



# LESSON TITLE: Privateers in the War of 1812: Soldiers or Thieves?

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DATE: May 16, 2011

## COURSE/GRADE: Social Studies, Grade 8

TIME NEEDED: One 45-minute class period

### LESSON OVERVIEW:

In this lesson students will analyze the roles and contributions of privateers during the War of 1812. They will analyze the concept of governments authorizing individuals to perform illegal acts during times of war according to the rule of law and make a judgment on whether or not governments have the right to do this. And finally they will evaluate the actions of these individuals. Were they heroic contributions to the American war effort or just plain thievery?

**OUTCOMES:** At the end of this lesson, students will be able to: Evaluate the role of pirates/privateers in the War of 1812 and to express an informed opinion on the legitimacy of the actions of these individuals, as well as the actions of the government in authorizing them.

### OBJECTIVES:

**Focus Question for the Lesson:** Is a government's use of privateers in time of war legitimate?

#### Historical Thinking Skills Targeted:

Historical Comprehension:

- Reconstruct the literal meaning of a historical passage.

- Evidence historical perspectives.

- Draw upon visual, literary, and musical sources.

Historical Research Capabilities:

- Interrogate historical data.

#### Maryland State Curriculum Content Objectives:

1.A.1.b: Explain and summarize the principles of federalism, popular sovereignty, rule of law, consent of the governed, separation of powers, checks and balances, majority rule, limited government, and how they protect individual rights and impact the functioning of government.

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## Maryland State Curriculum Skills and Processes Objectives:

6.A.1.d: Use new vocabulary in speaking and writing to gain and extend content knowledge and clarify expression.

6.A.2.a: Identify characteristics of a text.

6.A.2.b: Preview the text

6.A.3.c: Use a graphic organizer or other note taking technique to record important information.

6.A.4.i: Draw conclusions and make generalizations based on the text, multiple texts, and/or prior knowledge.

## Common Core Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies:

RH.6-8.1. Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

RH.6-8.2. Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

RH.6-8.4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

RH.6-8.10. By the end of grade 8, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 6–8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

## MATERIALS:

- overhead projector/smart board and projector
- copies of motivation or transparency/file to display on board
- copies of primary source #1 for guided practice and transparency/file to display on board
- copies of focus questions/note taking sheet for taking notes as students analyze sources
- copies of primary sources #2-4
- copies of exit ticket
- copies of homework, if desired

## PRIMARY SOURCES:

“A bill to prevent citizens of the United States privateering against nations in amity with or against citizens of the United States ... [Philadelphia] Printed by John Fenno [1797].” Leaflet. Online posting. [An American Time Capsule: Three Centuries of Broad­sides and Other Printed Ephemera](#). Library of Congress. Accessed June 14, 2011. <rbpe 22302100 <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/rbpe.22302100>>

“Another glorious victory. Newport Oct. 18, 1813. This afternoon arrived in this harbour the British Packer Morgiana, Capt. Cunningham, of 18 guns, and 50 men, prize to the privateer Saratoga, Capt. Addington of New York ...” Broadside. Online posting. An American Time Capsule: Three Centuries of Broad­sides and Other Printed Ephemera. Library of Congress. Accessed June 14, 2011. <[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/h?ammem/rbpebib:@field\(NUMBER+@band\(rbpe+05000600\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/h?ammem/rbpebib:@field(NUMBER+@band(rbpe+05000600)))>

Currier, N. “American privateer ‘General Armstrong’ Capt. Sam. C. Reid.” Lithograph. [ca. 1830]. Online posting. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division. Accessed June 14, 2011. <<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3b49787>>

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“Cash in hand, occasioned by the capture of the British Packet Swallow. by Commodore Rodgers, with 260,000 dollars, in gold and silver on board. Boston printed by Nathaniel Coverly, Jun. Corner Theatre-Alley [1813].” Leaflet. Online posting. An American Time Capsule: Three Centuries of Broadsides and Other Printed Ephemera. Library of Congress. Accessed June 14, 2011. < [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/h?ammem/rbpe-bib:@field\(NUMBER+@band\(rbpe+0500060c\)\)>](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/h?ammem/rbpe-bib:@field(NUMBER+@band(rbpe+0500060c))>)

