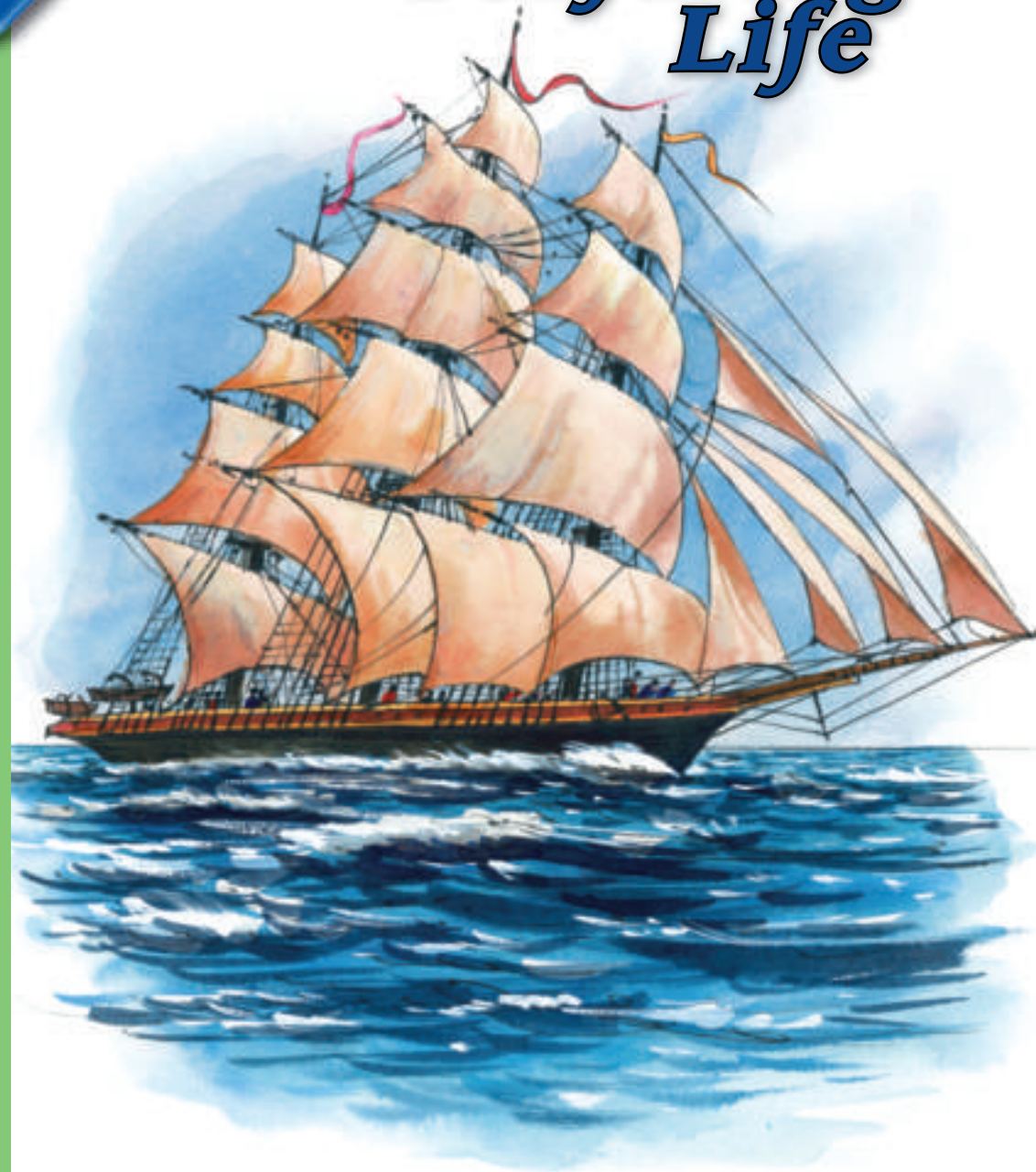


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Social Studies

Social Studies

The Seafaring Life



Genre	Comprehension Skills and Strategy	Text Features
Expository nonfiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Author's Purpose• Fact and Opinion• Predict	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Headings• Diagram• Labels• Glossary

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by *Mary Dismas*
illustrated by *Tom McNeely* ▶



The Seafaring Life



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People have been building ships and boats for thousands of years. They are one of the oldest forms of transportation.

