

J. Porter Shaw Library
Complimentary Study Guide

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Purpose

The purpose of this study guide is to both promote and facilitate the use of the J. Porter Shaw Maritime Library at Fort Mason in San Francisco. The guide will give an overview of some of the resources that are available at the library and suggest some activities and lesson plans that instructors might use as a springboard for planning units to teach library and research skills as well as state-mandated literature, language arts and history in their classrooms.

The library has extensive and unique collections concerning whaling, World War Two naval history, and Merchant Shipping. This guide will focus on those areas because of the depth of material available in those areas, but it should be remembered that the library covers much more than just those areas of interest.

Through the assignments they make and the organizations of the library visit, teachers can influence their students development and their attitude toward libraries and research. A well-designed assignment can teach students valuable research skills and provide them a positive experience in the library. Unfortunately, assignments also have the potential to confuse and frustrate students and leave them with a negative attitude toward libraries. Some things to consider in forming your lesson plan might be:

1. Make the objective clear to students.
2. Have students develop a vocabulary list of keywords.
3. Use the library catalogs to find books and other materials.
4. Keep a research log of where they found information.
5. Try to use periodicals, videos and other sources than just books or the Internet.
6. Divide class into small teams so they can work in different areas of the library and then switch areas periodically.

Things to avoid might include:

1. An entire class looking for one piece of information or topic.

2. Giving students obscure trivia questions and asking them to find the answers(it can be frustrating and seems unimportant.)
3. Dont assign excessively vague or general topics.

History of The J. Porter Shaw Library

According to Judith Overmaier, Professor Emeritus at the University of Oklahoma, the J. Porter Shaw Library is one of the four best libraries of commercial maritime history in the United States. It started in 1951 in a closet under the stairs at the San Francisco Maritime Museum. Today it has 40,000 books, 143 periodicals, shipping records dating back to 1847, over 900 oral history recordings, ship plans, manuscripts and films, and can provide reprints of over 250,000 historic photographs.

In 1959 the library acquired the maritime collection of an Oakland, California attorney, J. Porter Shaw(1884-1959.) Historian Warren Howell said of Shaw, He was the only one collecting maritime materials with discrimination in the 1930s.

In 1978, the largest private collection of Pacific maritime history belonging to John Lyman(1921-1977), oceanographer, maritime historian, and navy captain was added and the upper reading room was named in his honor.

In 1992 the library acquired the 18,688 item collection(mainly about whaling) of Barbara Chistina Johnson, a New Jersey lawyer and longtime supporter of the J. Porter Shaw library.

In 1994, Dean Mowdsley, a surgeon, donated his collection of 5,000 titles on World War II naval history. His donation includes a WWII cruise book collection that s the best in existence.

The library is an outstanding research tool, a unique repository of San Francisco and United States maritime history and a learning aid for students and teachers in conjunction with the San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park and the National Park Service.

Whaling and the Age of Sail

Content standards for California Public Schools grades K-12 in language arts indicate that students should be able to:

1. Formulate judgment about oral communication(7th grade)
2. Evaluate the content of oral communication(8th grade)
3. Listen critically and respond to historically or culturally significant works of literature(9th grade)
4. Write coherent and focused essays(9th grade)
5. Read and comprehend contemporary literature, magazines, newspapers and on line information.(9th - 10th)

For more information concerning standards see: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/elacontentstnds.pdf>.

Herman Melville's novel *Moby Dick* was inspired by an actual sinking of the whaleship, *Essex*, by a whale on November 20, 1820, 1500 miles west of the Galapagos Islands. The *Essex* sank and the crew fled into whale boats and attempted to sail back to the mainland of South America. They ran out of food and water and resorted to cannibalism to survive. Their story is told in the best selling book, *In the Heart of the Sea*(The tragedy of the Whaleship *Essex*) by Nathaniel Philbrick, Penguin Books 2001.

