



Hello! Welcome to *Pirates or Privateers: You Decide*. My name is Sharon Gibson. I am the founder of Homeschool Legacy, author of Once-a-Week Unit Studies and [Once-a-Week Micro-Studies](#), and I believe learning should be fun, don't you?

Unit studies are a great way to do exactly that! They provide you with fun, hands-on learning experiences and involve the whole family, regardless of age. They also cover several subjects while immersing you in a central theme.

We found learning with unit studies to be a great way to bring our family together, make learning more fun, and help our children better remember what they had learned.

Over the next four weeks, *Pirates or Privateers: You Decide* will provide you with an assortment of creative activities and assignments designed to further your children's understanding of pirates and privateers throughout history.

As with all *Once-a-Week Unit Studies*, a family read-aloud is suggested. My recommended read-aloud for *Pirates or Privateers: You Decide* is Robert Louis Stevenson's time-honored classic, *Treasure Island*. I recommend reading the original, complete with American artist, N.C. Wyeth's artwork, but if you have younger children you may prefer an abridged version.

If you would also like your children to read independently about this topic, you will find many books about pirates in the J910.4 section of your local library.

In addition to family read-alouds, it is characteristic for Once-a-Week Unit Studies to include family nights that pertain to your unit study topic. That being the case, I have incorporated a couple of fun, family movie nights into your unit study. Others you may also wish to consider are *Muppet Treasure Island*, *Pirates of the Caribbean*, and *The Swiss Family Robinson*.

Younger children may enjoy coloring these [pirate pages](#).

Are you ready to have some fun? Okay! Let's get started!

Blessings,

Sharon Gibson

Owner and Author | [Homeschool Legacy](#) | [Once-a-Week Unit Studies](#)

## Week 1: Early pirates

### This Weeks Supplies:

A 3-Ring Binder  
Printer paper  
Hole punch

Colored pencils or crayons  
Globe or world atlas

### Literature (Family Read-Aloud)

Suggested literature to read aloud to your children throughout the course of this unit study: *Treasure Island*, by Robert Louis Stevenson - Library call number: JSTE

### Setting the Stage:

Ahoy there mateys! What usually comes to mind when you think of pirates? Chances are you imagine the dashing, adventurous, swashbuckling, Caribbean buccaneers you have seen portrayed in films, plays, and literature. As entertaining as that is, this indelibly etched, highly romanticized image can make discerning fact from fiction challenging.

The truth is pirates were nothing short of sea robbers and murderers and existed long before they roamed the Caribbean Sea. In fact, for as long as ships have sailed the seas, pirates have been in hot pursuit.

As maritime trade developed in the [Cradle of Civilization](#) around 3000 B.C. so did piracy. Known as the *sea peoples* (right) these pirates preyed on coastal villages.



The [Mediterranean Sea](#), with its many sheltered islands, hidden coves, and busy sea lanes, was ideal for ancient pirates. Crete, Greece's largest island, was in fact a major pirate haven and thriving marketplace for stolen goods and slaves for a thousand years. In fact, Ancient Greek poet Homer in his epic the *Odyssey*, described the Cretans as pirates.



By the first century B.C. Cilician pirates and slave traders, with their fleet of one thousand ships, were once so powerful they controlled the entire Mediterranean. Ancient empires, lacking the necessary naval power to subdue them, were at their mercy. Even young Julius Caesar fell prey to Cilician pirates when he and the ship he was traveling on were attacked and held for ransom. Many cities willingly paid the Cilician pirates "protection money" to leave them alone.



From the 700s A.D to the 1000s A.D. ruthless Scandinavian *sea rovers* (better known today as the Vikings) struck fear in the hearts and minds of Europeans. These pirates were renowned for their vicious attacks on innocent, unsuspecting villagers. Those who survived their wrath were sold into a life of slavery in the Islamic-held regions of the Mediterranean and Far East.

