

# BOXTALES

## WATERS OF THE EARTH *Multicultural Tales of the Sea* Teacher Guide K-6

### ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Boxtales is a storytelling theatre company which uses masks, movement, storytelling and live music to present myths and folklore from around the world. Performers Matt Tavianini, Jeff Mills and Michael Andrews combine their diverse talents to create a professional, high energy, highly interactive theatrical experience for young audiences.

### ABOUT THE PROGRAM

This production, directed by renowned movement theater artist **James Donlon** explores the rich folklore and mythology of seafaring peoples from all over the globe. The stories include *Raven and the Man who sits on the Tide* from the Northwest Native Tradition, *Sealskin Soulskin* an amalgamation of Selkie (seal people) stories from the Inuit, Icelandic, Siberian and Celtic traditions, *Sinbad the Sailor* from the One Thousand and One Arabian Nights, and the Greek myth *Dionysus and the Pirate Ship*. The program also includes an introduction to the tradition of **Sea Chanteys**, songs sung by working sailors on all kinds of ships. Songs from **Irish, New England and African American/Afro Caribbean** traditions will be taught and sung during the performance.

### OBJECTIVES

- To introduce students to classic stories from sea faring cultures.
- To introduce students to traditional Sea Chanteys played on authentic instruments.
- To encourage students to seek out and read other stories.
- To help develop creative imaginations.
- To introduce the importance of oral tradition as an educational tool.
- To present stories that will help raise self-esteem and teach important lessons.

## PREPARATION FOR THE PROGRAM:

Through the myths of a society an understanding of the culture can be reached. Stories older than the art of sailing itself, find their way into nearly every civilization during every age. These myths and folk tales provide us with a window into each culture and into our own humanity.

### THE STORIES



#### Sealskin Soulskin

Sometimes similar stories erupt from a sense of place. This archetypal tale is told across the world. It originates in the cold countries to the north, in any place where there is an icy sea or ocean. Versions of this story are told among the Celts and the Scots as well as among the Siberian and the Icelandic peoples. This adaptation is based mostly on the Inuit version and is found in Clarissa Pinkola Estes' book, **Women Who Run With the Wolves** but we have woven in aspects from many different cultures. It is commonly called **The Seal Maiden, Selkie-o, Pamrauk, Little Seal or Eyalirtaq Flesh of the Seal.**

In the story a lonely man steals the sealskin of a Selkie (a seal woman.) When she asks for the skin back the man refuses to return it unless she marries him and lives with him for seven years. She agrees and eventually they grow to love one another and have a child together, a boy. Eventually the woman becomes ill and crippled and in the eighth year she demands her skin returned to her. The man becomes angry (this story very very lightly touches on some domestic violence issues) and refuses for fear she will leave him and return to the sea. After the man storms out, the boy is summoned by a mysterious ocean spirit to where the sealskin is hidden. He returns the skin to his mother and they both plunge into the ocean to meet with the wise old Grandfather Seal. The Grandfather nurses the woman back to health and together they take the boy back to the land where he becomes a great musician and shaman.

This story tells about where we truly come from, what we are made of and how we must all sometimes use our instincts to find our way back home.



### **Dionysus and the Pirate Ship**

This tale is a Greek myth about the god *Dionysus*. Dionysus was celebrated as the god of the vine and of winemaking. He was also the god of the Greek Theatre. Theatre was very important to the ancient Greeks. Not only was theatre religious in nature but many important social issues were examined and pondered as the famous dramas played themselves out. Around 300 BC the most famous theater festival in all of Greece was dedicated to Dionysus. He was actually known as a demigod- half god/half human (his father was Zeus and his mother was mortal) and because of this he was not always recognized as a divine being. There are many stories about mortals not believing that Dionysus was a god.

In this story, Dionysus is kidnapped by pirates and taken aboard a ship. On board the pirates try to tie Dionysus to the mast. When the ropes continue to fall from his wrists the helmsman (the man who steers the ship) realizes that Dionysus is a god and tries to persuade his shipmates to let him go. They ignore the helmsman's warnings and

Dionysus takes control of the ship. You'll have to see the show to know what happens next but needless to say, it doesn't turn out well for the pirates. The moral of this story is that looks can be deceiving. Every person should be respected no matter who you think they might be. If you are disrespectful to someone you don't know (or anyone for that matter) that person could turn out to be too powerful for you to handle.



### **Raven and the Man who Sits on the Tides**

Ever wonder where fog comes from? Or why the tides go in and out? Well this creation myth from the Pacific Northwest Indians has the answers. In this comic tale **Raven** tries to convince the **Man Who Sits on the Tide** (the archetypal bureaucrat) to let the tide go out so everyone can get some food. But of course the man's job is to **sit** on the tide and Raven has a heck of a time teaching an old dog new tricks. Raven is clever though and eventually wins the day.