Possible Student Activities

1. Have a student prepare a wall map of the route of the *Essex* from Nantucket to the sinking.
2. Have a student draw a picture of the *Essex*(refer to a drawing by one of the crew on the Internet.) See wikipedia entry after googling Whaleship *Essex*.
3. Have students stage a radio or TV talk show interview in which selected students read the description of the sinking and pretend to be survivors who are interviewed by the host of the show and answer questions from the listeners(the class)[pages 86 to 91 in the book]

4. Have students read chapter 11, pps 164-176(cannibalism) in the book or have it read to the class. Have a discussion of the morality of eating shipmates who die or killing a shipmate in order that the others may survive. Stage a debate or assign an essay in which students take one side or the other and defend their position from the view of the rights of the individual versus the good of society.

Follow Up Activities

Nathaniel Philbrick has a bibliography of related books about the Essex and whaling activities in general in the back of *In the Heart of the Sea*. Interested students can do further reading about whaling and the Age of Sail from the list.

- Specifically about the Essex: Owen Chase, *Wreck of the Essex*, Harvest HBJ, 1999.
- *Revenge of the Whale, the True Story of the Whaleship Essex*, Nathaniel Philbrick, (In the Heart of the Sea but adapted for Children 10 14) Putnam, 2002.

Arrange a field trip to the San Francisco Maritime Museum and a visit on the *Balclutha* and the *C.A. Thayer*. The *Balclutha* was not a whaling ship, but shes a square rigger from the Age of Sail and has the flavor of ships of that era. Field trips can be arranged through the National Park Service where students hoist sails and experience shipboard routines. More information about *Balclutha*: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balclutha_\(1886\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balclutha_(1886)). If you plan a field trip to the *Balclutha* in conjunction with a visit to the library, there is an excellent free field guide on line for the *Balclutha* with crossword puzzles and other classroom exercises. See: http://www.nps.gov/safr/forteachers/upload/ftg_pmd_convert.pdf. More information about *C.A. Thayer* at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C.A._Thayer_\(1895\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C.A._Thayer_(1895)). To arrange a field trip, contact Heather Clancy (415)561-6662 ext 30(hcclancy@maritime.org).

For an exercise in periodical research, assign a student to find and read and report on the article about whaling at Herschel Island, San Francisco's Outpost on a Lonely Arctic Coast. *Mains'l Haul*(Periodical) winter 2004,

pp. 44-57, by David Hull(Principal Librarian at J. Porter Shaw Library) and Michael Dobrin. Mains'l Haul is available at the J. Porter Shaw library.

A student interested in woodworking might read up on a hardwood so dense it doesn't float and was used for many purposes on ships in the Age of Sail. Lignum Vitae was also used as the prop shaft bearings of the submarine USS Pampanito(SS-383) open to the visitors at the SF Maritime Museum. Read and report on the one page article in the periodical Sea History, by Deirde O'Regan, Summer 2007, p.17. If possible, bring a piece of lignum vitae to class. Sea History is available at the Shaw library. In the same issue see the article about the wood used in the C.A. Thayer on page 22.

Vocabulary

Bow - front end of the ship

Foreward - toward the bow of a ship

Stern - the back end of a ship

Aft - toward the stern of a ship

Aloft - above the deck in the rigging

Capstan - revolving drum or cylinder turned by many men with wooden bars for the heaviest pulling

Chantey - rhythmic song sung by sailors to coordinate their work so they can all pull together

Yard - long horizontal spar crossing the mast to hang sails on

Square rigger - ship with sails hanging across the ship from yards square to the ship(Balclutha)

Schooner - ship with two or more masts but the sails run fore and aft rather than across(Thayer)

Clipper ship - long, sleek square rigged ship build for speed in New York and Boston

Furling - putting away sails by rolling them up and tying them to the yard

Mast - vertical pole that the sails and rigging are attached to

Rigging - line, wire, chain etc. used to support a ships masts

Spar - a strong wooden pole used as a mast, yard or bowsprit

Bowsprit - a spar running forward from the bow to which stays and sails are attached

Port - left side of a ship when facing forward

Starboard - right side of a ship when facing forward

Trailboard - ornate board extending from the figurehead aft that has the name of the ship on it

Have students prepare their own vocabulary list of sailing terms or prepare your own list of terms and expressions that come from the nautical tradition such as no room to swing a cat, seven sheets to the wind, taken aback, or fiddlers green(**sailors heaven, where sailors imagined that sailors who died went rather than heaven, because they knew they were too bad to ever get into heaven. Sailors imagined they went instead to fiddlers green where there was always mirth, fiddlers who never stopped playing and dancers who never tired of dancing. When they climbed to the tops of masts in the Age of Sail, sailors said that was as close to heaven as theyd ever get.**)

To introduce students to our maritime history make a list of as many Hollywood movies about the sea as the class can name, such as Mutiny on the Bounty, Moby Dick, Captains Courageous, Billy Budd, Caine Mutiny, Master and Commander, Sink the Bismark, Run Silent Run Deep, and many, many more. Many students don't think of the United States as major maritime nation, and dont realize the importance of San Francisco in U.S. Maritime history.