Ships and boats have many uses. They are used for fishing, trading, and travel. Many countries also have fighting ships that are used during times of war.

For hundreds of years, wooden ships with sails ruled the oceans. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, many changes were made to improve ships and make travel by water faster and safer.



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Ships Over the Years

Ships and travel on the oceans have changed over the years. Here are some big changes that took place in the history of ships.



1000 Viking Longboats

Longboats carried up to 60 oarsmen. They were used to travel on rivers and on the ocean.

1100 Chinese Junks

Junks were sailing vessels. They were steered with a rudder. Junks were used for fishing, trade, and warfare.

1450 Three- and Four-Masted Sailing Ships

Wooden sailing ships were used for hundreds of years. They carried people and **cargo** over the world's oceans and seas.



1800s Clipper Ships

Clipper ships were sailing ships too. They were made for speed.

1819 Steamships

The first steamships to cross the Atlantic Ocean used steam and wind power for energy.

1845 Ocean Liners

These ships were made of iron. They got power from engines and large propellers. They had comfortable rooms for many passengers.





to trade with countries all over the world. About three-fourths of all trading goods are still carried from country to country by cargo ships.

Long ago, before people knew about electricity or petroleum, they used whale oil as fuel for their lamps. Hunting whales was a big business. Many seaports on the East Coast of the United States became rich from whale hunting and the sale of whale oil.

Whaling ships and their crews sailed the oceans looking for whales. Some trips lasted as long as four years. Once a whale had been captured and killed, the crew had to collect the oil from the whale's blubber. The oil was stored in barrels for the trip home.



How Ships Are Used

Before the 1800s, ships were mostly used for exploring and trading. At times, they were used as warships too. Ships carried passengers, such as settlers, to new lands. Most ships were fairly small. The crew did not have much living space on the ship, and there was not much space for passengers either. Most long sea voyages were very uncomfortable for passengers. Sometimes people became ill, and some died before reaching land.

Trade has long been a part of seafaring. Explorers took goods to trade with people they met on their voyages. Cargo ships carried goods





Most people who fish for a living do so in boats. Fishing boat crews supply us with fresh seafood, even today. People who work catching fish must travel out into the oceans in search of schools of fish. Storms and cold weather often make such work hard and dangerous. In some ways, fishing hasn't changed much over the years.



Ships are also used to fight battles in times of war. Battleships take part in wars between countries. A country uses battleships to defend itself and protect its land.