An insatiable glutton and perpetual trickster **Raven** is the most prominent character in Northwest Indian tales. A shape changer and "spirit being," Raven could take any form, though he usually was either in "human" or "bird" form. Considered the creator, he found the first people in a giant clamshell and became their teacher and protector. Raven is often shown with the sun disk in his straight beak, for he placed the stars, moon and sun in the sky. In the above picture the large "ovoids" that form his wings are "Salmon heads" for he brought the first salmon. One of the main family crests, Raven tops the Seattle Totem pole.

There are many tales about Raven told among the first nations of the Pacific Northwest - in particular in collections of Tlingit, Salish and Haida stories. We got this story from *Eldrbarry*, a teller who lives on the Olympic Peninsula just west of the Puget Sound. He gathered Raven stories from several different collections: **Sketco the Raven** by Robert Ayre and **Raven the Trickster** by Gail Robinson. A similar tale is found in the more traditional Raven Cycle: "*Raven and the Tide Woman*" in **Raven** by Dale De

Armond. The Fog Hat appears in that same collection in the possession of Petrel: "*Raven and the Fog Hat*".



### Sinbad the Sailor and the

### Valley of Diamonds

This classic adventure story comes from **One Thousand and One Nights** and in it our hero Sinbad the Sailor finds himself once again abandoned by his unwitting shipmates on a remote island. On this island, huge serpents and great giant birds called **Rhuks** lead Sinbad to discover the Valley of Diamonds. Sinbad is very pleased with his discovery but not so pleased about what he has to do in order to get back home.

The **Arabian Nights** written sometime between 1200 and 1550, is a collection of about two hundred stories within stories within stories. The main story is about Shahrazad, a very clever and beautiful woman who loves to read stories, histories and adventure tales. When King Shahriyar takes Shahrazad as his wife and quickly sentences her to execution, Shahrazad keeps herself alive by telling the king one riveting tale after another always being careful to leave a cliffhanger at the end of each night so the king will call her back the next day to tell how the story ends.

The Sinbad stories are wonderful and romantic sea adventures. The Valley of Diamonds was a legendary place about which even Alexander the Great had theories. The part about the giant snakes and their mirror reflections is attributed to Alexander the Great.

### Chanteys and Sea Songs

"...I soon got used to this singing, for the sailors never touched a rope without it. Sometimes, when no one happened to strike up, and the pulling, whatever it might be, did not seem to be getting forward very well, the mate would always say, '*Come men, can't any of you sing? Sing now and raise the dead.*' And then some one of them would begin, and if every man's arms were as much relieved as mine by the song, and he could pull as much better as I did, with such a cheering accompaniment, I am sure the song was well



worth the breath expended on it. It is a great thing in a sailor to know how to sing well, for he gets a great name by it from the officers, and a good deal of popularity among his shipmates. Some sea captains, before shipping a man, always ask him whether he can sing out at a rope."

-Herman Melville, *Redburn*, chapter 9 (1849)

Sea chanteys were songs invented and sung by sailors in a call and response format in order to make their work a little easier and more enjoyable. Throughout history call and response work songs have existed in almost every culture. Whenever there was a big job that could not be done by an individual, a group would gather, sing together and as a team get the job done.

The art of chanteying reached its golden age in the mid nineteenth century when the industrial revolution created a huge boom in the shipping industry. Ships became bigger and faster as trade routes opened between Asia, Europe and the Americas. Chinese tea needed quick delivery so it would not spoil and the Gold Rush brought supplies and passengers to California from all over the world in unprecedented numbers. Other industries like whaling and banana or sugar transportation required fast ships with hardworking crews. And chanteys made this grueling work possible.

The roots of this music are the Anglo-Irish tradition and the African-Caribbean tradition. Each tradition has unique characteristics. African-Caribbean music tends to tell a story or present a poetic image within each verse. Harmony is often sung when multiple singers are present. It is improvisational and very rhythmic (this is very similar to gospel, blues and rap music.)

Songs originating in the Anglo-Irish tradition tend to be sung in unison and tell a more linear story. This meant that if the job was finished quickly the story was cut short. If the job took a long time, the lead singer would have to start a new story or sing the story again. These two traditions invariably came into contact with one another and evolved into the chanteys with which we are familiar. Irish melodies mixed with African and Polynesian rhythms mixed with American stories made this music truly multicultural.

A particular kind of chantey was usually sung to accompany a particular job.

### **Short Drag Chantey**

Short drag or short haul shanties were for tasks requiring quick pulls over a relatively short time, such as shortening or unfurling sails.

