

Admiral Lord Nelson: England's Greatest Naval Hero [B2]

Grande maestro di strategia bellica e rinomato per il suo temerario coraggio, Horatio Nelson divenne un eroe nazionale dopo le sue brillanti vittorie contro francesi e spagnoli nelle guerre rivoluzionarie e napoleoniche.

From his [humble](#) beginnings as the sixth child of a Norfolk [clergyman](#), Horatio Nelson [rose](#) to become one of the greatest figures in British military history. His brilliant victories over the forces of Napoleon Bonaparte, and his [uncompromising](#) courage, despite his disabilities, have established him as a symbol of national identity.

CHILDHOOD IN THE NAVY

Nelson was born on 29 September 1758. Aged twelve, he joined the navy as an apprentice, and was [seasick](#) on his first day. In fact, he suffered from [seasickness](#) all his life! Made captain at just twenty, Nelson spent his first service managing Britain's commercial interests — including slavery — in the [West Indies](#). In 1787, he married Fanny Nisbet, a judge's daughter, in the Caribbean.

BRITAIN AT WAR

In 1793, Britain entered the French Revolutionary Wars. These were conflicts between France, allied with Spain, and other European countries, including Britain, resulting from the French Revolution. Now in command of the [HMS Agamemnon](#), Nelson served in the Mediterranean, and would help Britain establish naval superiority over the French and Spanish [fleets](#).

WAR WOUNDS

At the Battle of Calvi in 1794, Nelson lost the sight in his right eye. In 1797, he was [knighted](#) after his major role in the British victory at the Battle of

Cape St. Vincent. A few months later, at the Battle of Santa Cruz de Tenerife, [surgeons](#) had to amputate his badly [wounded](#) right arm, without anaesthetics. He only [complained](#) that the [surgeons'](#) knives were too cold!

THE BATTLE OF THE NILE

Nelson went on to win a famous victory at the Battle of the Nile in 1798, destroying Napoleon's fleet in a [daring](#) manoeuvre where he attacked unexpectedly from the [narrow stretch of water](#) between the French ships and the shore, with the land only metres away and at the risk of the English ships running aground. The French suffered thousands of [casualties](#), and Nelson stopped Napoleon's attempt to create a direct trade route to India, protecting Britain's growing empire. Nelson was then [posted](#) to Naples, where he met and fell in love with Lady Emma Hamilton, wife of the ambassador, Sir William Hamilton. The couple moved to England in 1803 and lived together openly — along with Emma's [aged](#) husband. Nelson ignored the monumental scandal, even having a baby with Emma.

TRAFALGAR

In 1803 the so-called Napoleonic Wars [broke out](#) between Napoleon's France (again allied with Spain) and various European countries. Nelson, now a vice-admiral and a [viscount](#), was made commander-in-chief of the British Mediterranean Fleet. Napoleon started to prepare an enormous force in northern France to invade England. On 21 October 1805, the British fleet engaged [aged](#) the French and Spanish ships at the Battle of Trafalgar, [off Cadiz](#) in the south of Spain. Nelson, on [HMS](#) Victory, won a famous victory, destroying the enemy [fleets](#) and forcing Napoleon [to call off](#) the invasion.

NELSON'S COLUMN

Tragically, though, Nelson was killed in the battle by a fatal gunshot wound. His death provoked [grief](#) on a scale never seen before in Britain, and his [feats](#) quickly entered British folklore. Today Nelson appears immortalised in stone on the top of Nelson's Column, a fifty-two-metre-high monument in

Trafalgar Square in Central London. With a bird's-eye view of the British capital, Nelson [stands tall](#) as one of Britain's great national heroes.

Glossary

- **complained** = lamentarsi
- **aged** = anziano
- **to call off** = annullare
- **humble** = umili
- **clergyman** = ecclesiastico
- **uncompromising** = irremovibile
- **West Indies** = Indie occidentali
- **casualties** = perdite
- **engaged** = affrontare
- **stands tall** = ergersi
- **fleets** = flotte
- **knighted** = nominare cavaliere
- **wounded** = ferire
- **daring** = audace
- **viscount** = visconte
- **grief** = lutto, dolore
- **narrow stretch of water** = stretto tratto d'acqua
- **posted** = assegnare, designare
- **broke out** = scoppiare
- **off Cadiz** = di fronte alle coste di Cadice
- **rose** = ascendere
- **seasick** = che ha il mal di mare
- **HMS** = nave di sua maestà ('His Majesty's Ship')
- **surgeons** = chirurghi
- **feats** = prodezze