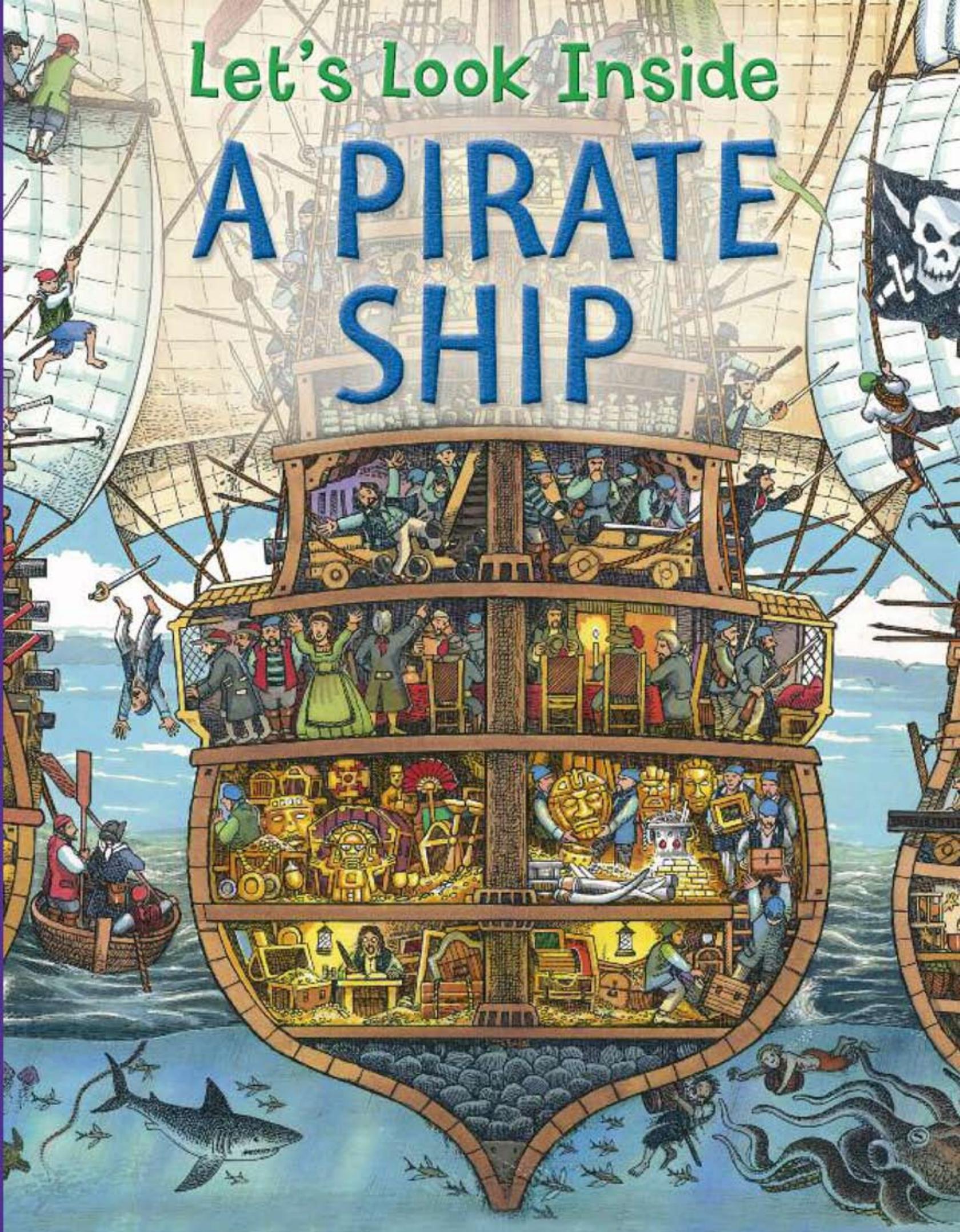


Let's Look Inside

A PIRATE SHIP



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First published in 2012 by Orpheus Books Ltd.,
6 Church Green, Witney, Oxfordshire, OX28 4AW, England
www.orpheusbooks.com

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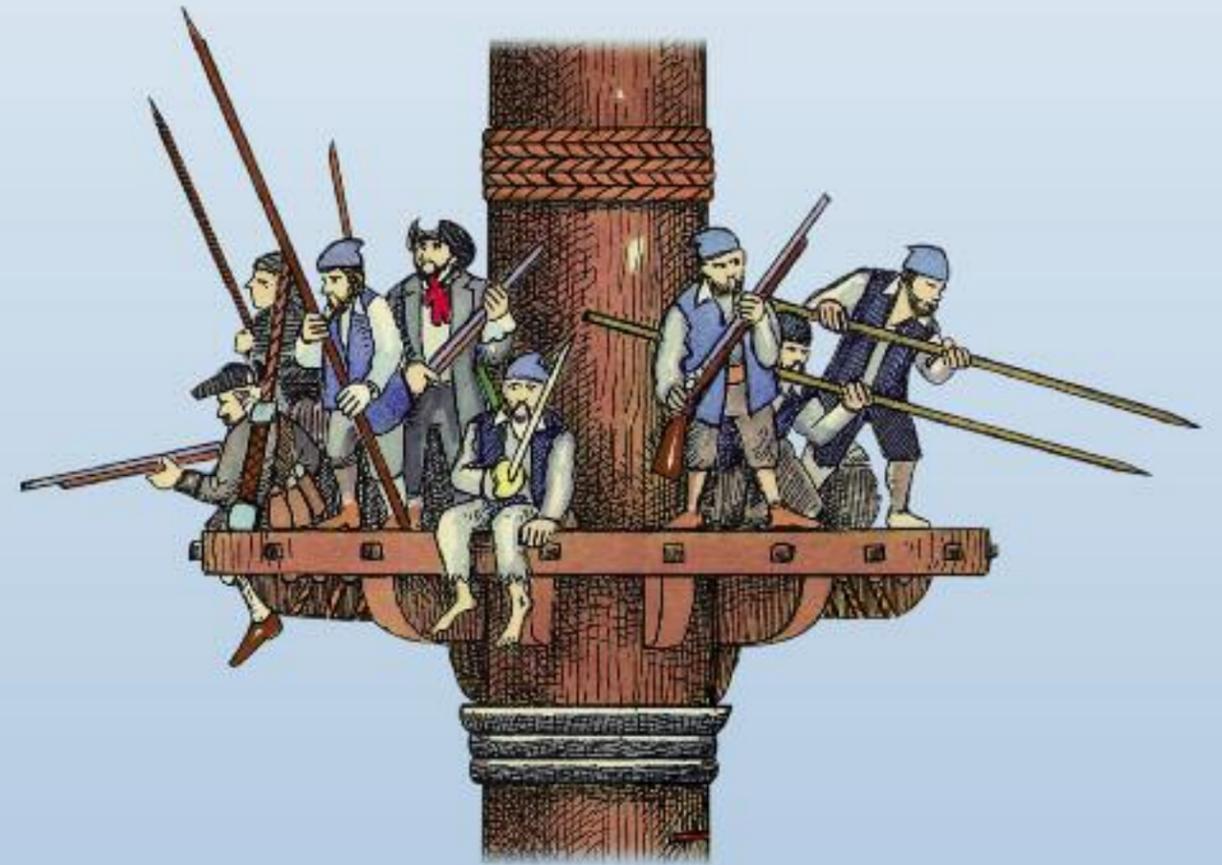
ISBN 978 1 7418 3785 0