### **Long Drag Chantey**

Long drag or halyard shanties were for heavier work requiring more setup time between pulls. For example, to get a heavy sail up to the mast, a shanty that gave the men a rest in between the hauls was what was required. The same shanty could also be used to lower the sails. This type of shanty usually has a chorus at the end of each line. These songs were used for long, heavy periods of labor.

### Capstan Chantey

Capstan (or windlass) shanties were used for long repetitive tasks, that simply need a sustained rhythm. Raising or lowering the anchor while winding up the heavy anchor chain was their prime use. This winding was done by pushing round and round at the capstan bars, which required a long and continuous effort. These are the most developed of the work shanties.

### Forecastle Chanteys

In the evening, when the work was done, it was time to relax. Singing was a favored method of relaxation. The songs sung could come from places visited, either at home or in some foreign land. Naturally, songs of love, adventure, pathos, and famous men, battles, or just plain funny songs topped the list.

### Whaling Chanteys

Life on a whaler was worse than any other type of vessel, except maybe that of a pirate ship (in the sense of surviving). Voyages typically lasted from two to three years, and you also had the ever-present stench of whale oil. Chasing a whale could lead to the ship being smashed by the whale's tail. Many sailors were maimed or killed by the tail.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND ACTIVITIES**



**Ship**, vessel that is buoyant in the water and used to transport people or cargo from one place to another via rivers, lakes, or oceans. Traditionally, ships were distinguished from boats by size—any buoyant vessel small enough to fit on board a ship was considered a boat. However, common usage has blurred the distinction between boats and ships, and today the difference between them is arbitrary.

From prehistoric craft made from animal skins stretched over wooden frames to nuclear-powered aircraft carriers that transport 5,000 people and 85 airplanes, ships have always reflected the values and technologies of the societies that built them. Ancient traders of the Mediterranean built swift-sailing ships with large cargo holds. Their warring successors added oars to increase maneuverability in battle. The Spanish and Portuguese built small, seaworthy craft to carry their best sailors to new lands, then huge merchant vessels to haul the newly claimed riches, and finally fleets of warships to protect their growing wealth. At the end of the 16th century, shipbuilders changed their

focus to passenger service as they sought to accommodate the increasing number of people immigrating to Australia and the Americas. They shifted from sail power to steam power and built ships that crossed the ocean in about one-fourth the time of their predecessors. When the jet airplane drastically reduced ship travel in the 20th century, shipbuilders again focused on the transport of cargo, turning out large tankers, the most massive ships ever afloat.

Despite their seemingly endless variety, all ships share a few basic elements. All ships have a main body, or *hull*, that displaces an amount of water equal to or greater than its own weight and the weight of its cargo. At the front end of the hull is the *bow* (or *pro*), and at the rear end is the *stern*. A ship's size is expressed in terms of the dimensions of its hull—that is, its length, breadth, and volume in tons (calculated by dividing the cubic footage of the hull by 100). All ships also have a steering system and a propulsion system—that is, a device or system of devices that moves them through the water. Like ships themselves, hulls, propulsion systems, and steering systems grew more complex through time.

## II. The Earliest Ships

Historians surmise that the earliest ships appeared around 16,000 BC in Europe, and perhaps earlier in Asia and Africa. Little archaeological evidence for these prehistoric vessels survives because they were made from perishable materials. Prehistoric drawings illustrate that reindeer hunters of central and western Europe made hulls of animal skins sewn together around a birch wood frame, and archaeologists have discovered vessels made from skin and reindeer antlers dating from 9000 BC. Seal hunters plied the frigid waters of the northern Atlantic in boats constructed from sealskin stretched over frames of wood or whalebone. Ancient peoples used *coracles*, round, skin-covered vessels with wicker frames, to fish the lakes and rivers of what are now Ireland and Wales. Larger but similarly constructed *currachs* could sail the open waters of northern Europe. Hunters and fishers all over the world constructed similar hulls from birch bark, balsa wood, papyrus, ox hide, and other local materials.

The skin boat was followed by the *dugout*, a simple hull made from a hollowed out tree trunk. The oldest known dugout dates from about 6000 BC and was discovered in what is now The Netherlands. Technical advances in dugout design appeared shortly thereafter. Ancient boat builders hollowed through the stern of the vessel, then inserted a separate piece of wood, called a transom, to make the craft watertight. They widened dugouts by splitting the hollowed trunk and inserting a plank between the two pieces. They lashed planks to the sides to gain additional height. Many ancient shipwrights embellished their craft with animal heads, beginning the long tradition of decorating and distinguishing a vessel with a figurehead.



