STORIES FROM THE SEA

THE 'JOLLY ROGER'

Date made
18th century

Object ref.
D3827

Credit
National Maritime Museum

Description

The 'Jolly Roger' flag was flown to show that a ship's crew were pirates and to frighten their victims into surrendering without a fight. Most 'Jolly Rogers' include a skull or skeleton, some flags also include an hourglass, another common symbol representing death in 17th- and 18th-century Europe. Pirates would also often simply fly plain black flags. The flag above, with the red heart, belonged to the famous pirate Blackbeard.

Questions

1. Which 'Jolly Roger' looks most fearsome?

2. Which flag is your favourite? Why do you like it?

3. What would you include on your pirate flag to frighten away other crews?