There are many trailboards on display around the library. Have students look up information about the ships these came from. Have them list the date they were built, the length and width(beam) and information about the type of cargo they were designed to carry or what their role was. See if there are photos available in the photo collection at the library of those ships and get copies made of the photos to put on display in the classroom. Different teams could adopt a ship and different members of the team could be assigned to find pictures or specifications and dates when their ship visited San Francisco(in Lloyds Register) if she ever did.

Glory of the Seas, for example, was a medium clipper ship 240 feet two inches long and 28 feet 3 inches wide with a registered tonnage of 2103 tons. She was built in Boston in 1869 by Donald McKay. Her trailboard is featured in the video which accompanies this guide. She set a speed record for a passenger between Nantucket and San Francisco. After the Earthquake in 1906 she was re-commissioned in San Francisco and put back into service. Extensive information on the Internet or see Nautical Research Journal vol. 25 Washington 1979 pp 111-118 for a periodical exercise.

For general background about a family living on a sailing ship see Fred Duncan, *Deep Water Family*, Random House, June 1969(suitable for all ages). From the photo collection at the Shaw library students could find photos of families on sailing ships.

Many students don't realize that the last shot in the Civil War was fired in California by a Confederate Warship sent to California and the Pacific States to harass Union forces here. For more on this interesting story see: Murray C. Morgan, *Confederate Raider in the North Pacific*, Washington State University, 1995, and John E. Carey, *Murkey Gray at Sea*, *The Washington Times*, June 17, 2006(The story of James Waddell and the CSS(Confederate Steam Ship) *Shenandoah*) or on line at: <http://civilwarstoriesofinspiration.wordpress.com/2008/08/30/css-shenandoah-a-technological-wonder/>

Beyond just book reports students can imagine themselves as crewmembers and write imaginary diaries or letters to home based on what they read, transcribe imaginary interviews with the Captain, draw pictures of the *Shenandoah*, or write an essay justifying or condemning the shelling of civilian targets in times of conflict.

Stage a treasure hunt where student teams win a prize for finding a certain list of information about a list of ships in the shortest time, or the most information about a ship or ships in a period of time.

World War II

There is a wealth of resources available in the S.F. Bay Area relating to World War II. A field trip to the library might include a visit to the USS *Pampanito*, WWII submarine, open to the public at the S.F. Maritime Museum. Nearby at pier 45 is the *Jeremiah OBrien*, a WWII Liberty Ship (415) 544-0100 and in Alameda the USS *Hornet*, WWII Yorktown class aircraft carrier, at 707 *Hornet Avenue*, Alameda, CA 94504. (501)-521-8448.

There are untold stories from World War II as everyone knows. The J. Porter Shaw library has an extensive collection in which an entire class of students at a time can immerse themselves in books not found at most libraries each with their own book about WWII. You might devise an exercise in which students read one chapter from a book that interests them and report on it

in writing or as an oral report and submit bibliographical information about the book.

If you plan a field trip to the USS Pampanito in conjunction with a trip to the library, see *USS Pampanito: Killer Angel*, by Greg F. Michno, University of Oklahoma Press, 1999, 445 pps. The account of the war experiences of the USS Pampanito written as an exciting novel. Information is also available on line at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Pampanito_\(SS-383\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Pampanito_(SS-383)).

