved marching and turning as a group to the beat of a drum. Marines marched at the “common step.” Each pace was two feet long, and they took 75 steps per minute. In addition, Marines were taught to point their toes as they marched.

Practice marching like a Marine!

- Gather a group and stand in a line. Each person should face the back of the person in front of him or her.
- The first person in line is the drill sergeant and will give the commands.

Commands:

- **“To the Front - March!”**: Step off together with the left foot. Drill sergeant marks time by saying the cadence “Left... Left... Left, Right, Left” to make sure everyone steps on the proper foot at the proper time.
- **“Halt!”**: Stop marching.
- **“To the Right - About Face!”**: Turn in place 180 degrees clockwise. Face the way you came and march back to where you began.
- **“Company - Dismissed!”**: Recruits may disperse!

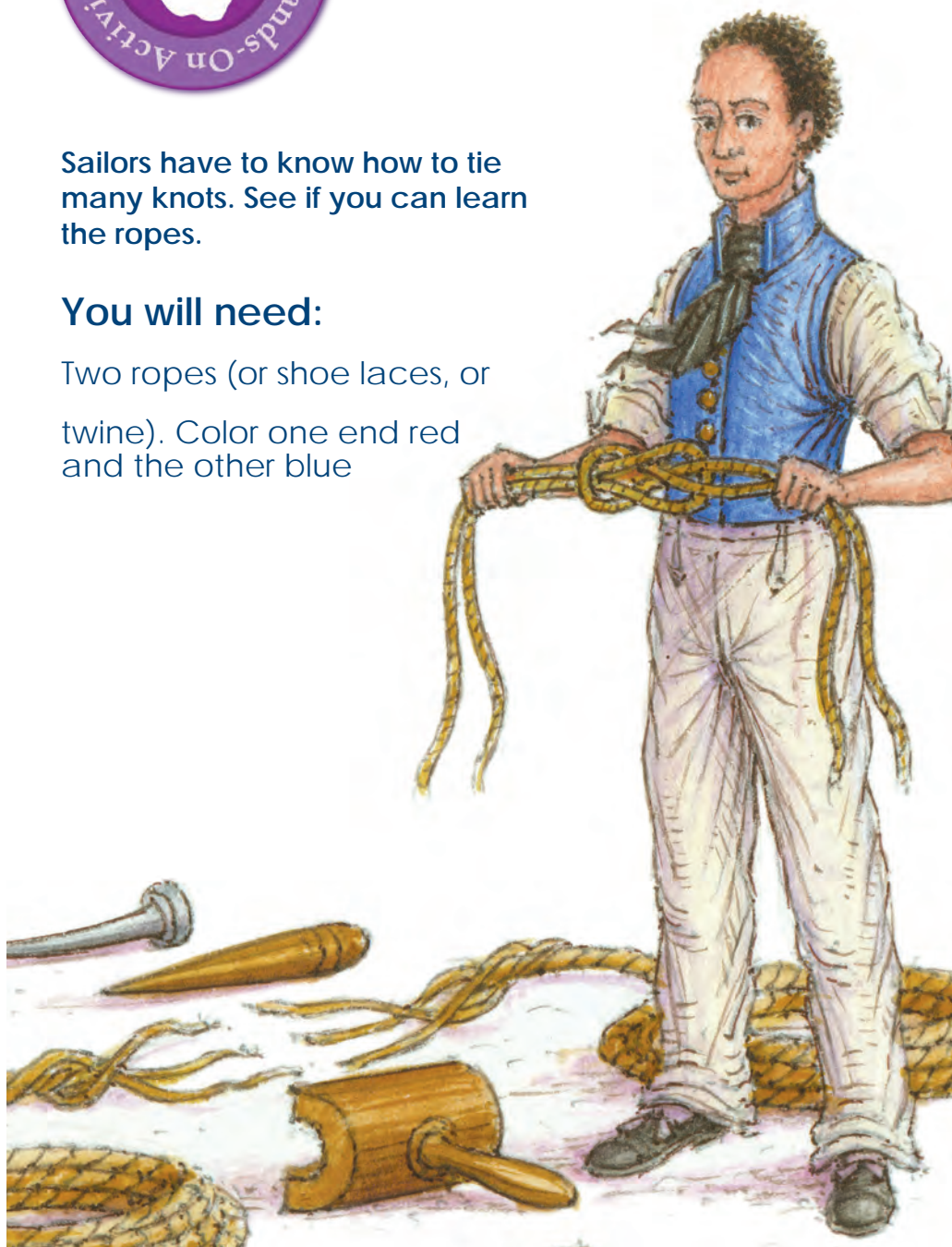


Tie a Knot

Sailors have to know how to tie many knots. See if you can learn the ropes.

