

LIFE AT SEA IN THE AGE OF SAIL

Itinerary for a Teacher-Led Tour

Living and working aboard a ship in the nineteenth century was quite different from living and working on land! Explore the following exhibits in any order to discover how the sailors' lives were dependent on, yet different from that of people on land. Have fun!

L. A. Dunton

- What was this ship used for? Can you still smell and feel its cargo?
- How many people worked on this vessel?
- Where would this ship go, and for how long?
- In your opinion, what was the quality of life aboard the *L.A. Dunton*?
- List four good reasons to be a fisherman.

Sail Loft

- Why was a sail loft important to the shipping industry 150 years ago?
- How long do you think it would take to make a sail for the *Charles W. Morgan*?
- Were the sails stitched only by hand?

Chandlery

- Identify two unusual smells in this building.
- What kind of store do we have now that sells the same type of things?
- List five items that you would bring with you for a three year voyage. Remember that they have to fit inside a seachest.
- Besides getting personal gear, why would a sailor come to a chandlery?

Ropewalk

- Why is this building shaped the way it is?
- How many feet long was this building in its original location in Plymouth, Massachusetts?
- What are the two main uses for rope on a sailing ship?
- Can you estimate how much rope would be needed to rig the *L.A. Dunton*? How about the *Charles W. Morgan*?
- What other ways do we have now of controlling and supporting sails and propelling vessels?

Cooperage

- Why was a cooperage so important in nineteenth century trade?
- From the other exhibits you have visited, name four items that would be stored in casks for a voyage.

- Can you find the best size and design for each of the items?

Charles W. Morgan

- What was this ship used for?
- How many people worked aboard this vessel?
- Where did it travel, and for how long?
- In your opinion, what was the quality of life aboard the *Charles W. Morgan*?
- List four good reasons to be a whaleman.

Questions to Consider

- Why is it important to the sailors that the sail maker, the chandler, the ropemaker and the cooper do their jobs well?
- Would you rather be a sailor, or a shoreside craftsman?
- Did women live on any of the ships? If so, where and why?

Related Demonstrations

See “*Today’s Activities*” sheet for times and locations of demonstrations related to *Life at Sea in the Age of Sail*.

Vocabulary

cargo	items being transported by ship at a price.
seachest	wooden trunk containing all of a sailor’s personal belongings.
rigging	line, wire, chain etc. used to support a ship’s masts and handle sails.
watch a	section of a ship’s crew on duty at any given time to run the ship.
fo’c’s’le	crew’s living quarters in the most forward part of the ship.
watch	a period of time during which one part of the ship’s crew is on duty to run the ship.

Further Reading

Melville, Herman. *Moby-Dick*.

Kipling, Rudyard. *Captains Courageous*.

Latham, Jean Lee. *Carry On Mr. Bowditch*.

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