Item 1 (Coin)

“Tom’s the name! Tom Binnacle. Well… actually I ain’t got a second name... or maybe I do, but I don’t know what it is. But a proper business proprietor needs a proper name. I heard some sailors talking about a binnacle and I think it sounds like a fine name, don’t you?”

“The parish alms society was generous last Christmas! Some boys bought oranges, but I thought I’d become the proprietor of my own business, so I set myself up with some rags and shoe polish. That’s how I keep body and soul together.”

“I sure am hungry, but I don’t want to part with this halfpenny I got from a gentleman. Look! On the back it’s got a grown sailor, but this sailor on the front is a boy! I wonder what the letters say… I can’t read them.”

*Find the coin. What does it say?*

*(Maritime Society Boy)*

Item 2

“Maritime Society? I wonder what that is?” Some gentlemen are really talkative while I shine their shoes. Maybe I can ask one of them if it won’t be bothering them…”

“Guess it’s time to head down to my spot and get to work… What’s that? I haven’t seen that in the shop window before!”

[http://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/4207.html](http://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/4207.html" \t "_blank)

“That boy is a sailor too! I wonder why he’s changing his clothes? Who is the lady? I wish that could be me!”

*What does it say?*

Item 3

“Hmmm… the shop doesn’t look too busy… only a lady and her maid in the whole place. I’ll ask the shopkeeper.”

“Pardon, shopkeeper. What’s that about? How did the boy get new clothes? Is he a sailor?”

“I’m tired of you beggars robbing me! Buy something or get out!”

“How do you like that? I’m not a beggar! I have my own business and everything!”

“Business?”

“See?” here’s my polish and step-”

“Get out!”

“But, the sailor boy…”

“And then be threw me out. I had just picked myself up and heading to my spot when an almost grown girl came running up behind me.”

“Hey there! Boy! My mistress sent me to tell you that the boy got his clothes from the Maritime Society.”

“The Maritime Society again! I felt a shiver run down my spine even though it was shaping up to be a warm day.”

“It provides boys with no prospects with the things they need to become a sailor and trains them to be sailors. The lady on the bowl is England. She needs good sailors! Do you have friends or family?”

“I don’t need any! I’m the proprietor of my own business!”

“The girl smiled… I think she might have been laughing at me…”

“Well, such excellent prospects indeed! But my lady believes you may be better suited to the sea for some reason. She requests that you appear at her kitchen entrance first thing tomorrow. Someone will show you to Mr. Smith’s office. Mr. Smith manages the household and he may be able to set you up with a man from the maritime society… if you can bear to leave your business.”

“I was grinning like a fool! But I quickly put on the grownup voice I use with my customers, thanked the girl, and commended my thanks to her lady. She actually laughed out loud at me, but I don’t care! Me! A sailor! Will tomorrow never get here?”

“When the first bells rang to start the day, I figured I could finally appear to the door. Such a grand home! And a hundred people must live there!”

“I knocked on the door. My heart started pounding. Suddenly, I noticed that my breeches had a hole at the knee… and my shirt was not white as it should be, but a gloomy shade of grey…”

“You must be our Maritime Society boy!”

“A girl in an apron around my age sized me up.”

“My older brother Will is a Maritime Society boy too. When our went to his heavenly reward, there was no one to look after us, but our mistress is very kind and found a place for us both.”

“She led me down a long hallway and directed me to wait there until Mr. Smith called me in. I had no time to think about the butterflies in my stomach because I immediately laid eyes on the most glorious thing I have ever seen!”

*What is this a painting of?*

[link to painting of ship/battle]

Item 4

“What you see before you is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”

“I nearly jumped out of my skin when the voice behind me interrupted my daydreams. I turned to face a man neatly-dressed in plain but well-tailored clothes.”

“Young Tom, I presume! I am Mr. Smith and I run this household. Look lively and

follow me!”

“The man showed me into a room and then sat down next to a finely-dressed gentleman whom he introduced as Mr. Walker of the Maritime Society.”

“Tom. How old are you?

“To be honest I don’t really know. What if I give the wrong answer? What if I’m too young? What should I say?”

“…… 13 years old, sir.”

“Oh dear. That didn’t sound very convincing. Mr. Walker raised an eyebrow and eyed me sternly over his spectacles.”

“Hmph. You look of adequate height. Close enough.”

Mr. Walker went on to question me about my family connections. As I have none, that topic was quickly exhausted. Then he asked about my character. Mr. Smith had asked around the neighbourhood and seemed to know more about me than I did! But he was saying good things about how honest, industrious, and quick to learn I am that I dared not interrupt him.”