## ACTIVITIES

### **Waters of the Earth**

**Grade Level:** K-10



**Topic:** Oceanography

**Summary:** Students will make a striking visual display showing the distribution of water on earth.

**Key Words and Concepts Covered:** oceans, groundwater, glaciers, water cycle

**Introduction:** Earth as seen from space is clearly a water planet. About 71% of the surface of the planet is covered by water. Water is found in the oceans, rivers, ponds, lakes, groundwater, ice caps, glaciers, and in the atmosphere as water vapor and clouds. Water changes state and moves from place to place through the water cycle of evaporation, condensation, and precipitation. Although earth's water supplies seem almost limitless when viewed from an ocean beach, water forms only a thin film on the surface of the planet. The average depth of the oceans is about 3.5 - 4.0 km, while the average radius of earth is 6371 km.

**What to Expect:** Some of these volumes are so small the class will need to gather around the display to see the water being added. The clear bottles with blue colored water in them clearly labeled, make a dramatic display for the school or community.

#### **Materials:**

- Seven two-liter bottles
- Food coloring
- Water
- Labels for bottles
- Graduated cylinders
- Calibrated droppers for 1 ml.

**Procedure:**

1. Color about 2 liters of water blue with food coloring.
2. For younger students: have students measure out the volumes, add each amount to a separate bottle. (For older students: have students use these figures to calculate volumes. Students can fill the bottles and set up a display for the school in a prominent place.)



Type of Water	Percentage of Earth's Water Supply	Volume of Water to Use in Bottle
All of the earth's water:	100 %	2000 ml
All earth's salt water (oceans)	97.2 %	1944 ml
All earth's fresh water:	2.8 %	56 ml
Fresh water locked up as ice	2.3 %	46 ml
Underground fresh water	0.4 %	8 ml
Surface fresh water	~ 0.05 %	1 ml
Water in soil and air	~ 0.01%	0.2 ml

**Evaluation:**

1. Students can make a bar graph showing the percentages of water in different forms.
2. Students can calculate volumes for each percentage, answering the question, "If ocean water volume is about 1,360,000 km<sup>3</sup>, what is the volume of water in each of the other categories?"

**Extensions:** Have students calculate the average volume of water used per person per day in your community. How much water is used by the community annually?

**Source:** Demonstration set-up by Pete Barsness. Adapted from Project Wild Aquatic, "How Wet is Our Planet." 1987, Western Regional Env. Ed. Council.

## Made to Sail

**Grade Level:** 2 - 6



**Topic:** Nautical Science

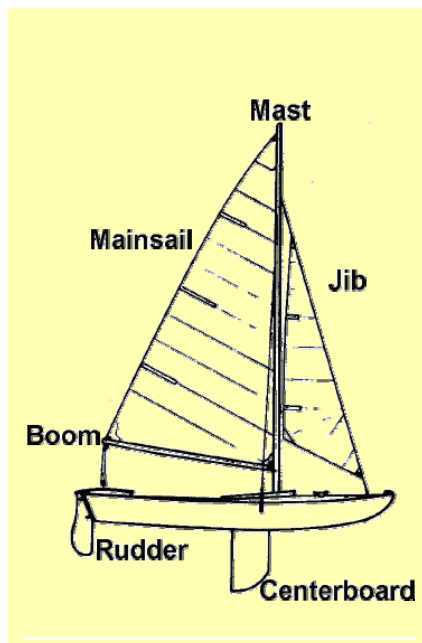
**Summary:** Students use simple materials to make model sailboats which must stay upright and sail straight in a testing tank.



### Key Words and Concepts Covered:

sail, stability, leeway, resistance, floating, displacement, propulsion, steering, keel

**Introduction:** As sailboat designers know, the hull characteristics that keep a boat moving efficiently, resist handling difficulties and keep a sailboat upright, are sometimes in conflict. It can be a tricky job to reconcile



