

LEVELED BOOK • N

Blackbeard the Pirate



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Written by Kate Follett • Illustrated by John Walker

Blackbeard the Pirate



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One of the pirate ships recreated for the Disney movie *Pirates of the Caribbean: Curse of the Black Pearl*.

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Movie and cartoon pirates may look funny, but real pirates like Blackbeard (right) were colorful characters, too.

The Man Behind the Myth

Picture a **pirate** in your mind. Do you think of a man with an eye patch, a parrot, and black hat? That colorful picture is not just from cartoons or the movies.

In the early 1700s, a pirate with a dark beard and wild eyes really did **sail** the seas. His name brought fear to the hearts of sailors. He was known as Blackbeard.

Becoming Blackbeard

Not many facts are known about the man who was called Blackbeard. He may have been born in Bristol, England, around 1680. His real name was Edward Teach. Sometimes his name was spelled *Thatch* or *Teache*.



The trading ships of many countries sailed back and forth across the southern Atlantic Ocean. It was a very busy area for trade—and for piracy.

Edward Teach became a sailor—a very hard life that paid little money. He soon became an English **privateer**, robbing enemy ships for England. That led to a job with Captain Benjamin Hornigold, a famous English pirate.

Pirate or Privateer?

Many countries hired sailors as privateers during wars with other countries.

By law, privateers could attack enemy ships.

They would add the best captured ships to their country's navy, and sell the items the ships were carrying. Privateers were given a small share of the profits, but they had to follow certain rules of war.

Many privateers became pirates instead. As pirates, they didn't have to follow the rules of war. They could attack any ship—and keep all the treasure for themselves!



Edward was fearless and bold. Captain Hornigold put him in charge of a captured ship. The two worked as a team, attacking ships and stealing cargo. Soon, they were the most feared pirates on the ocean.

In November 1717, Edward took command of a large, captured French ship named *La Concorde*. He named it the *Queen Anne's Revenge* and added more cannons to it. His ship was now heavily armed. When Hornigold retired, Edward took over. Within a year, Edward the sailor had become Blackbeard, the pirate.

The Golden Age of Piracy

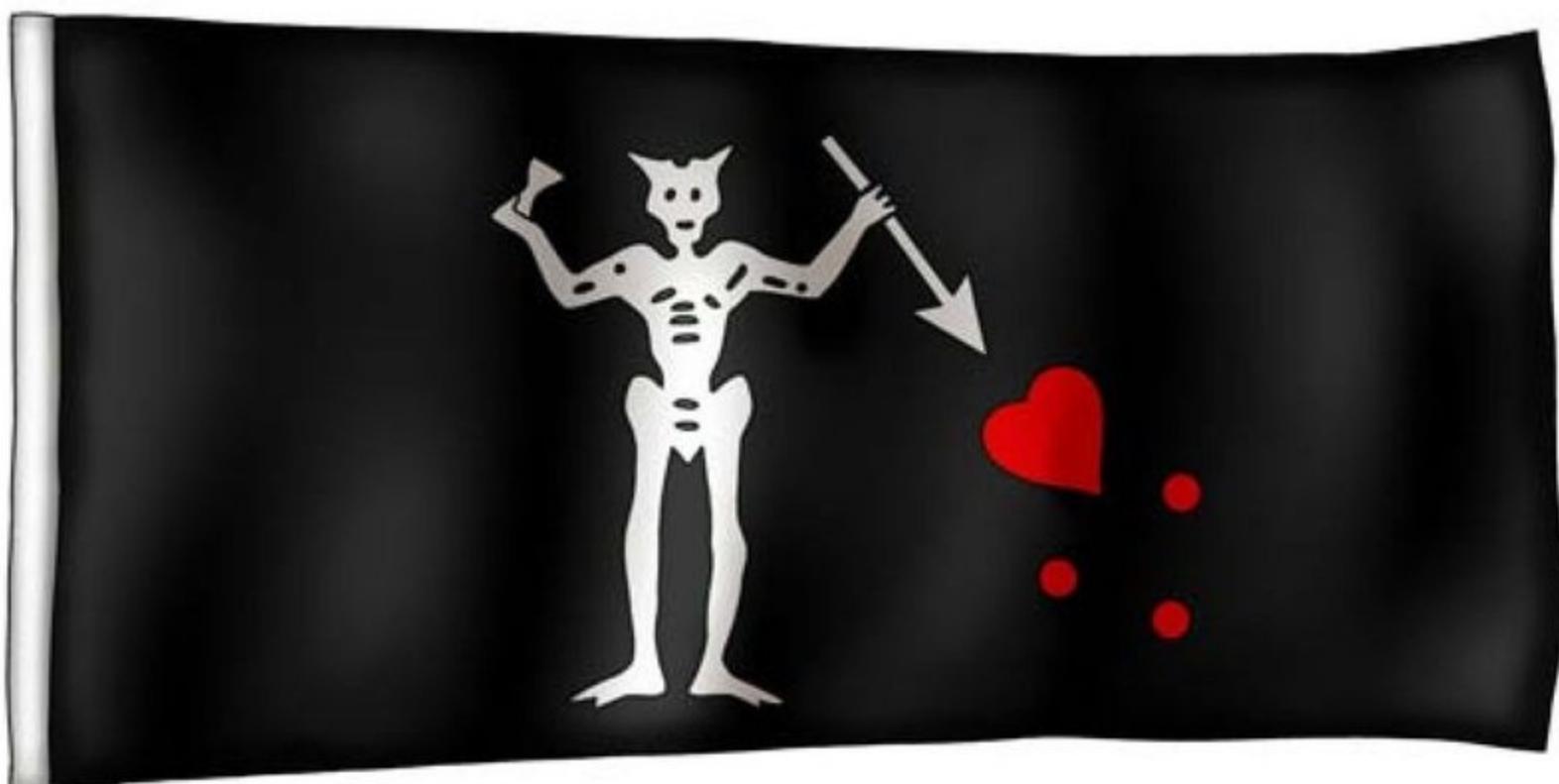
During the 1700s, European countries set up new towns in the Caribbean and North and South America.