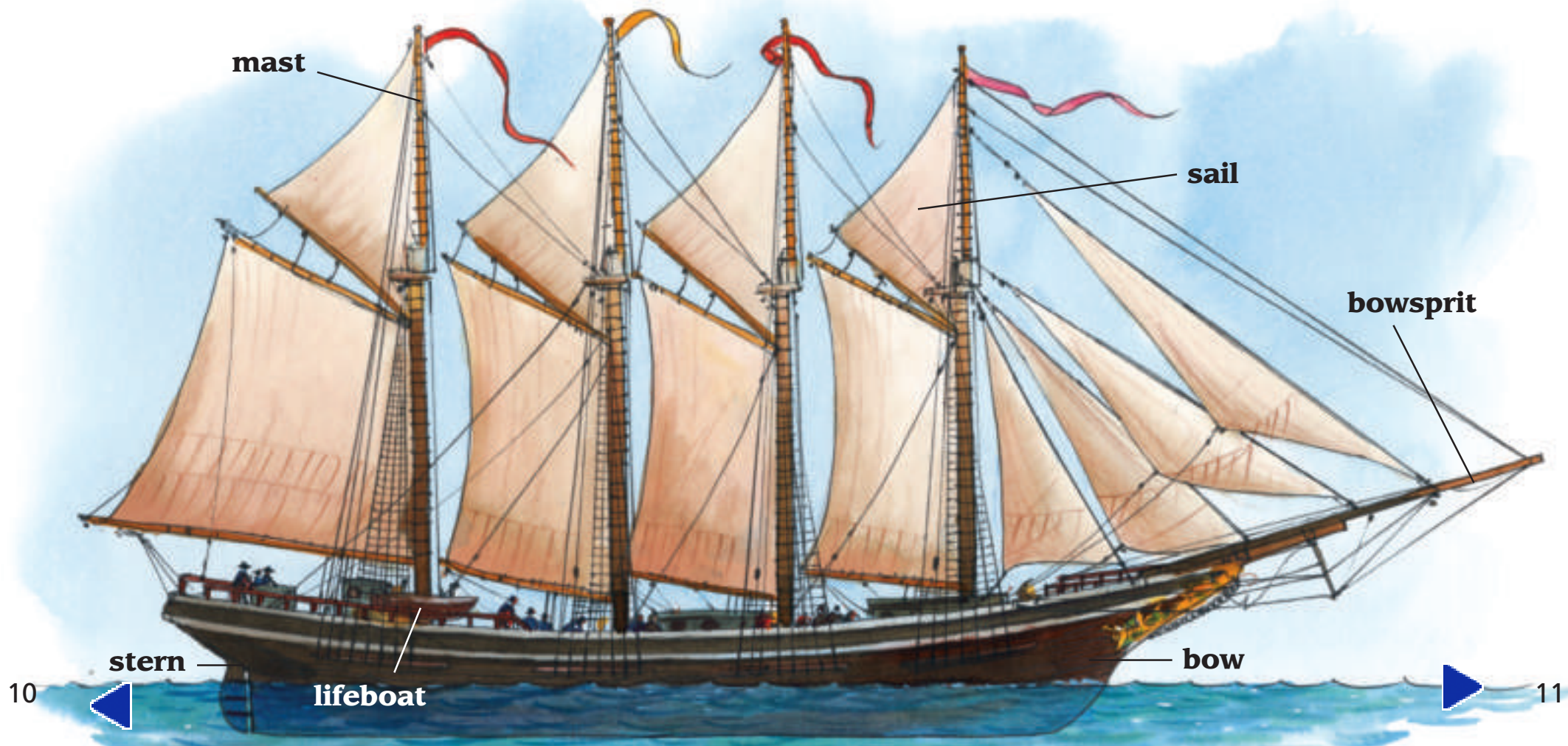


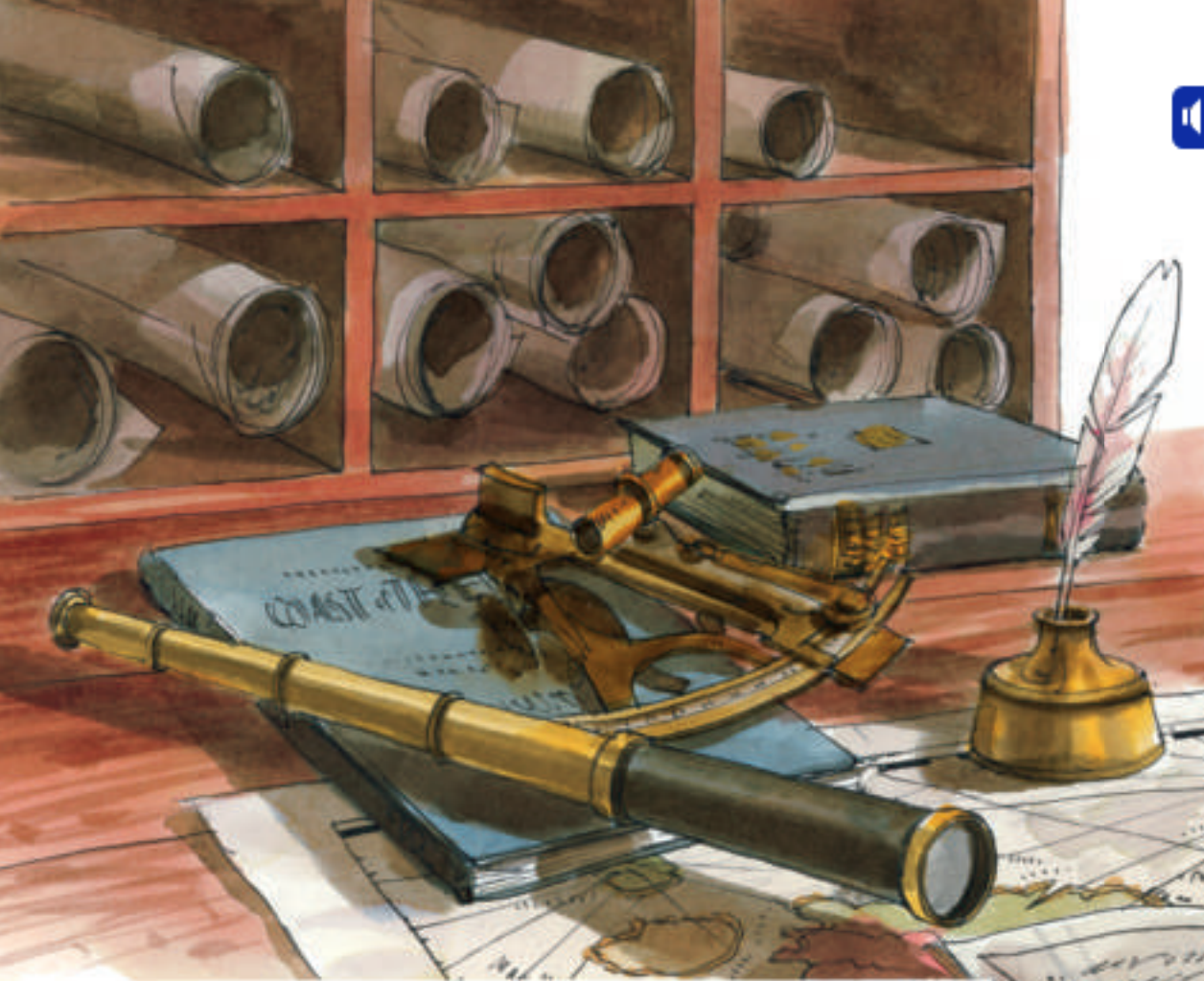
Parts of a Ship

The parts of a ship have special names. The **bow** is the name for the front end of a ship. The back end is called the **stern**. On the sailing ship in the diagram, the tall poles that rise from the ship are the masts. The large pieces of cloth attached to the masts are called sails. The masts support the sails. On sailing ships, the sails catch the wind that supplies the energy needed to move the ship across the water. By 1900, steam engines had largely replaced sails on most ships.



Larger passenger ships were built in the late 1800s. They had a lot more room inside them. Main cabins held bunks for sleeping, benches for sitting, and tables for eating. Cabins often had portholes, which are round windows in the ship's side. Passengers could look out at the sea or approaching lands. The kitchen, or galley, often had a coal stove for cooking. There were bathrooms as well. Hot baths were not very common because water had to be heated on the stove first. If people on board wanted a bath, cold water was often their only choice.