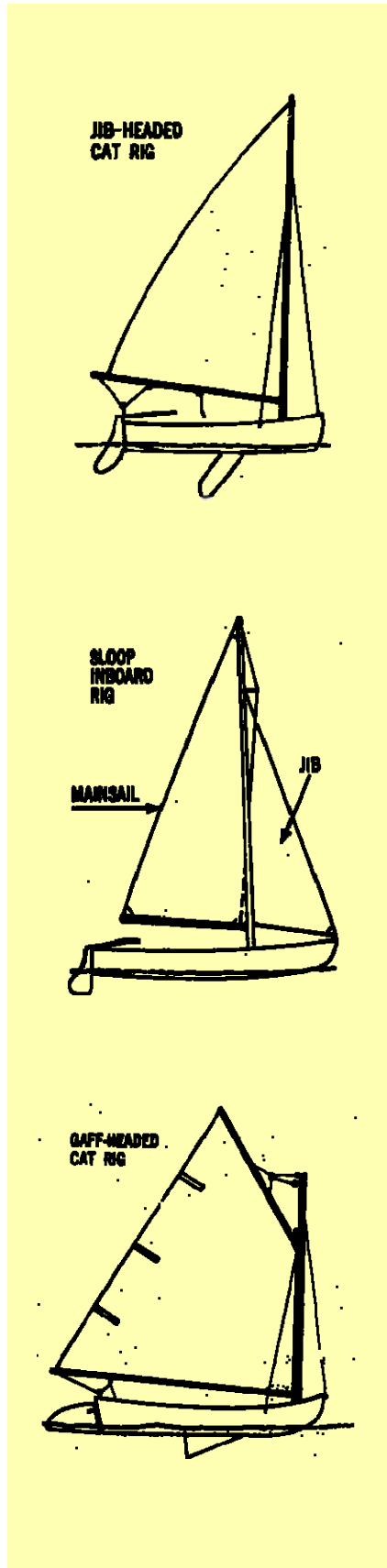
them. All boats, sail or power, are compromises, but sailing craft embody more trade-offs in their design than do other types.

Most modern sailboats give nearly equal attention to stability, load-carrying ability and a speedy hull, with perhaps a slight tilt toward one factor or another, depending on the designer's special aims. In the nearly "pure" racing sailboats, speed-producing elements are emphasized to the detriment of other factors. Cruising sailboats tend to be designed for comfort and cabin amenities instead of speed.

Sailboat hulls are designed to pursue a straight-ahead course with as little disturbance of the water as possible. At the same time the boat is moving forward, wind pressure on the sails is pushing it to one side. This lateral movement of the boat in the water is called leeway and is partially counteracted by the hull shape.

The portion of the hull shape that minimizes leeway is called either a keel or centerboard depending upon which is used in the design of the boat. This fin-shaped feature in the bottom of the hull allows forward movement, but increases the side profile of the hull thereby increasing lateral resistance.

### What to Expect:



Students will be making and testing their own sailboats. They may choose to use the materials that the teacher supplies, or may supply their own. The class will also make a testing tank using simple materials.

Since the tank is large and filled with water, it should be made outdoors. The sailboats will be designed to sail the length of the testing tank. You can use a fan to propel the boats, if needed. The testing tank is about eighteen feet long and about two feet wide. You may choose to have competitions for speed, sailing straight, and carrying weight.

### Materials:

#### *Sailboat Materials*

1/2 gallon cardboard milk cartons cut in half from top to bottom so each half has a "bow" like a boat. The "bow" will need to be stapled shut.