A CIP record for this book is available from
the British Library

Printed and bound in Malaysia

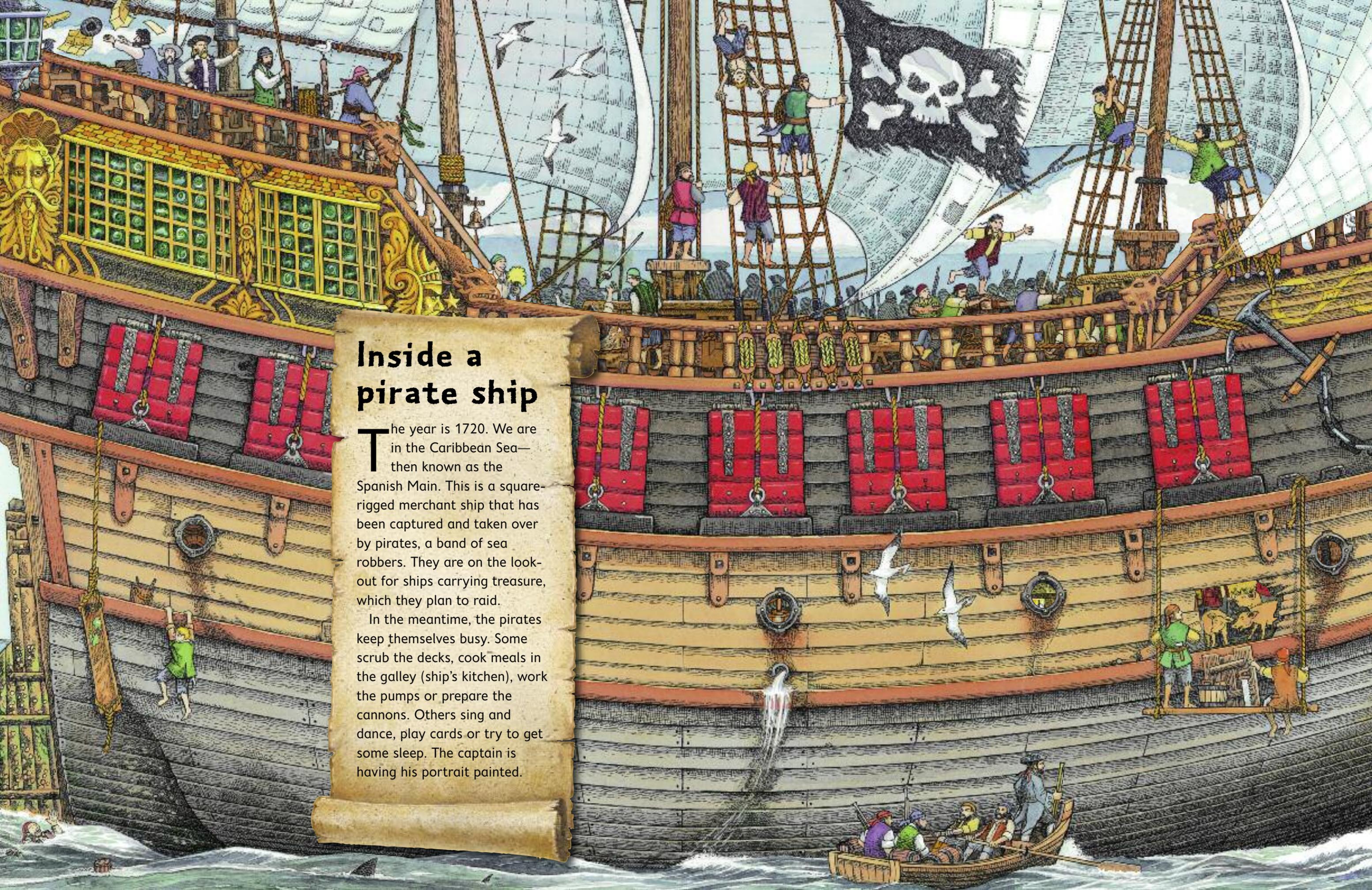


Let's Look Inside A PIRATE SHIP



Illustrated by Brian Lee

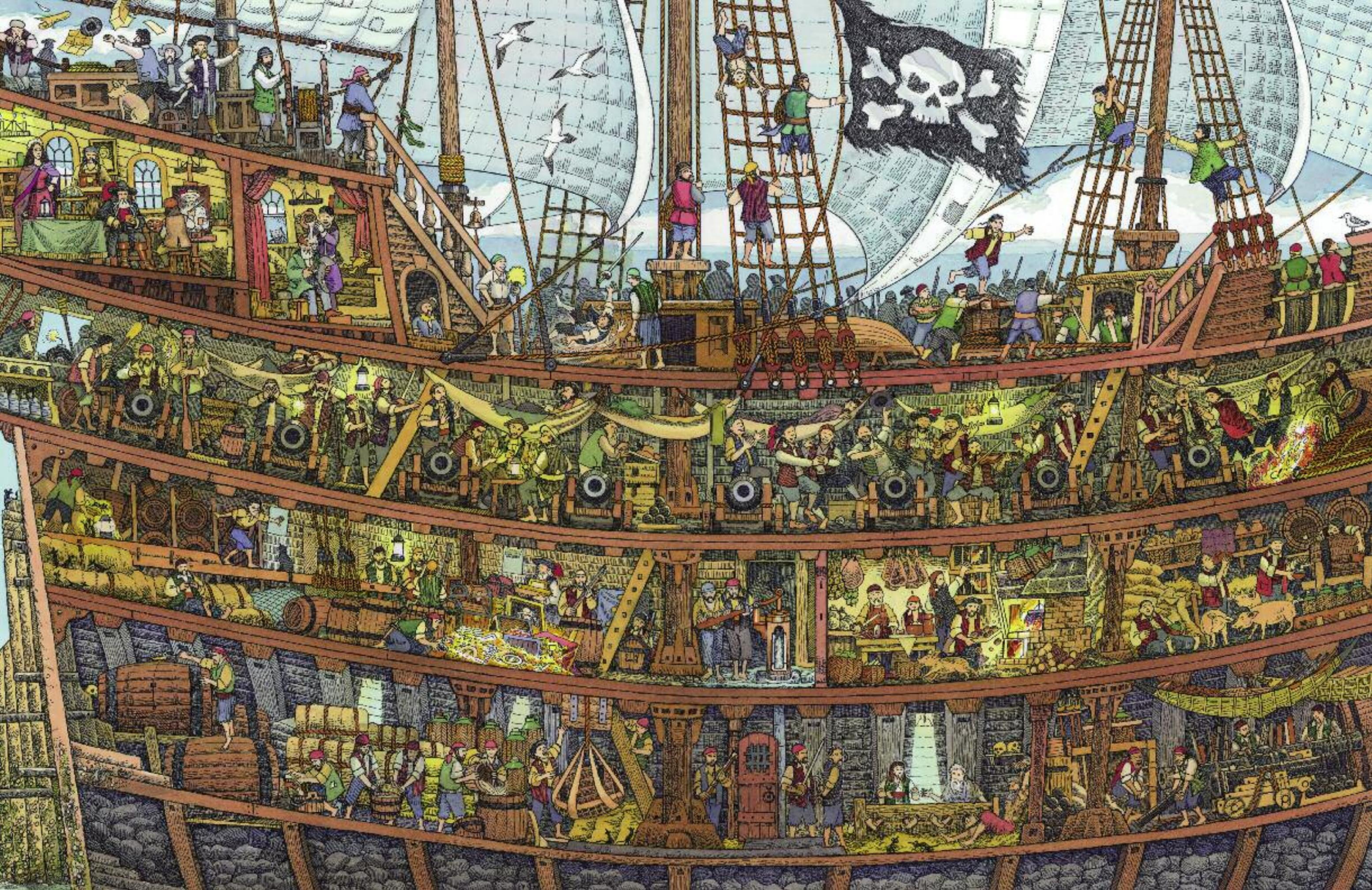
 Orpheus



Inside a pirate ship

The year is 1720. We are in the Caribbean Sea—then known as the Spanish Main. This is a square-rigged merchant ship that has been captured and taken over by pirates, a band of sea robbers. They are on the lookout for ships carrying treasure, which they plan to raid.

In the meantime, the pirates keep themselves busy. Some scrub the decks, cook meals in the galley (ship's kitchen), work the pumps or prepare the cannons. Others sing and dance, play cards or try to get some sleep. The captain is having his portrait painted.



Life aboard ship



absolute authority and often handed out harsh punishments, including flogging.

Life at sea was still tough for pirates. Below deck, it was dark, damp and dirty.

The men lived in cramped conditions, sleeping amongst rats and eating a poor diet. There were no doctors, so their battle wounds went untreated. Much of the time, in the weeks between attacks, life was extremely boring.

But the pirates were certainly better treated, and had more freedoms and rights than “normal” sailors. Both the captain and the quartermaster (the person in charge of food and living conditions on board) were elected by the crew. The captain was often the fiercest fighter, a man the crew would trust rather than a hated figure of authority.

