

BLACKBEARD THE PIRATE

AT FIRST, THE COLONIES THAT ENGLAND SET UP ON THE ATLANTIC coastline were very weak. They had few soldiers and sailors to protect them. An evil pirate like Blackbeard could steal and kill when he wanted to. Nobody, not even the Governor of North Carolina, was strong enough to stop him. There were many pirates along the North Carolina coast. But Blackbeard was the meanest.

He was born in England and, when only a boy, left home to go to sea as a sailor. He noticed how weak the colonies were and decided to become a member of a pirate crew. So fearless and bold was he that soon he was the captain of his own ship, the *Queen Anne's Revenge*.

He fought ships at sea, killed their crews, and stole their cargoes. When afraid he would be caught, he slipped away to the North Carolina coast. He did this because the North Carolina coast had many coves and sounds behind the sandbars where he could hide. North Carolina became his head-

quarters. By now, no one remembered his real name. The name Blackbeard was enough to make people shake with terror, and he liked this.

Blackbeard was a tall, strong man—fearful to look at. He would take locks of his long black hair and beard, twist them into little pigtails, and bind them with colored ribbons. During a battle with an unfortunate ship, he would tie slow-burning matches to the pigtails near his forehead. He looked as if he might explode any minute, like a firecracker. Hanging from his shoulders down across his chest was a leather belt with six pistols, all cocked and ready to shoot. He carried a sword in his strong hand.

Most pirate captains attacked only weak vessels, but not Blackbeard. He was so brazen that he went after warships too. He was not afraid of anybody. Once he took his fleet to Charlestown, South Carolina, and took over the town. The Governor of South Carolina and his officials looked on helplessly.

Early in 1718, Blackbeard heard that the King of England would pardon all pirates who turned themselves in. Blackbeard sailed up to see Governor Charles Eden of North Carolina and surrendered himself and twenty of his men. It was reported that Governor Eden was a friend of Blackbeard, because he gave the Governor part of his booty. We do not know whether this is true or not but certainly Governor Eden was easy on pirates.

For a while, Blackbeard stopped being a pirate. He bought a big house in North Carolina, gave fine parties, and made a great display of the money and jewels he had stolen. He married a girl sixteen years old and Governor Eden performed the ceremony. The poor girl did not know

she was wife number fourteen, with twelve still living in other parts of the world.

After a while, this kind of life began to bore Blackbeard, and he decided to go back to pirating. He went to sea and captured so many ships that the Governor of Virginia asked Governor Eden to stop him. But Governor Eden had no intention of curbing this evil man.

Finally, the Governor of Virginia would put up with Blackbeard no longer. He asked Lieutenant Robert Maynard to go out and take Blackbeard, dead or alive. Lieutenant Maynard sailed with two small sloops for Ocracoke Island on the North Carolina coast, where he knew Blackbeard was hiding.

Several days later, at sundown, he saw Blackbeard's ship, *Adventure*, anchored off Ocracoke. The pirate was not surprised to see the sloops, for Governor Eden's secretary had written him a letter to warn him. But he was not worried. While Maynard was busy all night getting ready to fight, Blackbeard spent the night drinking.

At sunrise on November 22, 1718, Lieutenant Maynard began the fight. First, he sent out rowboats and the smaller sloop. The rowboats retreated when Blackbeard fired upon them, and the sloop stuck on a sand bar. Maynard's sloop, the *Ranger*, now had to attack alone.

Blackbeard shouted out when the *Ranger* was near, "You villains! Where do you come from?"

At this, Maynard ordered the British flag run up on the mast. He yelled back, "You can see by our colors that we are not pirates."

"Send over a boat so that I can see you," replied Blackbeard.

"I cannot spare my boat," said Maynard, "but I will come aboard your ship from my sloop as soon as I can."

Blackbeard ran up his flag, the skull and crossbones, and fired at the *Ranger*. Since Lieutenant Maynard's sloop had no heavy guns, he ordered his men to lie still on the deck or to go below. When the smoke cleared, Blackbeard saw few men, and he thought he had killed most of the sailors. The *Ranger* drifted closer to Blackbeard's *Adventure*. Finally, the two ships touched. Blackbeard cried out to his men, "Jump on board and cut to pieces those that are alive."

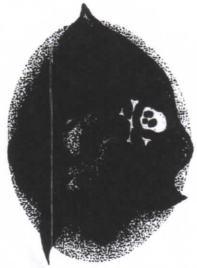
As the pirates boarded the *Ranger*, Maynard's men came to life. Blackbeard could not believe his eyes, but he ordered his men to fight with everything they had. There was a terrible struggle. There were shouts, pistol shots, and groans.

Suddenly, Blackbeard and Maynard stood face to face. They fired at each other. Blackbeard missed, and Maynard's bullet went right through the pirate, but the tough man went on fighting. Each drew his sword, and Blackbeard swung at Maynard and injured him. One of Maynard's men wounded the pirate in the throat, but still Blackbeard fought on. Then, as he was loading a pistol, Blackbeard fell dead. The pirate crew quickly surrendered. The fight was over.

Later, Maynard counted twenty-five wounds in Blackbeard's body, five of them from pistol shots. Maynard then took his sword and, with a great sweep, cut Blackbeard's head from his body. He tied the awful-looking thing to the bowsprit of the *Ranger* and sailed away.

The days of the cruel pirates were ended.

Today, the island of Ocracoke is calm and peaceful. Many people take their vacations there. The beautiful blue waters off Ocracoke tell nothing of the terrible last day of Blackbeard.



Blackbeard: The Pirate Story

1. Why were pirates so successful along the Atlantic Coast?
2. Where was Blackbeard born?
3. Name his ship.
4. Why did he hide out along the NC Coast?
5. Describe Blackbeard.
6. Blackbeard was brazen. Brazen means bold, shameless. Describe actions, which show him to be brazen.
7. "Booty" is pirate treasure. To whom did Blackbeard give part of his booty? Why?
8. Name the Governor of NC.
9. How many wives did Blackbeard have?
10. Since the Governor of NC wouldn't take action against Blackbeard, the people of NC turned to Governor Spotswood of VA. Spotswood sent _____ to take Blackbeard, "dead or alive".
11. Who warned Blackbeard that people were coming to get him?
12. Why did Maynard attack the "Adventure"?
13. What did Blackbeard's men find when they boarded the "Ranger"?
14. Describe the final battle.