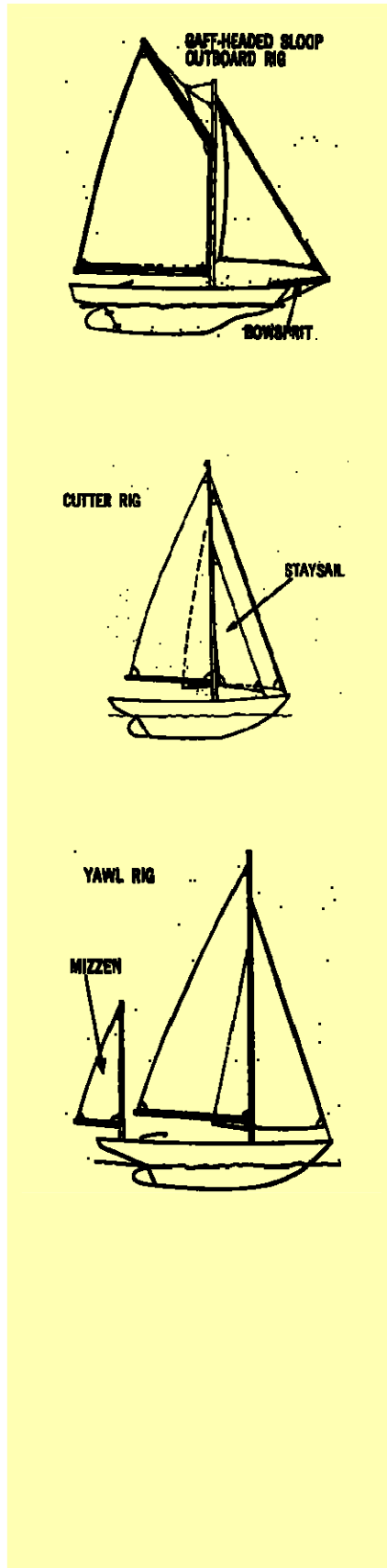
Straws for masts

Modeling clay to support the masts and as needed for ballast

Other cardboard

Paper for sails

Any other construction materials needed



Markers

Scissors

Staplers

Glue

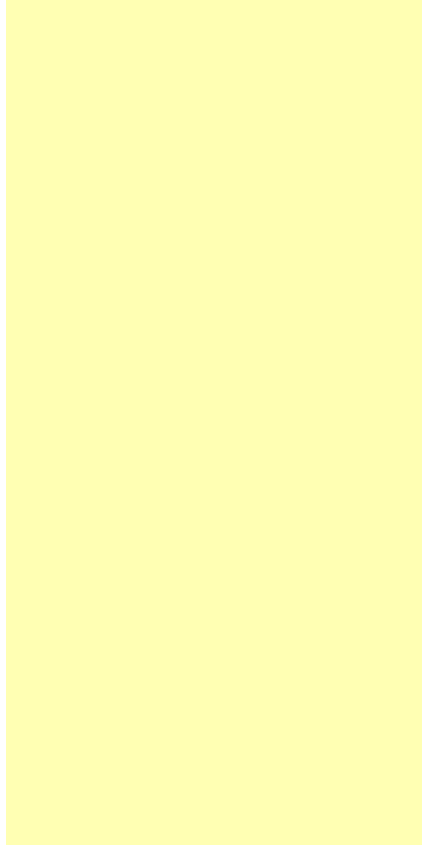
Uniform sized weights for carrying capacity

### *Testing Tank Materials*

Cardboard boxes approximately 2' wide by 2' long (boxes from grocery stores are strong - get as many as needed for length of the tank)

Roll of black plastic

Electric or battery powered fan



### ***Building the Testing Tank***

NOTE: It is best to set up the tank outside the building, but it may be possible to have it inside. Handling the water in and out of the tank can be difficult. One class found that outside they didn't need a fan to propel the boats. The slightest breeze was usually sufficient.

1. For all but two of the boxes, cut opposite ends out of the boxes.
2. For the remaining two boxes, cut only one end out. These boxes form the ends of the tank.
3. Cut the sides down to about 4 inches.
4. Put the boxes end to end, overlapping the ends. Support the boxes with books or large rocks where needed to withstand the pressure of the water when the tank is filled.
5. Lay the black plastic over the boxes.
6. Fill the tank with water.

### ***Activity***

1. Ask students to suggest some considerations and goals for sailboat design (speed, stability, capacity).
2. Introduce students to a variety of sailboat and sailing ship designs using books, magazines, and the internet.
3. Have students use a half of a milk carton, or other materials, for the hull of the boat. The shape of the hull makes a large difference in how a boat sails. They may attach a keel and decorate the hull if desired.
4. The boat's hull must include the following compartments: dog house (where the navigation equipment is), galley (kitchen and dining area), and cabin (for captain's quarters).
5. Design a helm (steering wheel) for the ship. (Since these designs do not have rudders with which to steer the ships, the helm won't function as a real helm does).
6. Each boat must have at least three sails, which the students design and decorate.
7. Attach the sails to the masts, and attach the masts to the hull, making sure they all stay upright. Attaching some string (stays) may help to hold the masts up. Students may want to design their boats so that the sails can be adjusted to control the effect the wind has on the sails and the direction the boat sails.
8. Design an original flag for the boat. Attach it to one of the lines.
9. Add other items to the boat as desired: lifeboats, oars, anchors, cannons, etc.
10. In the testing tank, each boat will sail with a "following wind and following sea," and must sail straight without running into the shore or sinking. Measure the distance and speed the boat sailed (speed = distance/time), and observe how straight it sailed.
11. Each boat will have three trials to determine how much weight it can carry while still sailing at least six feet.

**Evaluation:** Students should record the speed and distance sailed before the boat hits the side of the tank. They should also record the amount of weight the boat carried. Evaluation will be a student's written or oral report on these results and must include the student's suggestions for improvements or modifications.

**Extensions:** The testing tank can be used to test boats of the same hull shape with propulsion designed by students (rubber bands, balloons, etc.).

## Packing A Sea Chest



**Topic:** Maritime History

**Summary:** Students will make a model sea chest, then fill it with provisions for a voyage.

**Key Words and Concepts Covered:** *sailing voyages, life at sea, shipboard economy, self-sufficiency*

**Introduction:** Going to sea was an enterprise that could take months or years. Each sailor was allowed only a small amount of storage space in the cramped fore's'le. If he was careful, he could pack everything he was likely to need in his sea-chest. The sea-chest was often carved or decorated with intricately worked handles, showcasing the skill of its owner. Sea chests held about as much as a modern duffel bag, but the supplies were expected to last throughout the voyage. The ship's store (slop chest) sold canvas, twine, and other supplies to sailors, but the sailor had to know how to construct shirts, trousers, hat, and jacket, as well as how to mend them.



