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## **Pirates!**

On the oceans, robbers have a special name: pirates. Pirates have been around for more than three centuries. In the days when there were many sailing ships, pirates often had the fastest vessels. Pirates were often dangerous criminals who stole valuable cargo. They sometimes sank their victims' ships to hide the crime. Men and women could be part of the pirate crew.

One very famous pirate was Blackbeard, who was also known as Edward Teach. He was an English pirate who attacked ships off America's coast in the 18th century. Blackbeard was known for being heavily armed. During battles, he often wore candlewicks into his beard, and covered them with gun powder, so that his beard was smoking, or even on fire! Blackbeard was so famous (or infamous!) that he was able to scare many crews into giving up without firing a single shot. Although his career as a pirate only lasted two years, legend has it that much of Blackbeard's wonderful buried treasure still waits to be discovered.

Not all pirate activity was illegal. From the 1500s to the 1700s, many warring nations relied heavily on legal and licensed pirates called "privateers". Privateers were used to help the navies. Privateers were pirates who plundered enemy ships.