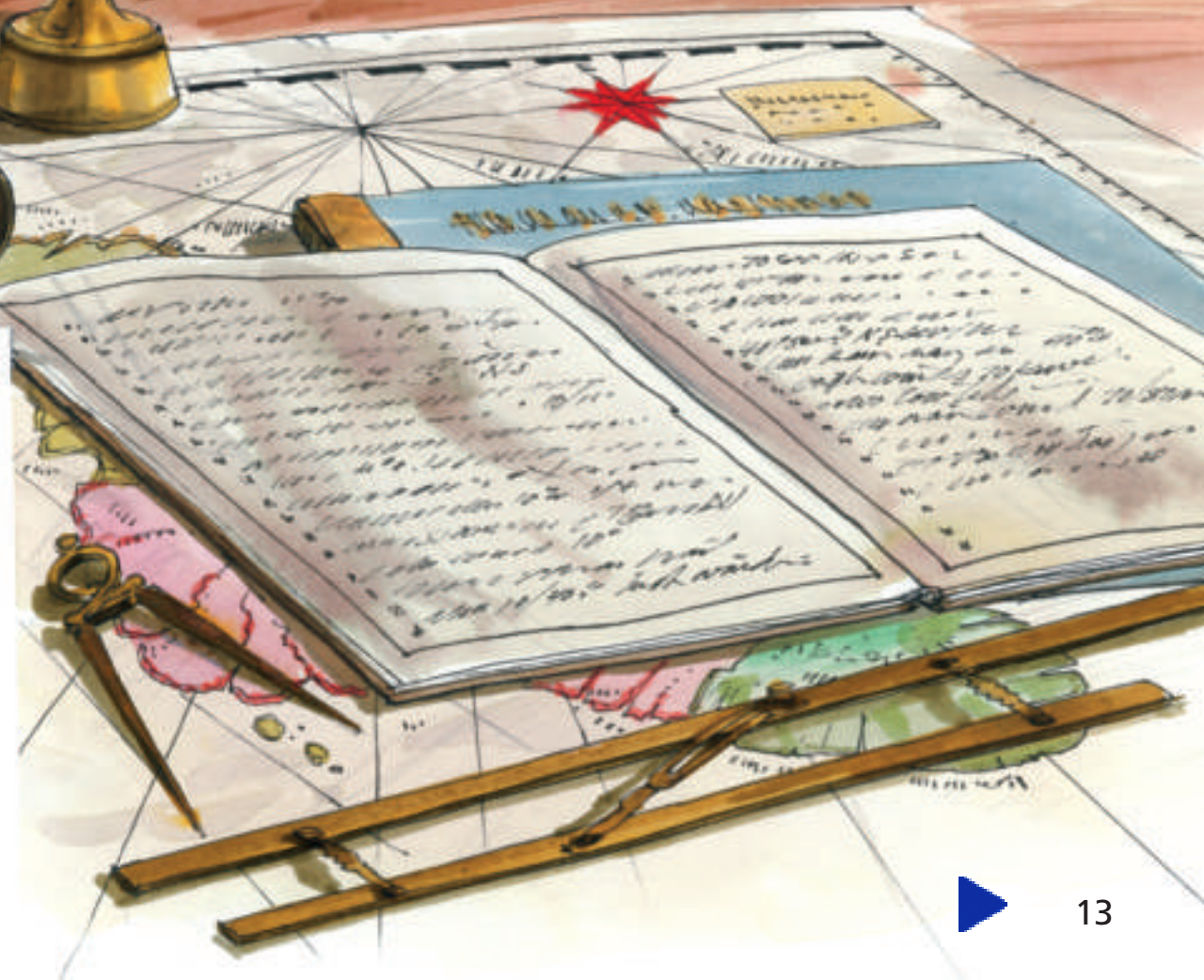
The Ship's Log

The captain also kept a daily log during every voyage. Weather, ocean currents, and the ship's location were recorded in the log. Daily events on the ship were recorded also. The ship's log helped the captain plan the next voyage. Future voyages could be made faster and safer by paying attention to the weather patterns and ocean currents recorded in the ship's log.



Finding the Way

The chartroom was, and still is, the place where a captain **conducted** the ship's voyage. Many maps and charts are kept in the chartroom. The charts and maps help the captain plan the route the ship will take. It is important that a ship stay on course. A wrong turn could add days or weeks to a voyage. The chartroom also holds important business papers. Ships must keep records of all the sales and trades made on a voyage.





Every member of the crew had to be able to pilot the boat. The cabin boy often did the cooking if there was no full-time cook on board. Cabin boy was just a title. The cabin boy could be a grown person.

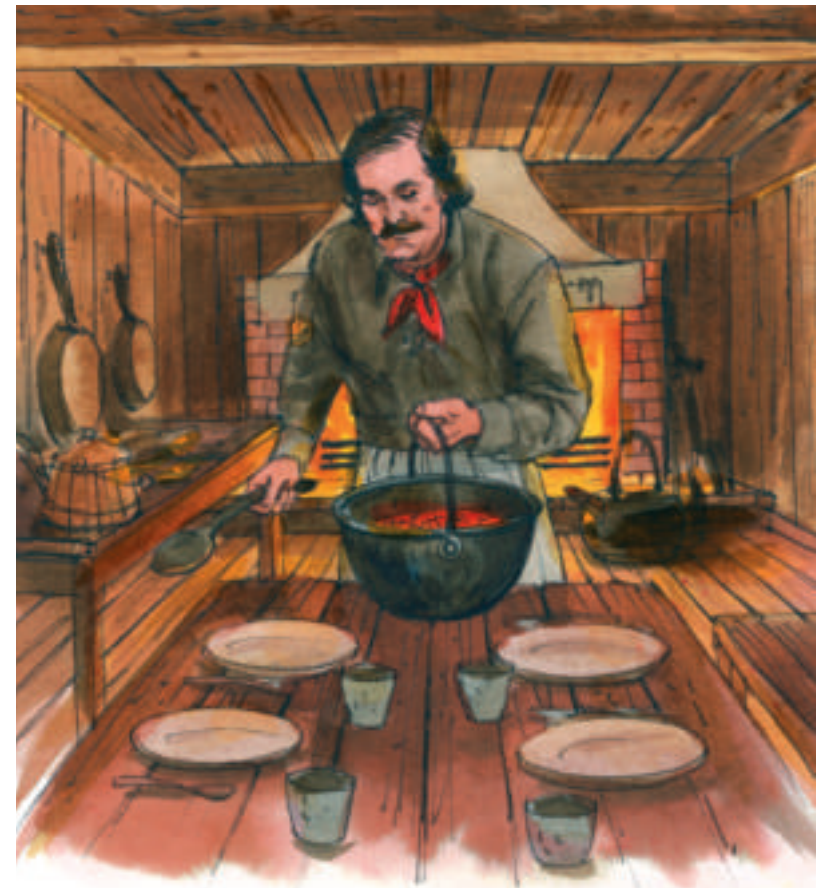
A seaman's day was divided into watches. A watch was usually four hours long. When not on watch, a seaman helped keep the ship in working order. Sails and ropes had to be repaired. The masts had to be oiled. Water had to be pumped from the ship every day. Everyone was expected to help with any jobs that needed to be done.



