**Piracy in the Indian Ocean: Illicit Economy of the Sea**

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*Suggestion: Do this lesson after completing the Medieval Explorers lesson plan to expand upon knowledge from previous lesson.*

**Overview and Objectives:**

This lesson will introduce students to the study of piracy and privateering, both historical and current, through analysis of a subject that is exciting, tangible, and new to students. Students will learn to challenge orientalist narratives through a study of illicit and/or transnational economies during the First Global Era. In the context of this lesson, orientalism can best be defined as a Western perception of Eastern cultures which is often exaggerated, distorted, and/or romanticized. Students will also come to understand how instability within a state can fuel illicit economies and serve as a catalyst for transnational conflict.

In 2007 and again in 2009, Western media focused its attention on the Horn of Africa when US Naval forces faced off against Somali pirates during two discrete attacks on international cargo ships passing through the Arabian Sea. While Western narratives of piracy traditionally illustrate romanticized images of outlaw adventurers at sea, the reality of piracy in the Indian Ocean is that it has been a consistent transnational security threat for centuries, if not millennia. This lesson will take 2.5 classes to complete. The first class will explore the history of piracy in the Indian Ocean region. The second class will compare and analyze modern cases of pirate activity in Somalia, the Strait of Malacca, and the Philippines. Students will compare and contrast instances of premodern and modern piracy. The third class will require about 20 minutes for students to give their group presentations. This lesson should stimulate a discussion about the economic and political motivations behind pirate activity, as well as the differences and similarities among premodern and modern incidents of piracy in the Indian Ocean.

**Materials:**

1. Indian Ocean World History (IOWH) website
2. Blank maps <https://www.google.com/search?q=blank+map+indian+ocean&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj-6NO217DdAhXLnuAKHYupDp8Q_AUICigB&biw=1463&bih=916#imgrc=J3h8lebcAr--jM>:
3. “Piracy in the Indian Ocean: The First Global Era” PowerPoint
4. Captain Kidd biography handout

<https://www.biography.com/people/william-kidd-17179370>

1. Research guide handouts (one per group)

**Class One: Premodern Piracy**

**Part I: History and Geography (10-20 minutes)**

Separate students into small groups. Each group will examine the Medieval Era, First Global Era, and Industrial & Imperial Era on the IOWH website and identify all mentions of pirate activity. On their blank maps, each group will indicate ports, shores, and trade routes that were popular among pirates during these eras. These maps will be used later to compare instances of historical piracy with those of modern piracy. While indicating hotspots of pirate activity on their maps, students should brainstorm responses to the following discussion questions:

1. What are some examples of types of ships used during the Medieval and First Global Eras? How are ships different with regard to pirate activity? What information can we infer from these ships about strategies of and impediments to pirate activity?
   1. (Chinese Junk, Caravels)
2. Indicate major hubs of pirate activity as mentioned on the Medieval, First Global, and Industrial & Imperial Era maps. In addition, look for descriptions of famous nautical travelers, and make note of their encounters with pirates during their explorations. Finally, look for mentions of valuable trade goods to identify what commodities pirates were targeting during these eras. Brainstorm among your groups and try to think like a pirate: What is strategic about these locations? What trade routes, geographies, or political events make these spots opportune for pirate activity?
   1. (Ibn Battuta, Fa Hsein, Zheng He, Captain Kidd, Mapilas, Strait of Malacca, Batik, Nutmeg and Mace, Cloves, Ivory, Kaolin Clay, Coir, Silver, Gold Ivory and Copper, Ebony, Chocolate, Vanilla)

**Part II: The Mappila Pirates of the 16th Century (30-40 minutes)**

* Lead the class through “Piracy in the Indian Ocean, the First Global Era” PowerPoint
* On Slide 2 (“Pirates vs. Privateers”) distribute the Captain Kidd biography handouts, and give students a few minutes to read the short biography on their own.
* Encourage students to take notes regarding economic motivations behind piracy, social/communal factors of piracy, pirate strategies, and funding. These concepts will be revisited next class, when students examine modern instances of piracy in the Indian Ocean.

**Class II: Modern Piracy**

Separate students into three groups. Each group will represent one of the following regions and produce a short (5-10 minute) presentation on recent incidents of piracy in that region.