Many pirate crews followed rules that were agreed amongst themselves. They shared out what they seized between them. If a pirate took more of his share of the booty, was found guilty of stealing, or was judged a coward in battle, he was marooned (left on his own) on a remote island with only a little water and food.



1 Ship's wheel The ship was steered by a helmsman, using a wheel.

2 Mainmast The tallest mast of the ship.

3 Great Cabin The captain had use of this cabin. It served as a dining room, a map room and a place to entertain guests.

4 Rigging The sails, together with the ropes used to control them, were called the rigging. The rope ladders fixed to the rigging were called ratlines.

5 Capstan A winding machine used for raising or lowering the anchor. Sailors pushed levers, called handspikes, to turn the capstan.

6 Cannon A gun mounted on a wheeled carriage. It fired cannonballs at enemy ships.



7 Crew's quarters Most sailors slept in hammocks slung from the ceilings

8 Tiller A lever attached to the rudder.

9 Bilge pumps These drained the bilges, the lowest part of the ship. These tended to fill up with smelly water.

10 Galley The cabin where the cooking was done. The hearth is enclosed in bricks to keep the heat in.

11 Rudder A large wooden paddle fitted to the stern (back) of the ship.

12 Ship's stores The ship carried food stores, (biscuit, grain and salted meat) water and beer, gunpowder, cannonballs, spare sails and ropes.

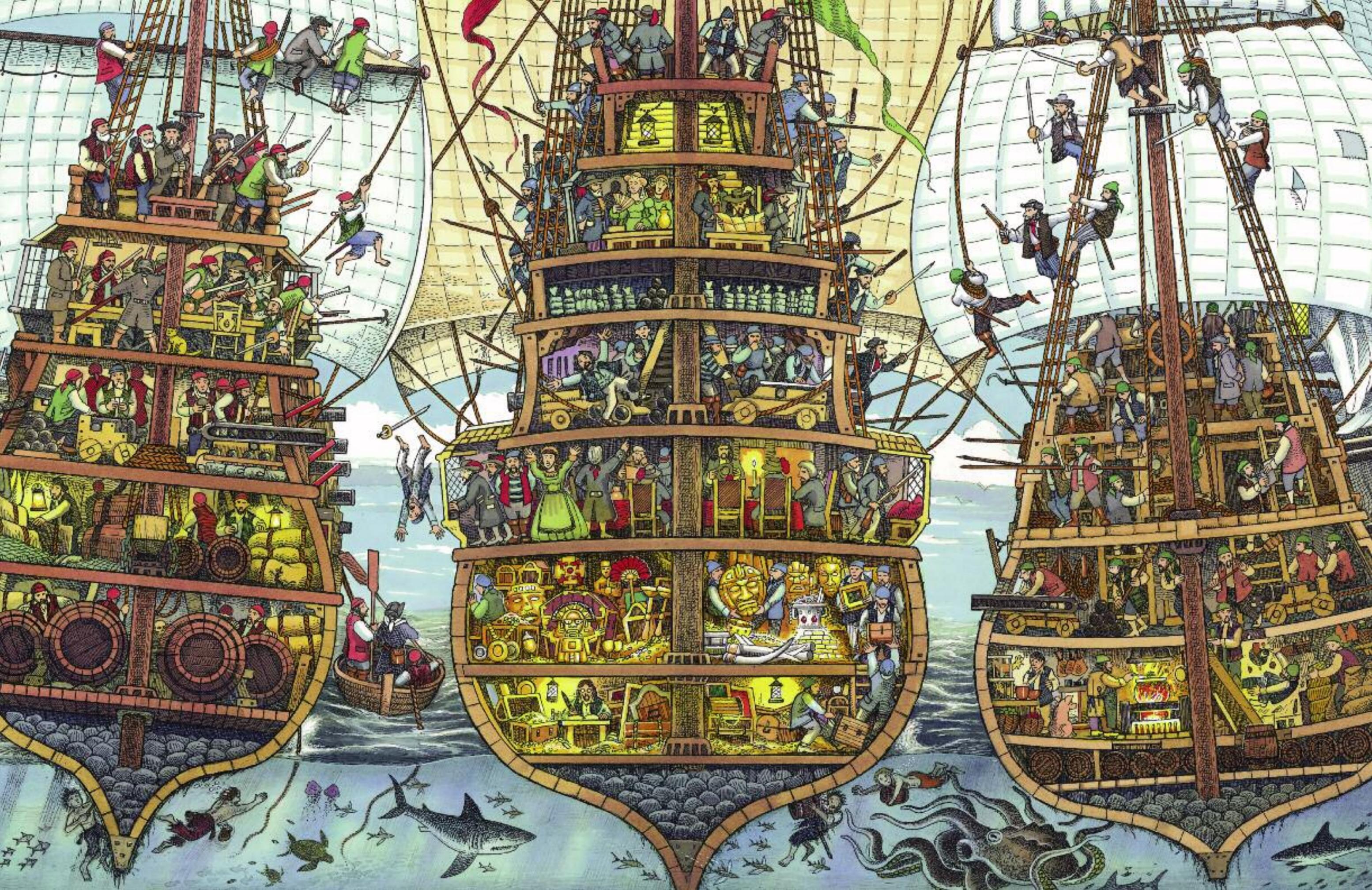
13 Ballast Heavy rocks in the bilges helped keep the ship stable.





