

# THE AGE OF EXPLORATION

## LIFE ON THE OPEN SEAS

### A HARD DAY'S WORK

Life was pretty difficult for a sailor in the age of exploration.

**Journeys could take years.** Ships only covered about 100 miles a day.

**The pay was poor.** Seamen on Columbus' journeys made less than \$10 a month in today's money.

**Crews worked around the clock** in shifts minding the ship.

**Disobedience led to harsh punishments.** Beatings and floggings were common, and mutineers were put to death.

**16 was the minimum age for sailors,** but some boys started working on ships as young as 7 or 8.

**Some men didn't join willingly.** They were "impressed," or forced into service.

Sailors consumed about 3,000 calories a day, which they got from:

- 1 LB. Salted beef or pork
- 1 LB. Biscuit or hardtack
- 1 GAL. Ale, wine or hard liquor
- Dried beans, peas or rice

Flour mixed with fat was served when meat rations ran low.

Hardtack was infested with weevils and bugs, which sailors ate as additional food.

A salty diet combined with a lack of fresh water led to dehydration.

There were no fresh fruits or vegetables.

### SCURVY, SEASICKNESS AND SLIME

IF THE DIET DIDN'T KILL YOU,

Sailors had just one set of clothes that were rarely washed.

They thought dirt and grease provided protection from wind and rain.

Lice, rodents and foul drinking water spread typhoid fever.



Vitamin deficiencies gave men scurvy—and rotted teeth and gums, open sores and even mental breakdowns.

It was common to lose 50 percent of a crew to scurvy, known as the "scourge of the seas."

Explorer James Cook was a pioneer in scurvy prevention. He fed his men sauerkraut and dried vegetable soup.



THERE WERE PLENTY OF OTHER THINGS THAT COULD.

Ships could be dangerously cold—fires were only allowed in calmer weather.

The lack of fresh air below deck caused carbon monoxide poisoning. Men slept on deck in hammocks—an invention they borrowed from Mesoamerican cultures.



### IGNOMINIOUS ENDS

Captains didn't have it much better than their crews.

A fight over stolen boats ended Cook's life in Hawaii.

Balboa was beheaded after feuding with his bosses.

Magellan didn't make it around the world with his ships. He was killed in the Philippines.

Hudson's crew set him adrift in what is now Hudson's Bay. He was never heard from again.

Ponce de Leon failed to find the Fountain of Youth, but a poison arrow found him in Florida.

Verrazzano was killed and eaten by cannibals in the Caribbean.