You will need:

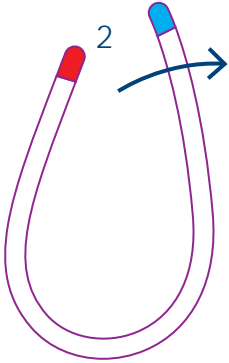
Two ropes (or shoe laces, or twine). Color one end red and the other blue



Tie a Knot

Reef Knot (square knot)

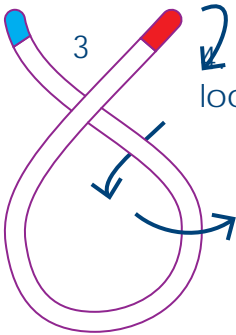
One of the first knots sailors learned was a reef knot, necessary in shortening sail (reefing).



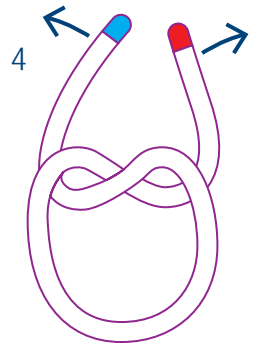
1. Hold the red end of the rope in your left hand and the blue end in your right.

2. Cross the red end over the blue end to create a loop.

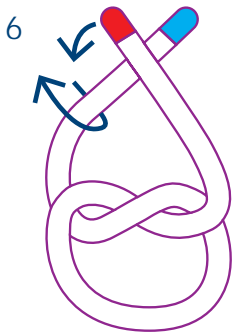
3. Pass the red end under the blue end and up through the loop.



4. Pull, but not too tight (leave a small loop at the base of your knot).

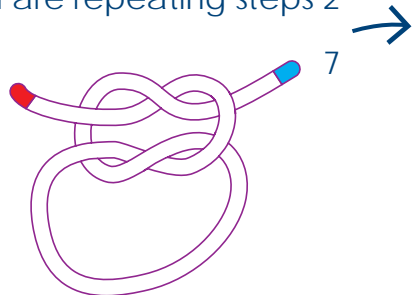


5. Hold the red end in your right hand and the blue end in your left.



6. Cross the red end over and under the blue end and up through the loop (here, you are repeating steps 2 and 3)

7. Pull tight.



Write a Secret Message

You will need:

Signal Flag Decoding Chart

Paper

Pencil

Markers, crayons, or colored pencils

Scissors

Yarn or string

A ruler or straight edge (optional)



Instructions:

- Choose a word or phrase that you would like to spell (such as your name or a nautical word like "anchor," "ship," or even "USS Constitution").
- Using the Signal Flag Decoding Chart, find the flags that spell your word.
- Copy the flags that represent the letters in your words. Or, download and print them from the "Fun & Games" link on www.USSCM.org.
- Color and cut out your flags.
- String them together to create a word.
- Challenge your friends and family to decode your flags!



Signal Flag Decoding Chart



A

B

C

D

E

F



G

H

I

J

K



L

M

N

O

P



Q

R

S

T

U



V

W

X

Y

Z

What's for dinner?

As ship's cook I prepare the food for over 450 hungry sailors in one large stove, called a camboose. The crew takes turns bringing me the ingredients for their meals and then fetch the finished dish when it's ready. The menu is pretty much the same day after day. Stew anyone?





Cook a Sailor's Meal

Copy the recipes to cook your own sailor's meal.

Ship's Biscuit

I serve this hard, bland bread on board every day. Sailors soak 'em in their stew or water before eating 'em. You should too. We don't want any broken teeth around here.

2 cups whole wheat flour
A little water
Baking sheet
Damp cloth

1. Preheat oven to 175 degrees.
2. Mix flour and enough water to form a stiff dough. If the dough is sticking to your fingers, add more flour. Cover with a damp cloth and let sit for ten minutes.
3. Fold and beat the dough until it is 1/2 inch thick. Repeat until dough is smooth.
4. Cut into circles, about 5 inches across. Pierce four times with a fork. Dust lightly with flour.
5. Place on ungreased baking sheet and bake for 3 hours, or until dry inside.



This ship's biscuit is REAL. A sailor kept it as a souvenir, writing "Constitution" and recording the date, 1861.

Ship's Biscuit issued on board
Constitution, 1861
Courtesy of the Mariners Museum



*An enemy ship
has been spotted!*

*The drum beats, sending all hands to
prepare for battle. In a flurry of activity we
quickly ready the Ship for the fight. Breathlessly
we hasten to our battle stations for the long
painful wait. Hour after hour in tortured
silence we contemplate our fate while we
watch the enemy ship approach.*



Make and Fire Your Own Cannon

You will need:

An empty 35mm film container (or disposable salt or pepper shaker, or M&M's Minis® container [make sure the lid is not hinged to the container])

1-3 Alka-Seltzer® tablets

Warm water

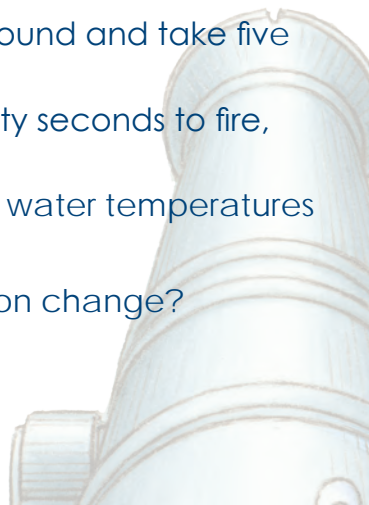
Safety glasses (swimming goggles or sunglasses will work)