Stern and bow

Two pirate ships have joined forces to attack a galleon. We can see the stern (back) of the galleon and the pirate ship to its left. To the right of the galleon, we can see the bow (front) of the other pirate ship. The captain of the galleon has no intention of surrendering to the pirates. So preparations for a battle are underway in each of the ships. When you look inside the galleon, you can see into the captain's quarters. The pirates, meanwhile are priming their cannons, ready to fire ...



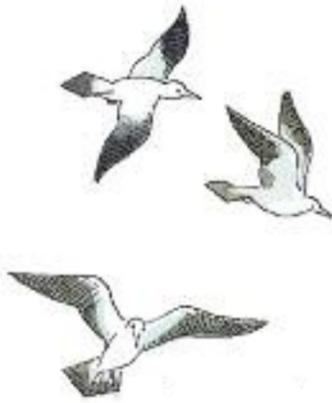
Spanish galleon

Christopher Columbus, in the service of Spain, first landed in the Americas in 1492.

Spanish seamen began to explore the “New World”, beginning with the Caribbean Sea and moving on to the mainland—what became known as the “Spanish Main”. Spain claimed much of Central and South America as its own. The empires of two great native American peoples, the Aztecs and the Incas, were conquered and their vast stocks of gold and silver shipped back to Spain.

The sea journey from the Spanish Main back to Spain was threatened by pirates, intent on seizing the treasure. Pirates would often take a treasure ship by surprise, swapping a friendly flag for the Jolly Roger only moments before their attack.

The sight of the skull and cross-bones or cross-swords would often terrify the crew of the galleon into surrender without a fight.

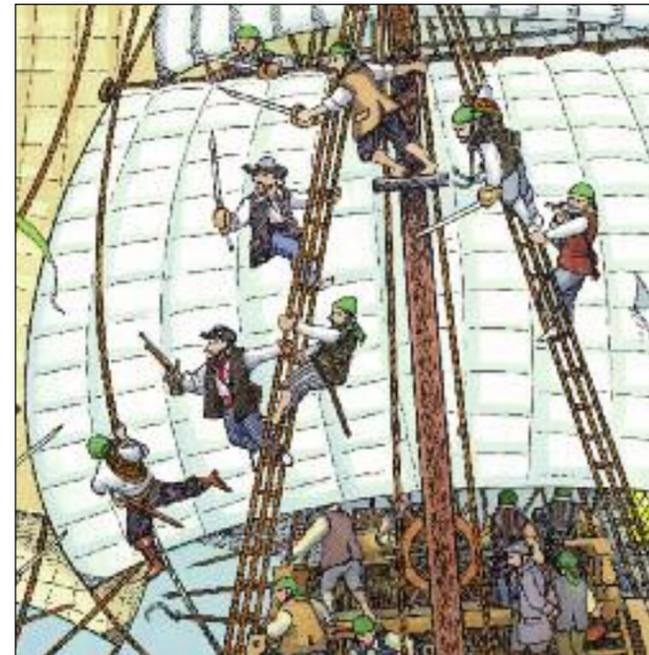
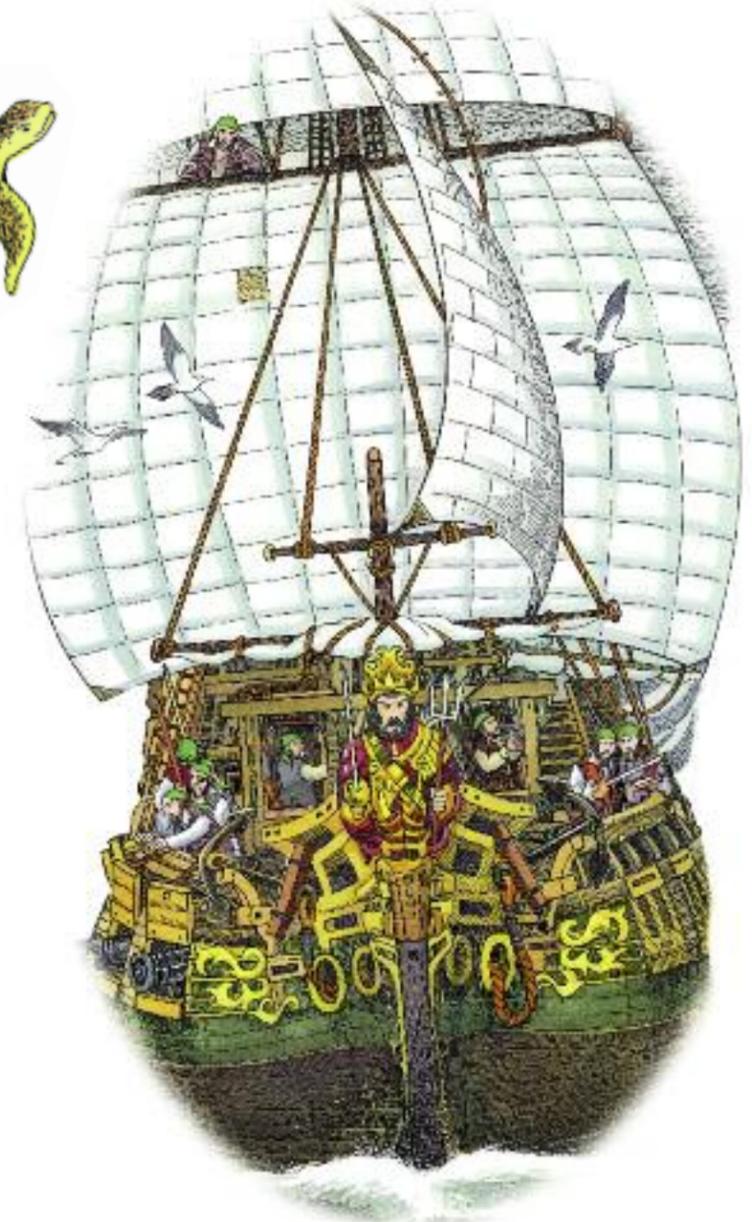
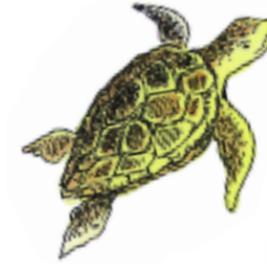


The ships the Spanish used to carry their treasure were called galleons. These huge warships were sometimes more than 35 metres long and 10 metres wide. They had up to 30 cannon on either side and a crew of more than 200 men. Despite their great size and weaponry, the galleons were often out-manoeuvred by the smaller, faster pirate ships.



