

Women of the Waves

Throughout history, the majority of pirates have been men. But were there any women pirates? Absolutely! Below are two from different parts of the world.

MARY READ: PIRATE IN DISGUISE

1 Mary Read was born in England around 1690. She lived most of her life disguised as a man. As a teenager, looking for adventure, she dressed as a boy and got a job at sea. Later, as a young woman (still **pretending** to be a man), she got work on a ship and **sailed**
5 to the Caribbean.

On one journey, pirates attacked Mary's ship. Instead of fighting, she joined them. But Mary had to be careful because many pirate ships had a rule: no women allowed. If the men discovered her true identity, they might **shoot** and kill her. So at first Mary stayed
10 by herself and **avoided** the others. But one day, she made a surprising discovery: one of the pirates on the ship was actually a woman! Anne Bonny was the captain's girlfriend, but she was also a pirate herself. Mary told Anne her secret, and the two women became good friends, and powerful fighters. They
15 fought together until they were captured in 1720.

CHING SHIH: PIRATE QUEEN

In the early 1800s, pirate Ching Shih terrorized the Chinese coast. When her powerful pirate husband died, control of his 500 junks **transferred** to Ching Shih.
20 While she was **boss**, her fleet grew to almost 2,000 ships.

A **fearless** fighter, Ching Shih led nearly 80,000 pirates—both men and women. They **targeted** ships and towns along the coast of China. For years, leaders throughout the region **failed** to stop her. Eventually, Ching Shih
25 retired,¹ a rich and **respected** woman.

¹ If you **retire**, you decide to stop working completely.



▲ Ching Shih controlled almost 2,000 junks.