1. Somalia
2. Strait of Malacca (Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand)
3. The Philippines

Resources for students are provided via links on the next page. All groups should begin by reading the “Piracy” icon on the IOWH website’s 20th Century and Globalization map.

Students should address the following questions in their presentations:

* What factors motivate people in this country/region to resort to piracy? If poverty is a motivating factor of pirate activity, what are some root causes of widespread poverty and/or instability in the region?
* What, if anything, has/have the state/states done to contain piracy within their waters?
* What are common strategies of these pirates? (Robbery, ransom, illegal fishing, etc.)
* What do these modern pirates have in common with the Mappila pirates of the 16th century? What do they not have in common?

Online resources

Group 1: Somalia

1. *TIME Magazine*: <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1892376,00.html>
2. *New York Times*: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/04/world/africa/somalia-pirates.html>
3. *CNN*: <https://www.cnn.com/2017/05/25/africa/piracy-resurgence-somalia/index.html>
4. *Washington Post*: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2017/04/23/u-s-monitoring-spike-in-pirate-attacks-off-horn-of-africa-officials-say/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.687be53ceaff>
5. *The Economist*: <https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2017/04/18/why-somali-piracy-is-staging-a-comeback>
6. *Foreign Policy Magazine*: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/04/09/somalias-pirates-are-back-in-business/>
7. *The Guardian:* <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/02/my-977-days-held-hostage-by-somali-pirates>

Group 2: Strait of Malacca

1. *NBC News*: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/strait-malacca-worlds-new-piracy-hotspot-n63576>
   1. NOTE: Great article, but video is not relevant!
2. *NYA*: <https://www.nyarisk.com/2018/08/23/violent-piracy-southeast-asia-feature-past/>
3. *NYA:* <https://www.nyarisk.com/2018/05/14/pirates-attack-vessel-malacca-strait-first-time-since-2015/>
4. University of Connecticut: <https://sites.google.com/a/uconn.edu/strait-of-malacca/issue-of-piracy>
5. *TIME Magazine*: <http://time.com/piracy-southeast-asia-malacca-strait/>
6. *Phuket Wan Tourism News*: <http://phuketwan.com/tourism/high-seas-pirates-plague-waters-south-thailand-21206/>
7. *The Maritime Executive*: <https://www.maritime-executive.com/article/piracy-increases-in-straits-of-malacca-and-singapore>
8. *The Straits Times*: https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/more-piracy-robbery-cases-in-malacca-and-singapore-straits-in-2017-as-in-rest-of-asia
9. EJ Foundation: https://impakter.com/thailand-pirates-slaves/
10. Statement from Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations: <http://webtv.un.org/topics-issues/watch/thailand-piracy-security-council-6865th-meeting/1980087585001/?term=&sort=date&page=12>

Group 3: The Philippines

1. *Al Jazeera:* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5maOjGh5L3Y>
2. *NBC News*: https://www.cnbc.com/2014/09/15/worlds-most-pirated-waters.html
3. *Business Insider*: <https://www.businessinsider.com/r-shippers-avoid-new-pirate-hotspot-in-waters-west-of-the-philippines-2017-1>
4. *Financial Times:* <https://www.ft.com/content/0f23b6aa-eeb3-11e6-930f-061b01e23655>
5. *Global Risk Insights:* <https://globalriskinsights.com/2016/04/kidnapping-risk-philippines/>
6. *BBC* *News*: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-39252503>
7. *The Straits Times*: <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/pirates-attacking-bigger-ships-off-philippines-for-ransom-money>
8. *The Straits Times:* <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/philippines-malaysia-and-indonesia-to-patrol-piracy-prone-waters>
9. *The Diplomat*: [*https://thediplomat.com/2017/06/asias-deadly-pirates/*](https://thediplomat.com/2017/06/asias-deadly-pirates/)

**Research Guide Handout** (one per group)

Group members:

Territory:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Recent piracy incidents (list a few) |  |
| Motivations for piracy  *If poverty is a motivating factor of pirate activity, make note of some of the root causes of widespread poverty and instability in this region.* |  |
| State responses  *What, if anything, has/have the state/states done to contain and/or combat piracy within their waters?* |  |
| Pirate strategies |  |
| Commonalities with Mappila pirates of 16th century |  |
| Differences from Mappila pirates of 16th century |  |