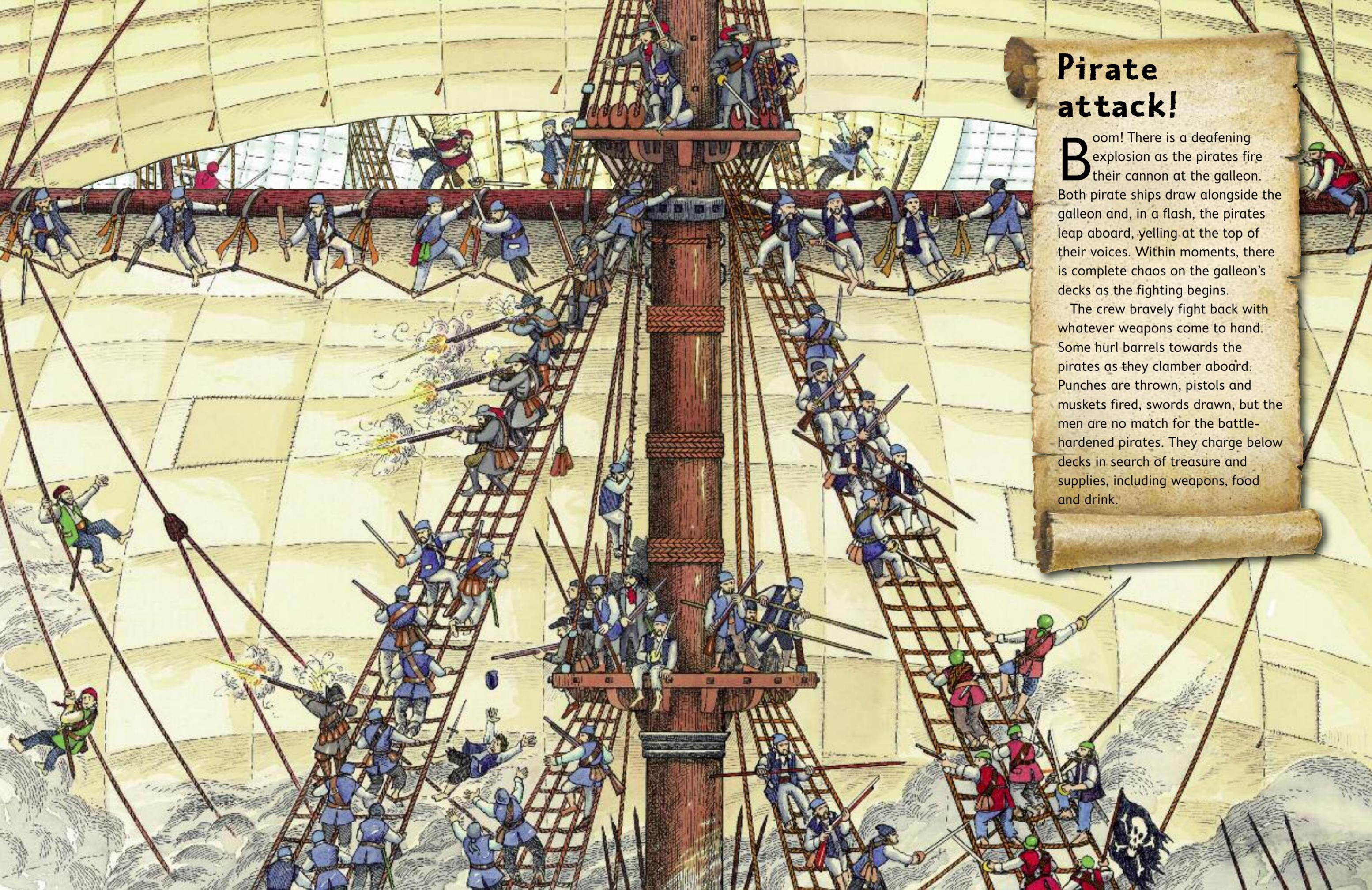
Several men were needed to fire a cannon. First, a loader packed gunpowder into the barrel, followed by the ball. A “sponger” used a long stick called a rammer to push both powder and ball down the barrel. The gun crew hauled on ropes to pull the cannon to the gunport. The gunner held a burning taper to a hole at the end of the gun, lighting the gunpowder.

Both galleon and the pirate ships relied on the power of the wind to move them forward. The sails were designed to get maximum advantage from the wind. By adjusting the position of the sails, the ship could change direction. The sails were attached to the masts by horizontal beams called yards. Ropes called lifts held them in place. Other ropes, known as halyards, hoisted the sails into position. The crew limbed up and down the rigging on rope ladders called ratlines. They did this to furl or unfurl the sails, to reach the crow’s nest, or to attack invaders on the deck below.



Faced with pirate attack, the galleon’s captain could either surrender or put up a fight. Sometimes it would be possible to fire a cannon directly at the bow (front) of the pirate ship, shattering her hull. This was called raking.





Pirate attack!

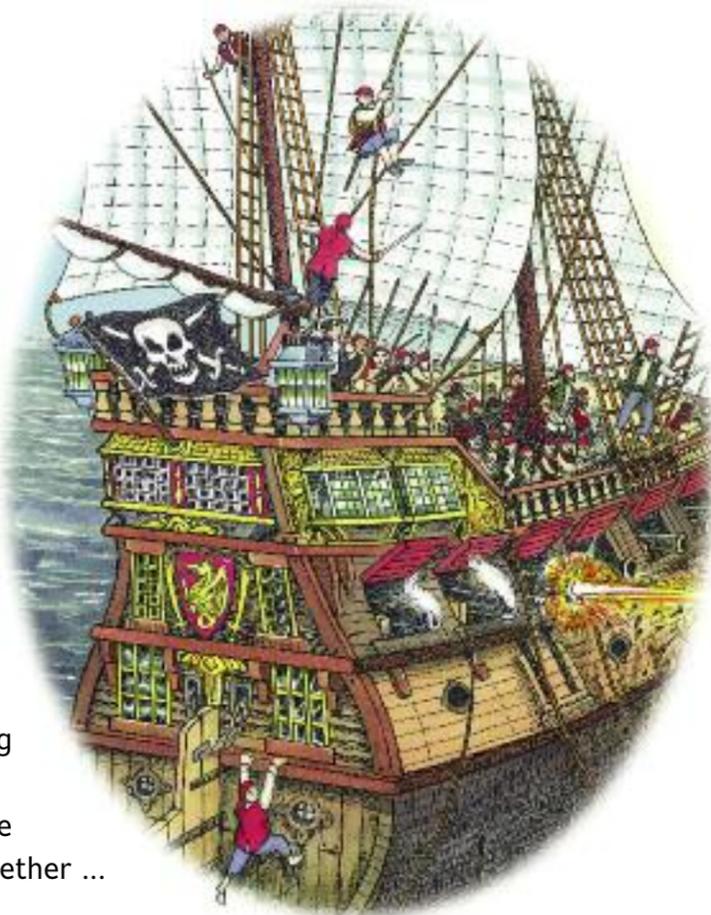
Boom! There is a deafening explosion as the pirates fire their cannon at the galleon. Both pirate ships draw alongside the galleon and, in a flash, the pirates leap aboard, yelling at the top of their voices. Within moments, there is complete chaos on the galleon's decks as the fighting begins.

The crew bravely fight back with whatever weapons come to hand. Some hurl barrels towards the pirates as they clamber aboard. Punches are thrown, pistols and muskets fired, swords drawn, but the men are no match for the battle-hardened pirates. They charge below decks in search of treasure and supplies, including weapons, food and drink.