English, French, Dutch, and Spanish cargo ships sailed back and forth. They were easy targets for pirates.

Blackbeard Ruled the Sea

The *Queen Anne's Revenge* was large, fast, and had all that cannon power. Blackbeard himself was also a fearful sight to face! He was a huge man. He wore beads and ribbons twisted into his thick, black beard. He even stuck lit fuses in it, so his beard looked as if it was on fire. Most of his victims were so scared of him that they gave up without a fight.





Blackbeard's black flag showed a skeleton stabbing a heart and holding an hourglass. The hourglass showed that the victim only had a short time to give up or Blackbeard would attack.

Blackbeard captured ship after ship until he had four ships and a crew of over 350 men. In May of 1718, his four ships arrived outside Charleston, South Carolina. For one week, his ships robbed every ship coming and going. He captured people on the ships and demanded that the town pay to get them back.

Pirate's Life for Me?

How did Blackbeard get such a big crew? Most sailors got little pay or respect. If a pirate attacked their ship, sailors often chose to join the pirates! Former slaves also gladly became pirates to escape slavery. Pirates often shared treasure with their crews.



Blackbeard planned to set up a new base on the Outer Banks, a chain of islands off North Carolina. On the way there, the *Queen Anne's Revenge* got stuck on a sandbar near Beaufort.

Blackbeard told his men to put the **treasure** aboard the other ships. He had heard that England was letting pirates go free if they turned themselves in. He sent one of his captains off to see if it was true.

While that captain was away, Blackbeard dropped off many men on a nearby island. Then, Blackbeard sailed off, taking the loot with him. Some people say that Blackbeard ran his ship onto the sandbar on purpose. Had he tricked his crew so he wouldn't have to share the treasure with as many people?



The wreck of the *Queen Anne's Revenge* was found near the Beaufort Inlet, off the coast of North Carolina, in 1996.

Blackbeard's Capture

It seemed that Edward Teach had taken his loot and stopped sailing. The governor of North Carolina forgave his past crimes.

Blackbeard soon returned to his old tricks, though. He offered to share his loot if the governor would allow him to rob ships sailing off the Carolina coast. With this backing, Blackbeard began attacking cargo ships in his remaining ship, the *Adventure*.

The governor of Virginia, Alexander Spotswood, became tired of Blackbeard's looting. Spotswood sent Lieutenant Robert Maynard to find and capture Blackbeard. On the morning of November 22, 1718, the crew of Maynard's ship, *Ranger*, spotted the *Adventure* near the island of Ocracoke.



Blackbeard's last battle at Ocracoke became famous. Even young Benjamin Franklin wrote a poem about it.

Blackbeard fought for many hours. The *Adventure*'s cannons fired on Maynard's ship. In the heavy smoke from the battle, Maynard's men hid so it seemed as if they had been killed.



Thinking he had won, Blackbeard climbed aboard the *Ranger*. Maynard's men ran up on deck and hand-to-hand fighting began.

Blackbeard fought bravely but Maynard had too many men. Blackbeard was shot five times before he finally fell dead. Maynard's men threw Blackbeard's body into the sea.



The Legend of Blackbeard

Blackbeard's name lived on. Like many pirates, he became an outlaw hero. His life story may be behind characters in books such as *Treasure Island* and movies such as *Pirates of the Caribbean*. Next time you hear or read about a pretend pirate, remember one of the real men behind the legend: Blackbeard!

Glossary

cargo (<i>n.</i>)	goods carried by a large vehicle (p. 7)
legend (<i>n.</i>)	an old story that is believed to be true but cannot be proven (p. 15)
pirate (<i>n.</i>)	a person who attacks and robs ships at sea (p. 4)
privateer (<i>n.</i>)	someone who serves on a private ship that is legally authorized to capture enemy ships on behalf of a country during wartime (p. 6)
sail (<i>v.</i>)	to travel across water in a boat or ship (p. 4)
treasure (<i>n.</i>)	something that is very special or valuable (p. 11)

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Back cover: a heavy cannon being lifted from the submerged wreck of Blackbeard's ship, *Queen Anne's Revenge*. Thousands of artifacts, including coins, swords, cannons, pottery, and an anchor have been salvaged and studied.

Blackbeard the Pirate
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