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# LESSON PLAN FOR ENCOUNTERS VIDEO: “WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO BE A MEMBER OF VANCOUVER’S CREW?”

## Lesson Overview

This video addresses challenges Vancouver’s crew experienced during their four-year expedition (1791 - 1795), including hardships of life at sea, disease, cruel punishment, and crew morale.

### Resources:

- Video “What was it like to be a member of Vancouver's crew?”
- Video worksheet

## Lesson Learnings

### Inquiry Question:

- What was it like to be a member of Captain Vancouver’s crew?

### Learning Objectives:

- Compare the living conditions, duties and experiences of crew members of different ranks.
- Evaluate the relationships between crew members that led to conflict and cooperation.
- Analyze the crew’s experience from a historical perspective.

## Activate Prior Knowledge

Use any of the following questions for group discussion or as think-pair-share. Students could draw a mind map to keep track of words and ideas.

- Based on books and movies you've seen, what do you think it was like to be a sailor on one of these ships?
- Pull up an image of the *HMS Discovery* from the previous video "What did Vancouver's expedition actually achieve?" [Timestamp 00:38]
  - What kind of jobs do you think the crew would need to do to sail and live on this ship?
  - What do you think life would have been like aboard this ship for four years in the late 1700s?

## Watch *Changing Perspectives* Video

*Resource:* accompanying review questions worksheet

Watch the video "What did Vancouver's expedition actually achieve?" as a class.

### Video Worksheet

Ask students to answer the following questions, as written answers using the worksheet or as think-pair-share. These questions build from direct recall to active critical thinking.

Possible answers in red.

1. Why did people become sailors?
  - a. Prestige, was forced to, money, employment, adventure
2. What were some jobs on the ships?
  - a. Trainee officers; botanist & surgeon; sailors/seamen; tradesmen; volunteer crew; marines; midshipmen
3. What challenges did Captain Vancouver's crew face?
  - a. Health: scurvy, seasickness, supply of food and water
  - b. Teamwork: mutiny, not cooperating, disagreements, arguments, homesickness, taking a year longer than expected, morale, keeping order
  - c. Safety: weather, ship maintenance, hostile people, disagreements
4. List three chores for crew members.
  - a. Watch shifts
  - b. Navigating
  - c. Keeping a lookout
  - d. Swabbing and scrubbing the deck
  - e. Gunnery practice
  - f. Maintenance

5. Did the crew like or dislike Captain Vancouver? Why?
  - a. He was known for being short-tempered and irritable, possibly due to his poor health
  - b. Disagreements with high-ranking crew members
  - c. Refusing to fight the duel
  - d. Disciplining the crew through punishment, and resentment towards the expedition taking longer than expected

## Analysis Prompts

These additional prompts challenge students to further analyze what they've learned from the video. These questions ask students to reflect on the practice of history and incorporate evidence to justify their claims. In some cases, students may benefit from further resources to explore these questions.

- 1) Create a table comparing and contrasting the living conditions between Captain Vancouver and a seaman.
- 2) As a crew member, what qualities would you want your captain to have as a leader? Why are these qualities important?
  - a) Do you think Captain Vancouver was a good leader? Support your opinion with evidence from the video.
- 3) What are examples of conflict amongst the crew? What are examples of cooperation amongst the crew? Use the image of the cat-o'-nine tails as another source.

## Wrap-Up Discussion

Wrap up your lesson with a reflective discussion. Ask students to give answers to the following questions, either as a class, in small groups, or as an independent writing exercise.

- Would you have wanted to be a member of Captain Vancouver's crew? Why or why not?

## Creative & Inquiry Project Ideas

### Sailor's Journal

Write a series of journal entries from the perspective of an imaginary sailor on Captain Vancouver's expedition to the Pacific Northwest Coast. This activity is an opportunity for students to take a historical perspective and use their imaginations. Use additional primary and secondary sources, such as other videos in the *Changing Perspectives* exhibit for context and inspiration.

Instructions:

1. Students create their character profile: biography, motivations, worldviews, beliefs, role on the ship (ex. Seaman; tradesman; cook; officer; marine; mapmaker, engineer; naturalist).
2. Students write their journal entries, which include a description of their journey to reach the Pacific Northwest Coast, arrival, and outcomes of the voyage. Remind students to write their entries in the voice and through the eyes of their character.

**Possible entry topics:**

- *The day you left England, April 1, 1791.*  
What are your emotions? What motivated you to embark on this voyage? What do you think will be accomplished on this expedition? What are you worried about?
  - *A day at sea.*  
What is your role on the ship? What are your daily tasks? Have there been any challenges? How do you know where you are at sea? What are your opinions of Captain Vancouver?
  - *Arriving at Yuquot on August 28, 1792.*  
What surprises you? What are your relations with the Mowachaht/Muchalaht? How is life in Yuquot different or similar to life in towns and cities in England?
  - *Arriving back in England on October 20, 1795.*  
How do you feel being back in England? Do you think the mission was a success?  
(Resource video: "What did Vancouver's expedition actually achieve?").
3. Students share their journal entries. Reflect on: Do you agree with the actions and opinions of your character? Do you think that their voyage should be remembered? Who else's stories are important to remember?
  4. Although journal entries offer a detailed primary document of the past, this type of source does not always get passed on to the next generation. They may get lost, damaged, even intentionally altered or destroyed. Another way to learn about the past is through oral history. Stories about someone's experience may be passed down through the generations. Students will choose one journal entry to share as an oral story.
    - Reflect on what changes or stays the same as you adapt your writing into an oral story? What is the main message you want to get across to the audience?

**Extra Resources**

- Crew quotes from the non-fiction book *Madness, Betrayal and the Lash: The Epic Voyage of Captain George Vancouver* by Stephen R. Brown
- Original letters from Archibald Menzies in the New South Wales State Library "[Series 61: Papers, Being Mainly Letters Received by Banks from Archibald Menzies, 1790-1795, 1798](#)"