Into battle

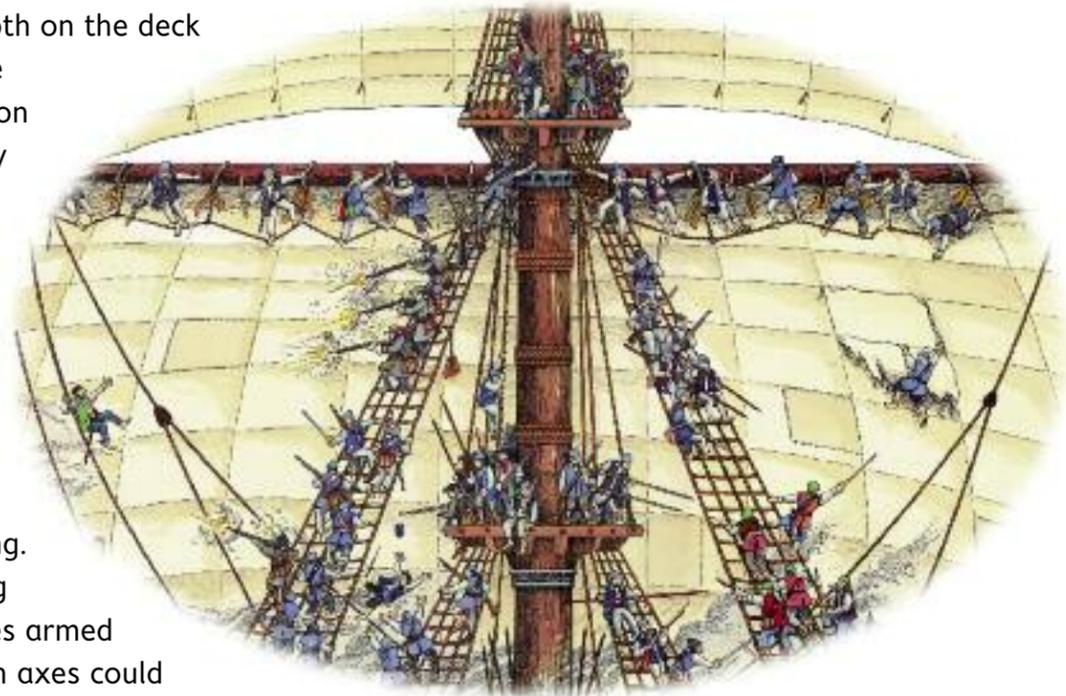
When a pirate ship threatened a galleon, it would normally meet with little resistance. Pirate crews often vastly outnumbered the crew of a merchant vessel. Faced with the challenge of pirates wielding razor-sharp swords and bellowing terrifying threats, few crews would dare to put up a fight. The captain would often surrender before a shot had been fired in order to save lives. But sometimes, especially if there were trained guards aboard, battle was joined. Following an initial bombardment by cannon fire, the pirate ship would draw alongside the galleon. Some of the crew used grappling irons to pull the two ships together ...



Fighting could go on both on the deck and in the rigging. The defenders of the galleon could gain an advantage by firing down on the pirate attackers from positions high on the ratlines. A successful shot from the pirate ship's cannons could, however, blast through the mast, bringing it crashing down, along with the rigging.



Boarding pirates armed with axes could also chop through the galleon's ropes, bringing the mainsail tumbling on to the deck and causing great confusion.



As long as people have sailed across the seas, there have been pirates. Some were out to steal all they could for themselves. Others were employed in the service of foreign governments: their kings gave them authority to capture and plunder foreign ships. The captain and the king would share the spoils. These were called "privateers", a term short for "private men-of-war".

Many privateers became pirates when their countries made peace.

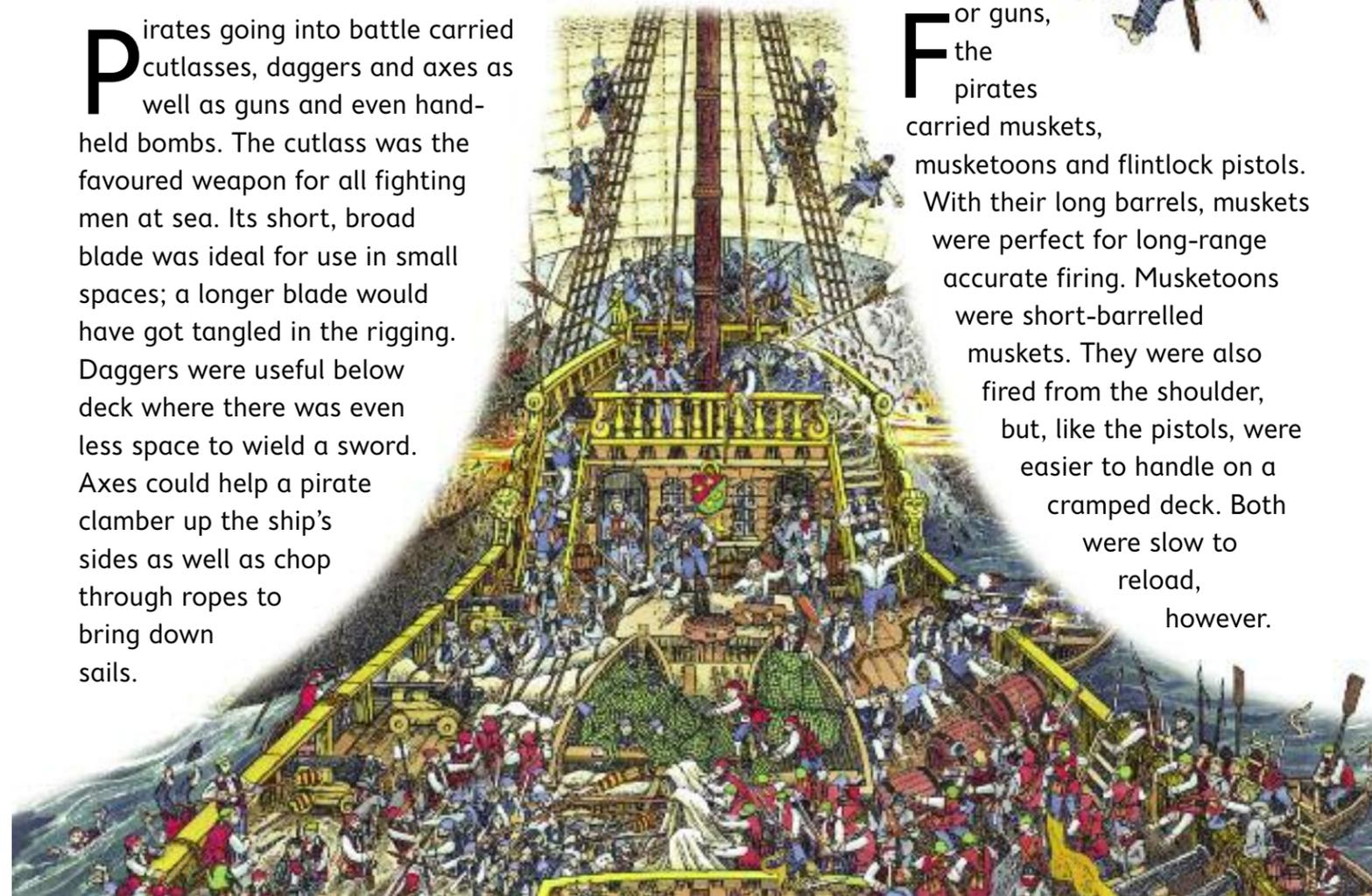
Runaway slaves, adventures and outlaws also became pirates. Inhabitants of the Spanish island of Hispaniola, who lived from hunting wild pigs, turned to piracy after being forced off their land by their rulers. They were called "buccaneers" after the "boucan" barbecues on which they smoked their meat.

