



## Introduction lesson

### Lesson 3.1: Circumstances on board

#### Aboard

The crew was collectively responsible for the goings on aboard the ship. A number of tasks were defined on paper. There was enough work to be done.

#### Prayer

Lead by the captain, the crew began each day with prayer and at 8 a.m. everybody needed to be working. The day was closed with prayer also. Everybody was required to attend. If a crewmember did not attend he was fined.

#### Tasks of the crew

The first mate was responsible for navigation and for cargo storage in the hold.

The second mate could also steer the ship, and was responsible for navigation after the first mate, the third mate did the third watch.

The gunman took care of the guns and ammunition.

The surgeon was responsible for the medical care aboard the ship.

The master carpenter was responsible for the maintenance of the ship.

The boatswain was a second officer who supervised the shrouds and sails, especially those on the main mast.

The head cooper supervised the opening of barrels and crates.

The cook supplied the crew with meals.

The corporal or (weapon) smith maintained the smaller (hand)guns.

The sailors kept the watches and helped the ship stay on course; loading and unloading; the cleaning, tarring and caulking of the ship; the taking down and putting up of the sails.

The sailor's mates were low ranking sailors, inexperienced sailors. They were sailor's assistants.

The lowest rank aboard the ship was that of the ship's boy. Boy's were under the age of 17 and did various odd jobs aboard the ship.

#### Life on board

The crewmembers were given meals twice a day. They mostly drank beer and wine. The sailors typically ate from containers, while the officers had access to plates and cutlery in the cabin. The officers were allowed to bring a ship's trunk with personal belongings per person. Sailors had to share one trunk with two persons. Life aboard followed strict rules. As soon as the crew set foot aboard the ship, they were assigned watches. There were six watches in total. A watch lasted four hours. The watch between 4 p.m. and 8 p.m. was divided into two two-hour watches so everybody had an opportunity to eat dinner. The length of a watch was measured with an hourglass, or simply called a glass. A glass lasted half an hour. After each half hour the glass was turned, simultaneously ringing the ship's bell so the crew knew half an hour had passed.

#### More information

Life on board: <http://eenigheid.slavenhandelmcc.nl/middelburgse-commercie-compagnie-en/life-on-board/?lang=en>

Crew: <http://eenigheid.slavenhandelmcc.nl/trajecten-van-de-reis-en/voorbereiding-en/bemanning-en/?lang=en>