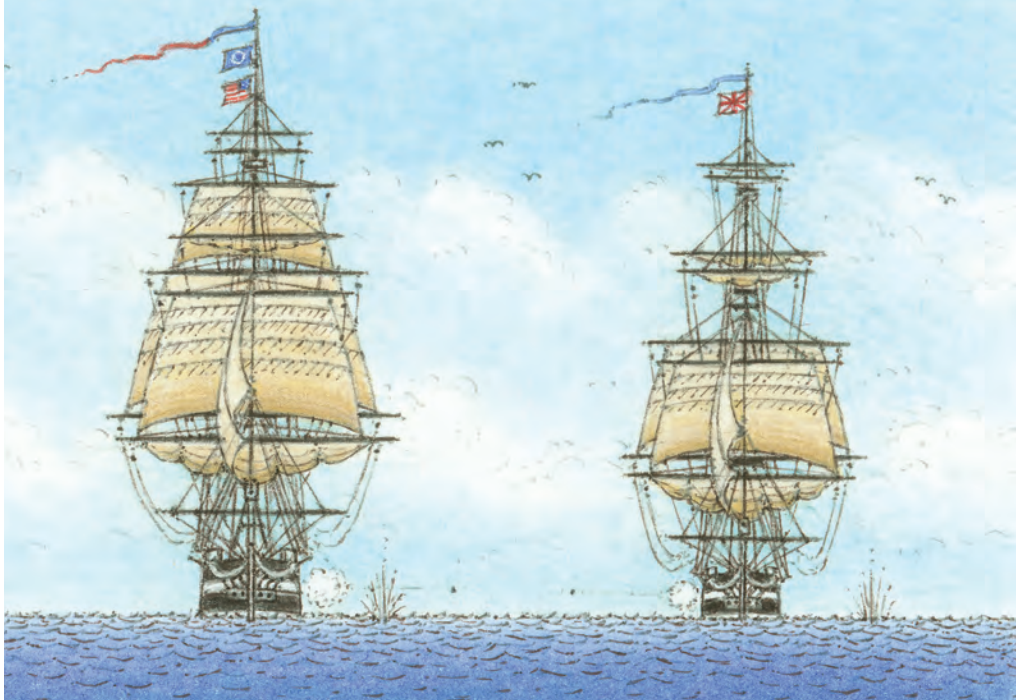
Note! Adult supervision required.

Test your cannon outdoors or somewhere you don't mind getting a bit wet.

Instructions:

1. Fill the film container 1/3 full with warm water (1/2 full for the salt shaker, and the M&M's Minis® container). Add 1/3 Alka-Seltzer® tablet (1 whole tablet for the salt shaker, and the M&M's Minis® container) and quickly pop the lid back on the film container.
 2. Place the container (top up) on the ground and take five large steps back. Wait.
 3. If it takes your cannon more than twenty seconds to fire, the adult should investigate.
 4. Try the experiment again with different water temperatures or a different amount of Alka-Seltzer®.
- Does the speed or height of the reaction change?
What about the "popping" noise?





How USS *Constitution* earned the nickname “Old Ironsides”

On August 19, 1812, USS *Constitution* engaged HMS *Guerriere* in an epic battle. Amidst the deafening roar and choking smoke of cannon fire, a sailor watched as cannonballs bounced off *Constitution*'s thick wooden sides. In amazement, he cried out, “Huzza, her sides are made of iron!” Ever since, the Ship has been affectionately known as “Old Ironsides.”

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A ship becomes a symbol

After USS *Constitution's* string of surprising victories over the British during the War of 1812, Americans no longer saw "Old Ironsides" as an ordinary warship. Instead, the Ship became a symbol of the country's strength and proof that the young nation would succeed.



In My Own Words

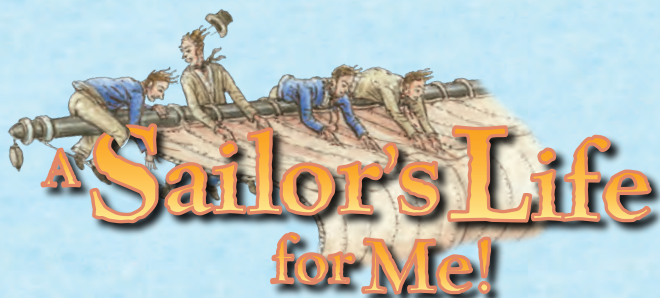
"She has been a good friend to many a worthy tar and carried them through long and perilous cruises and done more honor to herself than any other ship in the Navy."

- Midshipman Pardon Mawney Whipple, 1814

In My Own Words

"Let us keep Old Iron Sides at home. She has, literally, become a Nation's ship, and should be preserved in honorable pomp, as a glorious monument of her own, and our other naval victories."

- National Intelligencer
May 23, 1815



For more adventure visit
A Sailor's Life for Me:

www.asailorslifeforme.org



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