“After what seemed like an age, Mr. Walker began to write something on a paper. He folded it up and handed it to me.”

“Appear at the \_\_\_\_\_(ship name) training ship on Wednesday morning. Give the lieutenant in charge of you this paper. You are now a Maritime Society boy, Tom.”

“I think I was grinning like a fool again, but I tried to remember my manners.”

“Thank you, sir!”

I don’t know how to read the paper, but I keep it tucked in my shirt and everything I hear it crinkle as I go about shining shoes, I feel a shiver of excitement. I will finally be a sailor boy!

Item 5

*Find the training ship*. [http://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/201426.html](http://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/201426.html" \t "_blank)

I feel like a prince! I have never had any new clothes in life, let alone more than one set at the same time! And the food! My stomach is full every night and I fell stronger everyday. [Lieutenant- not sure about title] Banbridge, who is in charge of my group of boys, expects us to be respectful and work hard, but he is good to us.”

“He keeps a log, which means he writes in a book each day what the weather is like. I love to watch him dip his pen in ink and make looping, slanted lines on the paper.”

“Tom. Would you like to learn how to make the letters?”

“Oh no. I am grinning like a fool again.”

“Yes, sir. If you think it is possible, sir.”

“Of course it is possible! Indeed, if you mean to go anywhere in this navy, you will need to learn.”

“Thus began my lessons in reading and writing. Lieutenant Banbridge thinks I am making fine progress, but I despair of ever having so elegant a hand as midshipman should have. But I am doing well with stringing the letters together in my head to make words! Just as I have since I got it, I take put that old halfpenny take out with the sailor boy on it and think about that shoeshine boy Tom, but now I can read the words myself.”

“I wonder if the weather will be fine enough to work topside tomorrow. Tom! Run down to the my log book and tell me what the weather was like this day last year.”

“I am surprised that he doesn’t want me to bring the book to him. He actually wants me to read it and report back!”

*What was the weather like on \_\_\_\_\_(date)?* [link to logbook]

Item 6

“Well done, Tom!”

“After that, Lieutenant Banbridge included more and more reading and writing in my responsibilities. In time, my script grew so refined that he passed the task of recording the weather on to me. ”

“Almost four years have flown past. I find my thoughts wandering time and time again to what I will do when I complete my training.”

“One day, Lt. Banbridge took me aside and told me that his nephew had gotten a commission on a naval ship.”

“Congratulations, sir! I’m sure it is down to the excellent example of his uncle!”

“He will need a boy to go along with him and act as his personal assistant. As your training will end soon and you have shown yourself to be an able assistant, I had hoped to recommend you. Would that be amenable to you?”

“It’s a good thing I have grown much better at not grinning like a fool too noticeably. Soon, I was off to sea!”

“Lt. Carson uses lots of fancy equipment and it is part of my responsibilities to keep them in top working order.”

What is this and what is it used for? <http://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/43663.html>

“Lt. Carson does indeed follows his uncle’s example and is very keen to instruct me in the operation of navigation instruments. He tells me he often praises my quick mastery of navigation in his letters to his uncle.”

“The French look poised to invade and we have received orders to sail to England’s defense. But I happened to look over the calculations and realize they are slightly off and the resulting course will take us out of our way.”

“What should I do? I cannot contradict a superior officer, but can we risk wasted time when time could make all the difference? With much fear, I gently suggest an alternative calculation to the Lieutenant.”

“It turns out I am right! As I said Lt. Carson is a good man and he thinks not of himself, but the safety of our nation and quickly re-plots our course.”

That night, the captain called me to his cabin. Lt. Carson is also there. I was deeply scared that the captain had found out and that I would be disciplined for attempting to correct my officer.”

“The captain handed me a set of clothes. I did not understand, and I am sad to report that I stood there agape.”

“They are hand-me-downs, but they will have to do. There’s a war on, you know.”

*What kind of clothes did Tom receive?*

<http://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/556363.html>

“In general circumstances, one has to pass an examination to become a lieutenant, but I’m sure we can carry that out aboard ship or when we get back. We will need all the good men we can get right now!”

“And that is how I became an officer. I hope I can be as good a leader to my men as Lt. Banbridge and Lt. Carson were to me. We are on our way to a place of the coast of Spain called Trafalgar and there looks to be a fierce battle ahead of us, but I am confident in our courage.”

“And in the pocket of my fine uniforms, I still keep that that small halfpenny that a shoe shine boy in rags once wondered at.”