When war between Britain and Spain came to an end 1714, privateers and buccaneers joined forces. The Golden Age of Piracy had begun.



Pirates going into battle carried cutlasses, daggers and axes as well as guns and even hand-held bombs. The cutlass was the favoured weapon for all fighting men at sea. Its short, broad blade was ideal for use in small spaces; a longer blade would have got tangled in the rigging. Daggers were useful below deck where there was even less space to wield a sword. Axes could help a pirate clamber up the ship's sides as well as chop through ropes to bring down sails.

For guns, the pirates carried muskets, musketoons and flintlock pistols. With their long barrels, muskets were perfect for long-range accurate firing. Musketoons were short-barrelled muskets. They were also fired from the shoulder, but, like the pistols, were easier to handle on a cramped deck. Both were slow to reload, however.



Shipwreck

The pirates overwhelmed the galleon. But the cannon fire damaged the ship's hull so badly that seawater flooded in and she started to sink. Both pirates and crew quickly abandoned ship. The treasure went down with her.

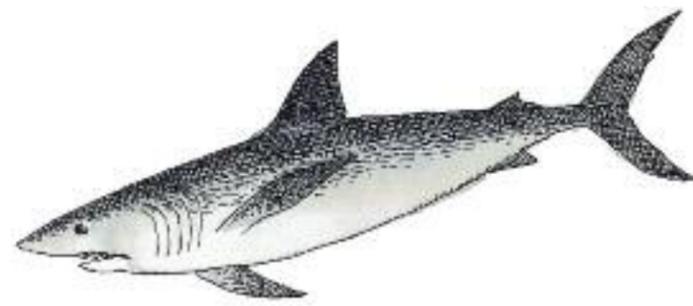
It is several months since the galleon sank and the pirates have returned. The captain of one of the pirate ships remembers exactly the spot where she went down. He sails there with some of his men. They dive down to the wreck to try and recover the treasure.





Under the sea

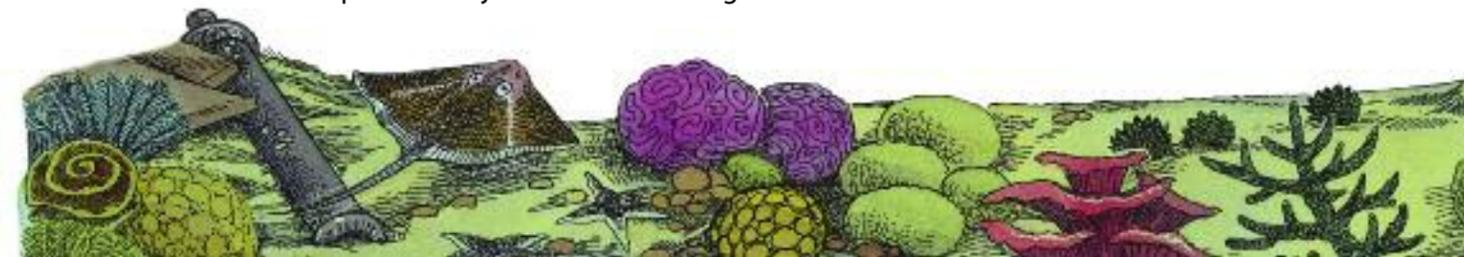
An 18th-century ship could be wrecked in a number of ways, besides being sunk in battle. A ship could become overbalanced by badly-laden cargo. Its top-heavy shape could cause it to topple over in the wind. Storms could whip up massive waves that would swamp it with water. In tropical regions, hurricanes, which caused high winds and mountainous waves, were an ever-constant threat. Sharp coral reefs or rocks just below the water's surface could smash a hole in its hull, causing water to flood in. Sometimes, shipwrecked sailors could make their escape in rowing boats or on makeshift rafts. But many drowned for one simple reason: very few sailors could swim!



When a wooden ship sunk, water currents might wash silt, sand and mud from the sea bed into the ship's hull. There, where there was no oxygen to rot away the wood, the timbers might remain preserved for centuries afterwards. But any wood left uncovered would be gradually eaten away by tiny marine creatures, such as marine worms. The weakened timbers would eventually collapse and rot away in the sea water.



Over the years, the wreck would gradually become part of a coral reef. Reefs are built up by tiny animals that live in warm shallow seas in the world's tropical regions, such as the Caribbean Sea. The corals group together to become colonies and make hard cases around their bodies. Eventually, brightly coloured, fantastic shapes appear. Many other sea creatures, including fish, clams and starfish live among the coral. Old iron anchors and cannon are perfect objects for coral to grow around.



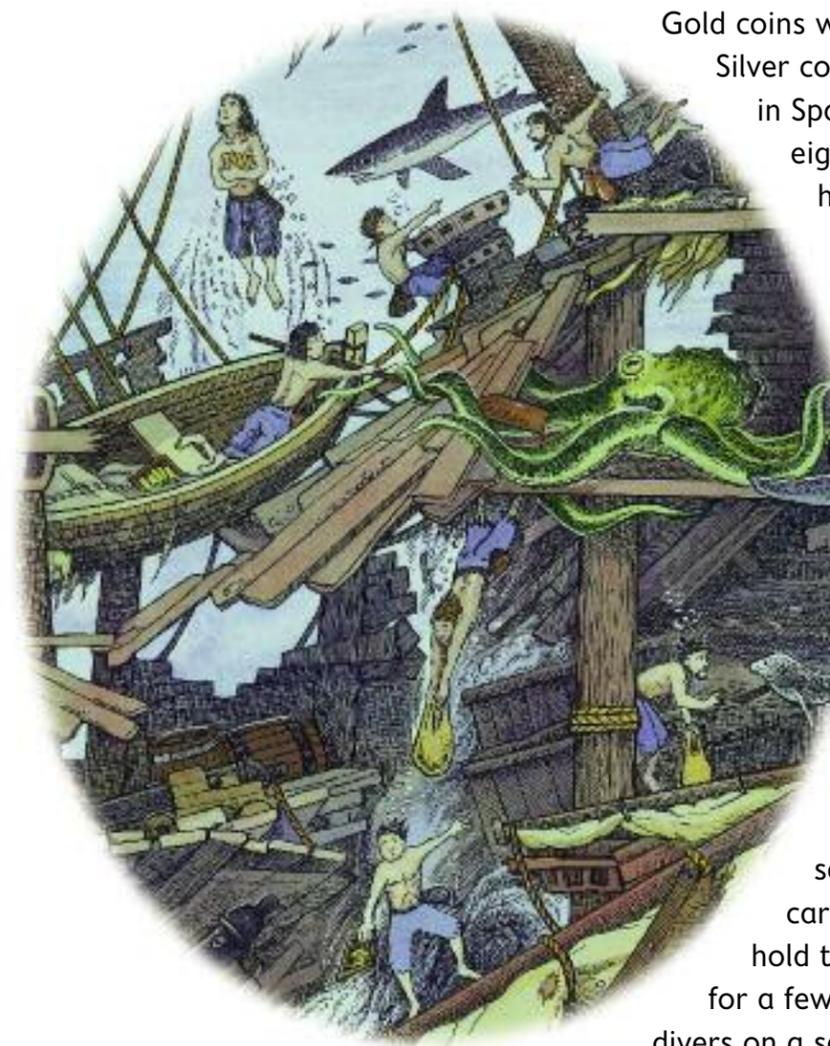
When a Spanish treasure ship sank in the Caribbean, its valuable cargo might go down with it. The treasure originally came from the Americas. The native peoples of Central and South America made beautifully-crafted ornaments, statues and jewellery from precious metals. The Spanish melted down some of the gold and silver they seized from the native peoples and turned it into coins.