For an assignment not so directly battle related that might be of interest to female class members, consider the video *The Men Who Sailed the Liberty Ships* originally a documentary on PBS. It is a show about merchant shipping during wartime and explains a lot about the difference between a ship meant to fight in the war and a nonnavy ship operated by civilians that delivered goods during a war. It tells the story of PQ 17 a famous convoy of Liberty ships to Murmansk in the U.S.S.R. That lost 25 of the 36 ships in the convoy and the merchant seamen who had to survive in lifeboats in the winter. Much of it was filmed on the



Figure 1: USS Pampanito, with SS Jeremiah O'Brien moored astern

Jeremiah OBrien in San Francisco and many of the seamen featured in the film are San Franciscans. Convoy PQ 17 is a small part of the whole show, but each seaman was interviewed for an hour or more and those interviews in their entirety are archived at the J. Porter Shaw library. After watching the entire show, have individual students check out the whole interview of one of the seamen in PQ 17 and watch it at the library or read the transcript. The interviews are in the *The Men Who Sailed the Liberty Ships* collection at the Shaw library and they can only be found at the Library. That's an example for the class of an interesting resource that can't be found on line via the Internet. Or you might show the video in class if you have time, or show just the part of the show that describes PQ 17 and then show one of the interviews to the whole class on the library machine. Or have the class read the transcript of the interview.

Here again, you might ask students to imagine they are one of the seamen in

the lifeboat that gets rescued and have them write a letter home describing their experience. Or have a debate or class discussion or write an essay about the morality of sinking unarmed ships and the outrage that Americans felt when a German Uboot sank the Lusitania in World War I.

To generate some interest in World War II before a trip to the USS Pampanito refer to Thunder Below(The USS Barb revolutionizes submarine warfare in World War II) by Eugene B. Fluckey, July 1997, 464 pps. III. The USS Barb has the distinction that she sank a train during the war.

Another unusual story is of the HMS Trinidad, who managed to torpedo herself in March 1942 and ultimately sank herself or caused herself to be sunk.



Figure 2: HMS Trinidad, 1941

See: The Ship that Torpedoed Herself, by Frank Pearce, it's a hardback book available at the Shaw library, but a brief account of her story can also be found on line using HMS Trinidad as a keyword.

If you plan a field trip to the USS Hornet in Alameda see 30 Seconds over Tokyo, by Ted Lawson(one of Doolittle's pilots) Bantam Books April 2001. The story of the bombing of Tokyo from the USS Hornet. Also available as a wartime movie on a 2007 DVD starring Spencer Tracy, Van Johnson, and Robert Mitchum. If you make a field trip to the Hornet, stop by the Port of Oakland on the way and observe the loading and unloading of commercial

ships and other port activities such as tugboats and pilots.

Commercial Shipping (The Merchant Marine)

Have students research non-military vessels that are crucial to the S.F. Bay economy (container ships, bulk carriers, tankers, tugboats, pilot boats, ferries, fishing boats etc.) Make a field trip to the port of Oakland and observe the loading and unloading of the merchant ships. Have the class identify and describe the different types of boats and ships they see. Write an essay describing the process of loading and unloading the ships. Sketch one of the boats. Make a scrap book of pictures of commercial ships.



Figure 3: World War II Liberty ship
SS Jeremiah O'Brien

The Jeremiah O'Brien is a merchant ship of the World War II era. Have the class visit the Jeremiah O'Brien and write about their visit. Have students research the Liberty Ships and the Jeremiah O'Brien in the library or on line and answer these questions:

1. Why were these merchant ships called Liberty ships?

The first one was named after Patrick Henry who said, Give me liberty or give me death. They were made to help Britain keep her liberty after the German Uboats sank many of the British merchant ships and they needed supplies for their people and army.

2. Who was Jeremiah O'Brien that this ship was named after?
Captain of the American merchant ship Unity who captured a British ship in 1775 in the first naval battle of the Revolutionary War.
3. Why was it appropriate to name a merchant ship after him?
The U.S. Merchant Marine considers this incident to be the beginning of their history.