The following verses were found in a log or journal from the whaling ship *Ocean Rover* and were written in 1859. They would probably have been sung to a popular tune of the time; it works well with the tune to "The Sailor's Alphabet" (see resources). In the song we are told about what a prudent and experienced sailor would take along on a sea voyage. This song is taken from Gale Huntington's wonderful resource, *Songs the Whalemens Sang* (Dover, 1970).

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#### A FITTING OUT

*A chest that is neither too large nor too small  
Is the first thing to which your attention I'll call  
The things to put in it are next to be named  
And if I omit some I'm not to be blamed*





*Stow first in the bottom a blanket or quilt  
To be used on the voyage whenever you wilt  
Thick trousers and shirts woolen stockings and shoes  
Next your papers and books to tell you the news*

*Good substantial tarpaulins to cover your head  
Just to say keep it furled N. C. nuff said  
Carry paper and ink pens wafers and wax  
A shoemaker's last awls and some small tacks*

*Some cotton and thread silk needles and palm  
And a paper of pins as long as your arm  
Two vests and a thimble a large lot of matches  
A lot of old clothes that will answer for patches*

*A Bible and hymn book of course you must carry  
If at the end of the voyage you expect for to marry  
Don't forget to take esseners pipes and cigars  
Of the sweetest of butter a couple of jars*

*A razor you will want a pencil and slate  
A comb and a hairbrush you will need for your pate  
A brush and some shaving soap and plenty of squills  
And a box of those excellent Richardson's pills*

*A podeldoe and pain killer surely you will need  
And something to stop the red stream should you bleed  
Some things I've omitted but never mind that  
Eat salt junk and hard bread and laugh and grow fat.*

### **Vocabulary:**

*Tarpaulins:* thick canvas, used for foul weather gear  
*Furled:* rolled and folded tightly  
*N.C.:* perhaps means "navy custom"  
*Wafers:* used to seal letters  
*Shoemaker's last:* a wooden form for repairing shoes  
*Palm:* a band worn around the hand to push needles through heavy canvas or leather  
*Esseners:* perhaps storage tins for tobacco  
*Podeldoe:* perhaps a poultice



### **Materials:**

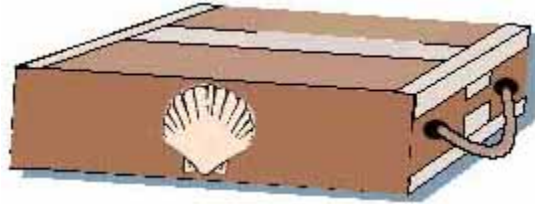
A cardboard shoebox for each student

Manila, cotton, or dacron rope, about 1/2" diameter, twisted, not braided

Tempera or poster paints

Magazines for clipping pictures

Glue



Fabric scraps, especially cotton and canvas

A wide assortment of materials for students to use to pack their sea chests: construction paper, foil, tape, yarn, toothpicks, craft sticks

### **Procedure:**

1. In the context of a class study of whaling, maritime history, or life at sea, introduce the idea that sailors had to pack for long voyages.

2. Ask students to list items they would pack in a single duffel to be used on a three-year journey in space. Assume food and water, but not eating utensils, and a space to sleep, but no bedding, would be provided. How would they choose differently if no electronics, running water, medical help, or communication with the outside world were available? Have them make a modified list.



3. Share the song with the class, and have them identify and list the items this sailor recommends as essential to include.

4. Show the students pictures of sea chests, or take them to a museum to see real sea chests if at all possible. Point out that many sailors carved or decorated their sea chests.

5. Have each student paint or decorate a shoebox as a personal sea chest. Use a paper punch to make two small holes in each end of the box and thread the rope through. Tie a figure eight knot in each end of the rope to keep the handle in place.

6. Have each student pack the sea chest for either a sea voyage of the 1800's or a space voyage of the near future. The students can make miniature equipment to place in the sea chest.

7. Ask students to supply a list of the contents of their sea chest, explaining the purpose of each item. The sea chests can be displayed for the school or community.

**Evaluation:**

1. Sea chest completion
2. Explanation form

**Extensions:**

1. Students may wish to use their sea chests after the project to keep desk supplies at school organized.
2. Try to borrow a sea chest from a school family, and fill it as closely as possible with appropriate items.