Gold coins were called "doubloons".

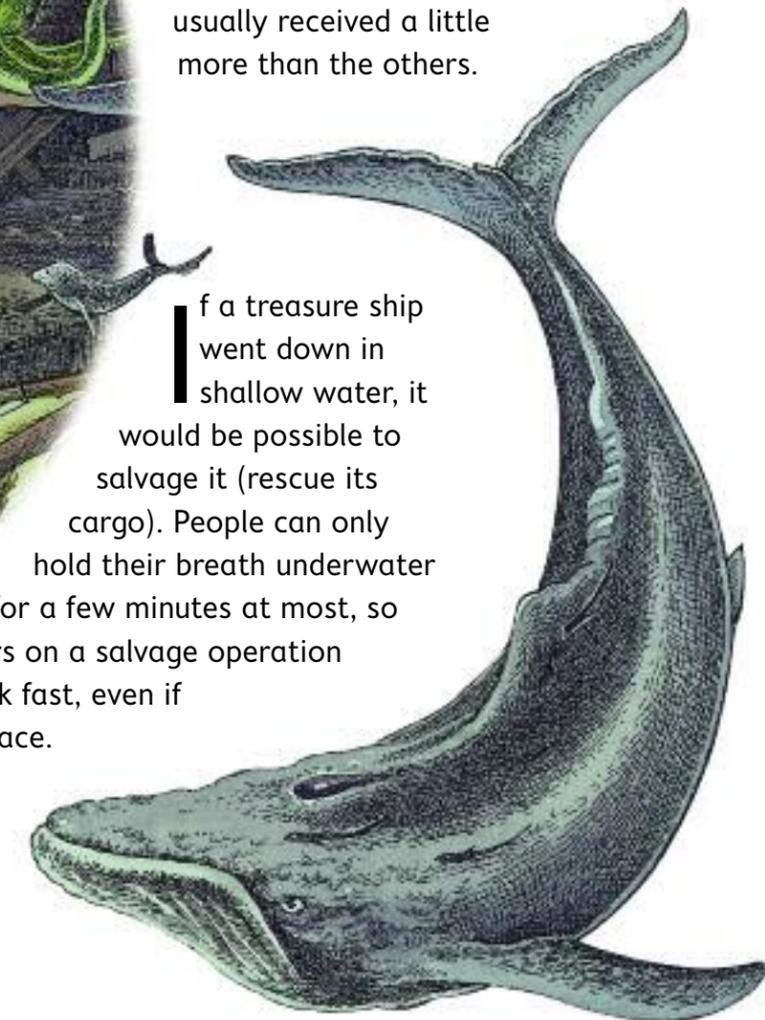
Silver coins, called "pesos", were,

in Spanish money, worth about eight reals each (real means "royal"). They had an "8" stamped on them, and came to be known amongst pirates as "pieces of eight". Pirates divided up a treasure haul more or less equally between them, although the captain usually received a little more than the others.



If a treasure ship went down in shallow water, it would be possible to salvage it (rescue its cargo). People can only hold their breath underwater for a few minutes at most, so divers on a salvage operation had to work fast, even if

the wreck was only a few metres below the surface. Exploring a wreck was very dangerous but the rewards were worth the risk. Heavy items like cannon and chests required ropes and grappling irons to lift them. They could be winched to the surface from a salvage ship anchored above the wreck.



Glossary

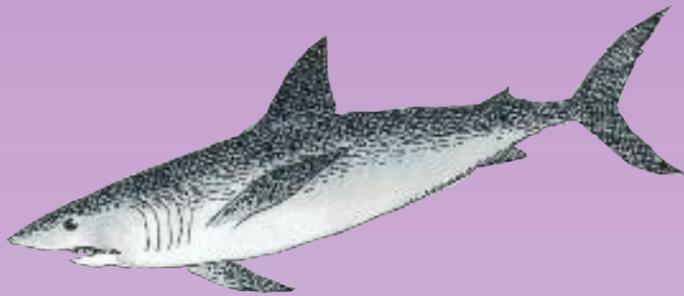
Backstaff A tool that measures the sun's position, and shows how far north or south the ship has travelled.

Ballast Stones packed into the bottom of a ship to keep the ship upright, especially in rough weather.

Bilges The lowest part of the ship, where **ballast** is placed.

Brigantine A fast, two-masted ship much favoured by pirates.

Buccaneers Former hunters who turned to piracy after being driven from their home island, Hispaniola, by the Spanish.



Capstan A winding machine used for raising or lowering the anchor.

Cargo The goods carried on board a ship.

Coral reef An undersea bank made up of the skeletons of many thousands of tiny animals, called coral polyps.

Crow's nest A lookout platform around a ship's mast.



Cutlass A sword with a short, broad blade.
Desertion When a sailor abandons his ship for a better life, often to become a pirate.



Doubloon A Spanish gold coin.

Flintlock pistol A light pistol. When the trigger was pulled, a piece of flint was struck, producing sparks that ignited gunpowder.



Galleon A large sailing ship used in warfare and trading between the 15th and 18th centuries.

Galley The kitchen of a ship.

Gunports Square holes fitted with hinged lids in the side of the ship to shoot cannon through.



Grappling iron A hook with several prongs, attached to a rope and used for holding on to or lifting objects, or to secure two ships together.

Halyard A rope used for hoisting a ship's sails into position.

Helmsman The sailor who steers the ship.

Hull The main outer body of the ship.

Hurricane A large rotating storm with high winds that forms over tropical seas, such as the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico.



Jolly Roger The flag flown by pirate ships.

Marooning

A punishment for a pirate who broke the ship's rules. He was left alone on a remote island with very little food or water.

Merchant ship A ship that carries cargo that is for sale.

Musket A gun with a long barrel, similar to a rifle, used between the 16th and 18th centuries.

Musketoons A shorter version of the **musket**, popular with pirates.

Mutiny When a group of sailors are in open rebellion against their captain.

Outlaw A criminal on the run.

Pieces of eight The pirate name for Spanish silver coins.

Pirate Someone who attacks ships and steals their contents.

Privateer Someone given permission by the government of one country to attack ships belonging to another.



Ratlines Rope ladders fixed to the **rigging** that enable sailors to climb up to the sails.

Rigging The ship's sails and the ropes used to control them.

Rudder A flat board at the back of a ship that is moved from side to side to change the ship's direction.

Salvage To retrieve the contents of a shipwreck.

Slaves People that were forced to work for other people, who "owned" them.

Spanish Main The Caribbean coast of Central and South America, claimed by Spain after Christopher Columbus discovered America in 1492.

Whipstaff The long lever used to steer a ship

Yard The pole on a mast that carries a sail.



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