

Captain Blackbeard

Pirates often capture the imagination. None have been as popular as Captain Blackbeard. He was just as famous when he was alive. Many people feared him. He has been made even more famous through films and books. But was he as terrifying as we are led to believe?

Blackbeard's real name was Edward Teach. He was born in 1680 and died in 1718. He wasn't a pirate for most of his life. He was probably a privateer for most of his life. A privateer owned their own ship. They would be paid by governments to fight for them in wars. It is most likely he became a pirate once the war was over.

Another feared pirate at the time was Captain Benjamin Hornigold. Blackbeard joined Hornigold's pirate crew in 1716. He was immediately put in charge of his own ship. Hornigold retired from piracy in 1717. It was then that Blackbeard became captain of his own crew.

There are a few descriptions of Blackbeard's appearance from the time. He had a long black beard. He sometimes decorated it with colourful ribbons. He was tall with broad shoulders. People who saw him said that he wore knee-length boots and dark clothing.

Blackbeard definitely knew how to scare people. He would tie candles and fuses from canons into his beard and set them on fire. This would create lots of smoke for him to walk through. One person who saw him said that he couldn't imagine anything scarier. None of Blackbeard's ships had a Jolly Roger flag. Blackbeard's flags had a horned skeleton stabbing a heart with a spear. Much scarier!

RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. What was Blackbeard's real name?
2. When was Blackbeard put in charge of his first ship?
3. Who did Blackbeard join in 1716?
4. What did Blackbeard's flag look like?
5. Why might we not know how successful Blackbeard was?

Blackbeard was definitely a dangerous man. Pirates often used fake names so we may never know just how successful he really was. Aye aye captain! (Pirates never actually said this!)



VIPERS QUESTIONS

I

Why do you think Blackbeard tied ribbons in his beard?

V

Which word tells you that people were scared of Blackbeard?

V

Find a word that tells you Hornigold gave up being a pirate.

I

Why would people have been scared seeing Blackbeard walk through smoke?

S

What happened after Hornigold retired?