**Resources:**

Stan Hugill, *Shanties from the Seven Seas* 1984, Routledge & Kegan Paul  
Peter Marston, *Songs of the Sea as sung by the Mimi crew* 1988, The Barn School

**Source:** Based on an activity from the New Bedford Whaling Museum

## **Social Studies/Language Arts Activity**

# **A Message in a Bottle**

**In this activity, students will create an imaginary tale of travel and adventure.**

**WHAT YOU NEED**

- Maps of the world, atlases
- Plastic bottles with caps (one for each child writing a tale)
- A water table, fish tank, or large basin (optional)

**WHAT TO DO**

1. Tell children that they are going to write a tale about an imaginary adventure or trip that has left them stranded on a desert island. Explain that the only chance for rescue is to write a message, put it in a bottle, and put the bottle in the water, with the hope that someone will find it.

2. Brainstorm with children the kind of information they should include in their tales. For example, they might want to explain who they are, where they were going when they got stranded, where they left from, and how they were traveling. They should also include information about where they are, such as the climate, what the island is like, what plants and animals they have seen, and how they are surviving. Record their suggestions on the board or chart paper.
3. When children are ready to begin writing, make maps and/or atlases available to them. They can refer to the maps if they need help planning their trips or spelling the names of places they might want to include in their tales.
4. When students have finished their tales, have them place the tales in the bottles and set the bottles afloat in the water table (or whatever container of water you have available).
5. Then have students fish the bottles (not their own) out of the water, and read aloud the tales within. After reading each tale, they can "rescue" the author by using maps and story details to find approximately where he or she is stranded.

### **TEACHING OPTIONS**

- If your class is studying a certain area of the world in social studies, you may want to have them write about being stranded on desert islands off the coasts of countries within that region.
- You may want to arrange with a teacher of another class to have your tales sent there. Then the students in that class can try to locate the writer of each tale. Your class could do the same with tales from the students in the other class.

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## **A Storytelling Festival**

This activity encourages students to explore the native cultures of the Americas, to learn some aspects of oral storytelling, and to share their knowledge with others.

### **WHAT YOU NEED**

Examples of legends or folktales from the cultures of peoples native to the Americas

### **WHAT TO DO**

1. Introduce students to legends and folktales of native American cultures by reading one to the class. If possible, choose a story that explains some aspect of the culture, such as the origin of a custom, or of the environment, like the existence of a mountain range.
2. Explain that many of these stories were created by storytellers, who passed them on to others orally, not in writing. Only later were they written down. Tell

- students that they are going to become oral storytellers themselves. They will chose a story to learn and then present the story as part of a storytelling festival.
3. Divide students into storytelling teams or, if you prefer, have them form their own groups. Give students time to do research and to choose a story. Tell students that their story should say something important about the culture from which it comes. Remind students that their stories will be performed and that they might want to choose a story that lends itself to a dramatic reading or presentation. (Note: You might want to review the groups' choices.)
  4. The group should study the story and make a plan for how they would like to perform, or "tell," it. For example, students may want to assign different parts of the story to each group member or have one group member act out a part or play an instrument, etc. The group should know the beginning, middle, and end of its story.
  5. Encourage students to be creative about their presentations. Some students may want to add music and props, some may be able to incorporate costumes or rhythmic movements.
  6. Allow enough rehearsal time for each group. Hold the first performances in the classroom. Then discuss with students how to share the storytelling with other classes, or with family and community members.

## TEACHING OPTIONS

Tape the presentations and make them available in the school library. You might also share the tape with a class in another community that is studying the same, or a related, theme.

If student enthusiasm stays high, suggest that students share their stories with the community by presenting it at local nursing home, hospital, or the like.

Encourage students to think of a landform or custom in their region and to write a "folktale" about it.

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## BOXTALES Theatre Company Program Evaluation

Name of Performance: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Level: \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator (please circle one): Teacher    Administrator    Specialist    Staff    Volunteer  
 Student

<u><b>Program Content/Delivery</b></u>	<u><b>Poor</b></u>	<u><b>Average</b></u>	<u><b>Good</b></u>	<u><b>Excellent</b></u>
<u><b>The Artists</b></u>				
Artists' verbal presentation and communication skills	1	2	3	4
Quality of artistic skill	1	2	3	4
<u><b>The Program</b></u>				
Organization and pace	1	2	3	4
The story was interesting	1	2	3	4
Creativity of presentation	1	2	3	4
Appropriate content for grade level	1	2	3	4
Length of program	1	2	3	4
Effectiveness in teaching educational concepts	1	2	3	4
Quality of printed teacher guide (if applicable)	1	2	3	4
<u><b>Students' Response</b></u>				
Students' attention to program	1	2	3	4
Rapport between performers and audience	1	2	3	4
Students' level of understanding of the story and characters	1	2	3	4

Would you recommend Boxtales Theatre Company to another school?     Yes     No

Please describe the impact of this program on yourself and/or your students. Was there any aspect of the program that inspired you as a teacher? Please feel free to share additional comments or suggestions for improvement. Use the back of this paper as needed.