4. Why do merchant ships have cranes on the decks?
To lift the cargo from the dock into and out of the ship's hold.
5. Why do merchant ships have Plimsoll marks on the sides(see photo below left.)?
They indicate when a ship is fully loaded or over-loaded. (Notice the Plimsoll marks on the Jeremiah OBrien and the Balclutha.)
6. How many days did it take to build the Jeremiah OBrien?
57
7. How many total Liberty ships were made?
2,751
8. How many Liberty ships are still operational today?
2
9. What do you call a person who goes to sea o n a merchant ship?
A sailor or as a seaman or a merchant seaman, but never a marine. A marine is a person in the military. The merchant marine is an industry and not a person.
10. Can a woman be a merchant seaman?
Yes. Today there are many women who are captains of ships, harbor pilots, tugboat captains, deck workers, engineers, engine repair mechanics, cooks, stewards and every other job on ships. (See the video Shipping Out)

As a counter balance to the male dominated information about World War II, you might choose to include a unit on seafaring women throughout history and in the modern merchant marine. Show the class the video Shipping Out or assign one of your teams to watch it and make a report about it. Shipping Out is a PBS documentary about women n the modern merchant marine and throughout history. There is a free and extensive study guide on line at: <http://www.waterfrontsoundingsproductions.com/shipping.pdf>

The guide provides many suggested classroom activities, quizzes based on the video, and general information about the merchant marine and going to sea for both men and women civilians. Much of it is filmed in San Francisco Bay and many of the women featured are local San Franciscans. The study guide is an excellent preview of the information that is in the video and will help you determine if the show is appropriate for your class.

Conclusion

This guide has provided you with an overview of the type of material that is available at the J. Porter Shaw library. Every teacher will want to make his or her own lesson plans for library study and plan lessons that fit into the rest of the goals for the class. Hopefully this guide will stimulate your own ideas utilizing books, periodicals, videos, archival material and photos available at the J. Porter Shaw library.

To bring an entire class to the library you will need to call and make arrangements in advance. Due to budget cuts the library hours have been curtailed, to visit the library or make arrangements for a class visit call in advance (415) 561-7080. For more information visit the library homepage on the Internet at: <http://www.nps.gov/safr/historyculture/library-and-research.htm>. Increased use of the library will help justify a restoration of the budget and help preserve a valuable and unique asset to San Francisco and California maritime history. At the same time the library is a valuable research tool of which many San Franciscans and Bay Area teachers are unaware.

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- [3] Fred Duncan. *Deep Water Family*. Random, New York, 1969. (Suitable for all ages).
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- [14] Nathaniel Philbrick. *Revenge of the Whale: The True Story of the Whaleship Essex*. Putnam, New York, 2002. (In the Heart of the Sea Adapted for children 10-14.).
- [15] Waterfront Soundings Productions. The Men who sailed the Liberty Ships, 2005. (video 57 minutes).
- [16] Waterfront Soundings Productions. Shipping Out: The Story of America's Seafaring Women, 2006. (video 56 minutes).

Internet Sites

- [17] For State of California standards in language arts
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/elacontentstnds.pdf>.
- [18] More on the Whaleship Essex
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whaleship_Essex
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Essex_\(whaleship\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Essex_(whaleship)).

- [19] Study Guide for a field trip to the ships at the S.F. Maritime Museum
http://www.nps.gov/safr/forteachers/upload/ftg_pmd_convert.pdf.
- [20] More information about the Balclutha
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balclutha_\(1886\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balclutha_(1886)).
- [21] More information about the C.A. Thayer
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C.A._Thayer_\(1895\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C.A._Thayer_(1895))
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http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Pampanito.
- [24] More information about HMS Trinidad
<http://www.thefederalounge.com/archive/index.php/t-2975.html>
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Trinidad_\(46\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Trinidad_(46)).
- [25] More information about the Jeremiah O'Brien
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS_Jeremiah_O'Brien
<http://www.ssjeremiahobrien.org>.
- [26] Online study guide ofr the video Shipping Out
<http://www.waterfrontsoundingsproductions.com/shipping.pdf>.
- [27] J.Porter Shaw library homepage
<http://www.nps.gov/safr/historyculture/library-and-research.htm>.

DVDs

- [28] The videos Shipping Out and The Men Who Sailed the Liberty Ships can also be checked out at the San Francisco Public Library or purchased of your own AV library from waterfron Sounding Productions in Oakland. See <http://www.waterfrontsoundingsproductions.com>.

[29] The Hollywood movie 30 Seconds over Tokyo is also available via Netflix or at many libraries and video rental outlets or can be purchased on line.