Jobs at Sea

The crew of a ship included a captain, or sail master. The captain had to feed and take care of the crew as well as keep order on the ship. The captain had the right to punish seamen who did not obey orders. Being captain was a very **dignified** position.

The first mate was next in command after the captain. The first mate was in charge of the rest of the crew. The crew was made up of seamen and a cabin boy.





Staying on Course

Seamen used **celestial navigation** to keep a ship on course. Each night the position of the moon and the stars in the sky above the ship was compared to their positions the night before. By doing this, seamen could tell how far the ship had sailed during the day.

The sun was used to guide ships too. The sun's height above the horizon was measured regularly during the day. By comparing measurements, it was possible to tell how far a ship had sailed.

Seamen also used a nautical almanac. This was a book of tables, charts, and facts about the ocean. The crew used the information in the almanac to better sail the open sea.





Storms at Sea

Weather has a big effect on the lives of people at sea. High winds can blow a ship off course. Rainstorms can cause damage too. In the days of the sailing ships, lightning could strike masts. Wind could tear sails and make masts **quiver** and break. Rain can make decks slippery and dangerous to walk on without the use of a safety rope.

Storms at sea can cause huge waves that rock a ship back and forth with a lot of force.



Large waves can break over the decks of a ship, threatening the crew and equipment. If the waves are large and powerful enough, they might tip a ship on its side in the middle of the ocean. If the boat can't right itself, it will sink.

The best days for sailing are sunny days with a gentle wind. The worst days are those when there are storms at sea.





Living at Sea

Many seamen were away from their families for months or years at a time. Ships very often sailed for weeks without seeing land. The captain often let the crew have free time on land when a ship stopped at a port.

Sometimes a captain would have his family live on board the ship. The captain's wife often helped by keeping the ship's log up to date. If the ship had visitors while in port, the captain's wife planned the dinner and helped entertain the guests.



The captain's wife might also act as the ship's doctor. If there were children, she taught them their school lessons.

The children lived, played, and did school work on board the ship. Little time was spent on land. The children didn't get to invite friends for a visit, except when the ship was in port. What do you think it would be like to grow up on board a ship?





Choosing Life at Sea

The members of a ship's crew probably missed their families and friends. Yet, they chose to leave their homes to sail. They wanted to work on a ship and travel around the world. Some ships went to new lands. Some may have found unknown islands. Some ship's crews got to meet new people and learn new customs. Life at sea was hard work, but there were rewards. Even today, people choose to work on ships and travel around the world.

