

You would think that pirates would get old after awhile, but they never do. After all, for decades they have been in the limelight. From Hollywood movie producers to costume manufacturers, everyone loves a pirate. You can see skulls and crossbones everywhere on Halloween, and some people have been known to even fly pirate flags from their houses nowadays. To think a symbol that is as sinister as the skull and crossbones has become a lighthearted sign of rebellion and free-spirited playfulness really shows how funny and strange modern trends can be. You just never know what people will go for!

Pirate flags are one of the places you are most likely to see the skull and cross bones. The pirate flag - or Jolly Roger as it is known - is not just an invention of Hollywood. Back in the day, of course, there used to be more variation among skulls and crossbones. There were many different sort of skull and crossbones flags - each pirate had one. One famous one showed the captain drinking with death, while another one showed crossed swords instead of bones. Although some of these have disappeared from popular imagination, they live on in the historical record, as does their spirit.

The really funny thing is how little the skull and crossbones has to do with modern pirates. Nowadays, it is just a fantasy for kids on Halloween, or for adults at pirate theme parties. Their costumes are everywhere, but the reality of pirates is much different from the fantasies that we all hold onto. Pirates still exist, but they are not the romantic swashbucklers of former years. They are cold, calculating, and thoroughly modern kidnapers and smugglers. They don't have the proud defiance of earlier pirates either. They keep secret, knowing that they could never go to war against the powerful navies of the world. They are the last people you'd expect to have skull and crossbones flags.

Of course, part of the reason for the popularity of the skull and crossbones has nothing to do with pirates at all. The skull and bones has been used for many different purposes throughout history because it is such a compelling symbol. It says it all: death awaits you here. This is also why it make such a great Halloween decoration. Skulls powered by electric blinking lights with funny sound effects are exactly the right combination of terrifying, sinister, silly, and hokey for the Halloween holiday. They create the perfect ambiance!