From around 1550-1830 Muslim Barbary pirates known as *corsairs*, in cahoots with the Ottoman Turkish Empire, terrorized people throughout the Mediterranean. Named for the [Barbary Coast](#) from where they originated, these pirates were highly organized and known for their brutality. Barbary pirates (like the one shown here) waged a religious war against European Christians. They attacked and plundered their coastal villages and trading vessels and sold the survivors as slaves. In fact, it is estimated the corsairs sold 1.5 million European and American slaves into Islamic held North Africa during this time.



Many towns and ships were forced to pay protection money or “tribute” to these government sanctioned thieves, slave traders, and murderers. In an attempt to protect American citizens and ships traveling in the Mediterranean, even the United States was forced to pay tribute. In 1795, George Washington paid the corsairs a ransom of almost one million dollars in exchange for freeing American citizens and leaving our ships alone. He also agreed to an annual tribute thereafter of \$28,000! Their out-of-control barbaric acts, combined with their incessant monetary blackmail, resulted in President Thomas Jefferson, in 1801, and President James Madison, in 1815, declaring war on the Barbary pirates. These wars are known as the Barbary Wars.



History records piracy existing in the South China Sea as early as A.D. 589. By 1801, Ching Yih, the son of a pirate, had built and was commanding the largest pirate confederation of all time. His fleet consisted of more than six hundred pirate junks and over 150,000 men!

These are just a few examples of pirates throughout ancient history. As you can plainly see, these criminals were not the glorified version depicted by the entertainment industry. Regardless of the names by which they were known or the times in which they lived, pirates were ruthless, bloodthirsty, and brutal!

### History/Language/Geography

“In fourteen hundred ninety-two Columbus sailed the ocean blue.” Columbus’s discovery of the New World sparked colonial expansion throughout the Caribbean and the Americas. For Europeans it was an exciting time. For the native populations, however, it was devastating.

The gold and Aztec and Inca civilizations, as well as many other native populations throughout the Caribbean, soon found their civilizations turned upside-down as Spanish conquistadors (like the one shown here) blustered and pirated their way through each and every one of them.



- June 7, 1494 - A significant agreement was made between two countries. It was called the **Treaty of Tordesillas (TL)**. Do some research to find out what the treaty stated and which two countries signed it. Write a short composition describing what you learn.

- Examine [this map](#) to gain a clearer, geographic understanding of the treaty.

### History/Geography

By the sixteenth Century, Spain's New World "main" land, which included present-day Florida and Texas, as well as Mexico, Central America, the northern coast of South America, and the islands of the Caribbean came to be known as the *Spanish Main*.



- Using a globe or [world atlas](#) to aid you, identify and label each of the Spanish Main territories bordered in black on this map. Label the bodies of water as well.

Gold and silver were the commonly accepted European currency of the day. So when Spain discovered the Aztec and Inca civilizations of Mexico, Peru, and Bolivia overflowing with these precious metals, she and her captives suddenly found themselves smack dab in the middle of a massive gold and silver rush.



For Spain, this discovery will mean immense wealth. Her newly-enslaved survivors however, will suffer greatly at the hands of the Spaniards. They will be forced to mine, melt, and mint tons of gold and silver into valuable doubloons and pieces-of-eight which they will later load onto Spanish galleons for transport to Spain.

- Go [here](#) to download, print, color, and label the parts of a Spanish Galleon (TL).

## **History:**

- A timeline serves as a visual of who lived when and which events took place during certain time periods. Today you will compile a simple timeline notebook using a 3-ring binder and these [timeline sheets](#). Several sets will serve for a number of centuries.

Label the first three sets of pages 3000 B.C., 2000 B.C., and 1000 B.C. Label the next set 0 – A.D. 1000. From here forward you will want to add sets of pages that represent full centuries. For example, title one set of pages the 1100's, another the 1200s, the next the 1300s and so on through the 1800s.

Place the people and events you have learned about this week in your timeline according to when the groups were active or events occurred. Feel free to cut and glue some of the images in this unit study to your timeline, or hand draw the people and events for a more personal touch.

You will continue to update your timeline throughout the course of this unit study.

*(This is a family project, so only one timeline is necessary. Keep it simple by assigning different timeline figures and events to your individual children.)*