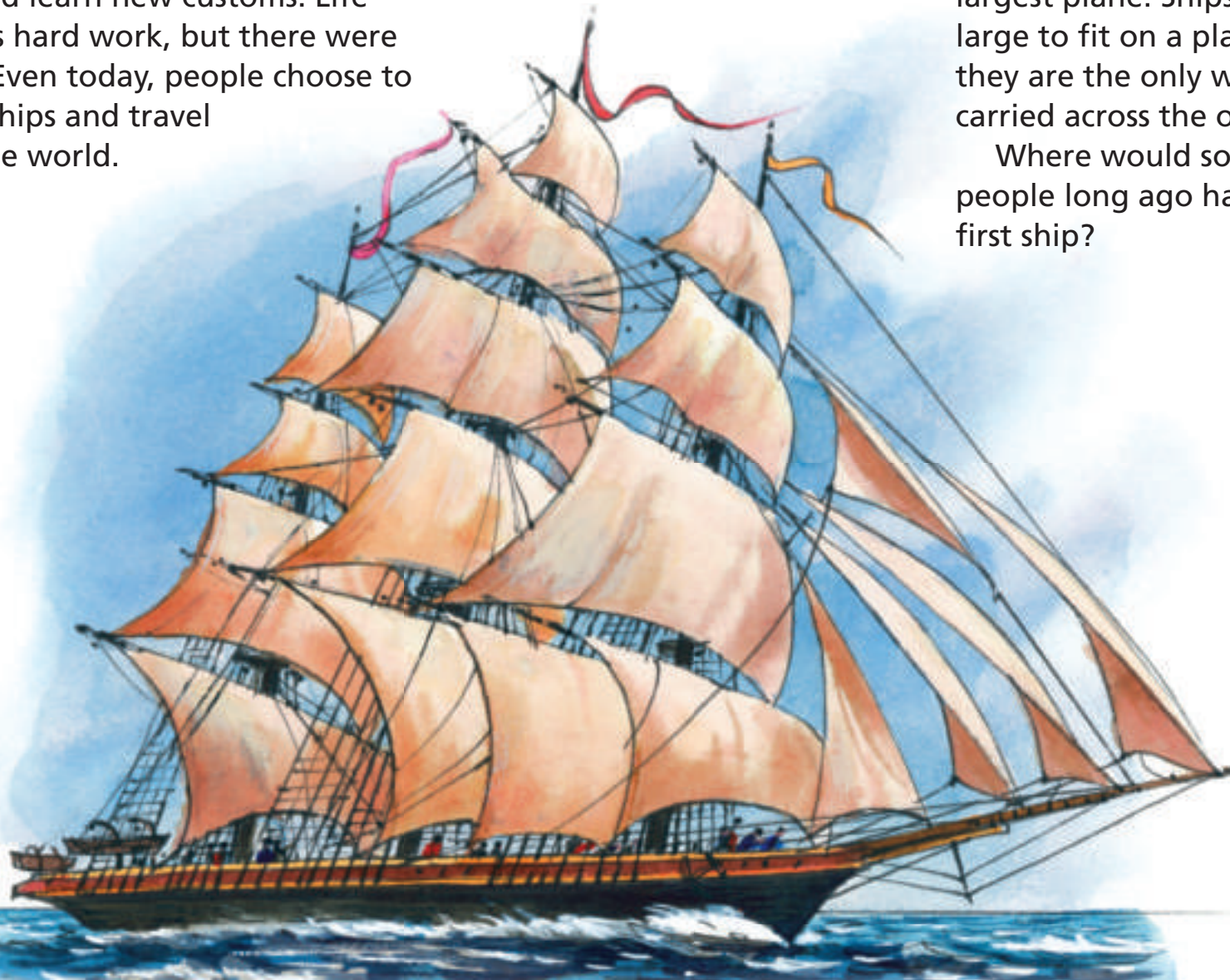


Ships and Today's World

Ships served people's needs in the past. Ships and their crews helped to bring goods and travelers to new places. They helped nations to grow.

Ships continue to serve people's needs today. The cargo they carry continues to improve people's lives. Ships can carry more cargo than the largest plane. Ships can carry things too large to fit on a plane. In some cases, they are the only way things can be carried across the oceans.

Where would society be today if people long ago hadn't built that very first ship?





Glossary

bow *n.* the front part of a ship or boat

cargo *n.* the freight carried by a ship

celestial *adj.* of or relating to the sky or heavens

conducted *v.* directed; managed

dignified *adj.* worthy of honor or respect

navigation *n.* the control of the course of a ship, car, plane, or other means of transportation

quiver *v.* to shake with a trembling movement

stern *n.* the rear part of a ship or boat



Reader Response

1. Think about what you have just read. What do you think was the author's purpose for writing this book? What do you know about ships that you did not know before? Be sure to give examples to support your answer.
2. A ship's voyage is affected by weather. Look outside at the weather where you are. Can you predict how this weather might affect a ship? What might happen if you sailed on a day like today?
3. Some of the words used to describe the seafaring life have other meanings too. *Port* is a place by a waterway where ships load and unload cargo. It is also the left side of a boat. Two other words from the glossary are like this. Make a chart like the one below to list and define these two words.

Glossary word	First meaning	Second Meaning
port	the left side of a ship or boat	a place by a waterway where ships load and unload cargo

4. Would you like to travel on a long sea voyage on a sailing ship? Explain your answer.