## SELECTED VOCABULARY:

letters of marque and reprisal

pirate

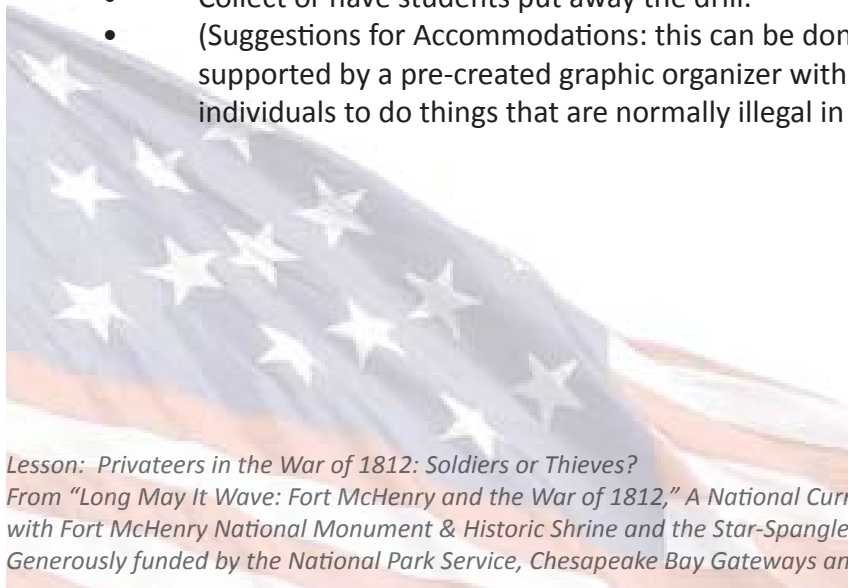
privateer

rule of law

## PROCEDURE:

### 1) Motivation

- Pose this question to students: “Should the government have the right to authorize individuals to perform usually illegal acts in times of war?” This can be put up on the board/smart board for students’ drill or can be handed out on a piece of paper.
- Have students take no more than one minute to answer the question and then talk about their answers. Make sure to bring up points like the fact that soldiers kill in war and governments allow it.
- Read students Article 1 Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution which grants Congress the power “to declare war, grant letters of marque and reprisal, and make rules concerning captures on land and water.” Explain that a letter of marque is a commission given by the government to a private vessel allowing that vessel to arm itself and attack enemy ships, keeping whatever of value was on board the ship. It was a way for governments without a strong navy to harass and weaken their enemy. Without a letter of marque, such actions by a ship would normally be considered piracy.
- Explain to students that today they will be examining the role of privateers in the War of 1812 and judging whether or not the actions of these individuals were legitimate and whether or not the government should have the right to authorize them to do these things. Refer to the focus questions.
- Collect or have students put away the drill.
- (Suggestions for Accommodations: this can be done entirely orally as a discussion or can be supported by a pre-created graphic organizer with other ways in which governments allow individuals to do things that are normally illegal in times of war)



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## 2) Guided Practice

- Explain to students that they will be examining primary sources that describe some of the pirates/privateers who participated in the War of 1812. They will look at the things these individuals did and decide if it should have been legal for them to do them and if the government should have had the right to give them permission.
- Hand out Primary Source #1 and model analyzing it for students by placing a copy on the overhead/smart board projector, reading together and discussing it.
- Point out to students that this first document is from the time period before the War of 1812 and is against allowing citizens to become privateers. When and why do they think the government changed its policy regarding privateering? Allow for questions. You can note to students that this legislation of 1797 was an attempt to preserve American neutrality in the wars between Great Britain and France. This bill aimed to prevent Americans from getting letters of marque from France to attack British ships and vice versa.
- (Suggestions for Accommodations: You may want to provide typed transcriptions of all primary sources to make them easier to read.)

## 3) Independent Practice

- Distribute Primary Sources #2-4 as well as the Note-Taking Worksheet. Pair students and release them to work.
- (Suggestions for Accommodations: students can work individually or in groups; students may be given simplified or redacted sources; the sources can even be read and analyzed as a whole group activity; analyzing different types of primary sources such as documents, pictures or letters can be pre-taught to help students; for higher achieving students more complicated sources can be used as well as including additional information and expansion into discussion and analyzing modern day pirates and their actions in comparison to what happened in the War of 1812.)
- Have students come back together. Review each primary source as a class.

## 4) Assessment

- Explain to students that, in the early 19th century, few people questioned the legitimacy of privateering. It was an established strategy in times of war. Also, while there were established conventions for what was allowed in “civilized” warfare there were no international organizations like the United Nations to police such behaviors.
- Have students imagine that it is 1813 and there does exist some global organization similar to the United Nations. Imagine that Great Britain has argued to this organization that American privateering during the War of 1812 is, indeed, piracy and illegal.
- Students should choose to represent either the Americans or the British in the hearings that follow this accusation. Direct students to write a one-page speech arguing a case for or against American privateering as legitimate, supporting their arguments with information taken from the primary sources.
- Ask several volunteers to read their speeches, and have the class vote as to whether American privateering is legitimate.

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## 5) Closure

- Distribute exit ticket and have students answer it and collect it.
- Engage students in a short discussion on what the students now think about the legitimacy of privateers during war. In what ways is the use of privateers justifiable? What aspects of privateering are not legitimate? Overall, do students think that governments should be able to use privateers? Point out that in 2007, the House of Representatives considered a bill (H.R. 3216) that would have granted private citizens Letters of Marque and Reprisal to seize the persons and property of Osama bin Laden and anyone working with/for him. What do students think about such an idea?
- Refer back to the focus question/objective. Did the primary sources examined provide sufficient evidence for students to answer the focus question? What other information might students like to see? What other questions do students have?

## SUGGESTIONS FOR ACCOMMODATIONS:

- For students with IEPs and 504s
- Students can work individually, in pairs or in groups; they can be given simplified, redacted or even fewer primary sources as necessary; all of the sources can be analyzed as a whole class activity to support struggling readers.

## LESSON EXTENSIONS:

- Homework:
  - o Writing to express an opinion: Have students write a short 1 paragraph/1 page essay on other things that the government allows individuals to do in times of war and if they think these are legitimate and why or why not.
- Have students do research on modern acts of piracy and write a short paragraph comparing these with the actions of pirates/privateers in 1812.
- For higher achieving students: Challenge students by asking them to do additional research and write a longer more detailed report on a pirate/privateer from the time period.



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**Pirates and Privateers**  
Note Taking Worksheet

Name:

Focus Questions: Is a government's use of privateers in time of war legitimate?

Guided Practice

Primary Source #1

1. What is the title of this source?
2. What type of source is this? (Letter, picture, broadside, etc.)
3. When is this source dated?
4. Describe the content of this source.
5. In what ways, if any, does this source suggest that a government's use of privateers in war is legitimate?
6. In what ways, if any, does this source suggest that a government's use of privateers in war is NOT legitimate?
7. How valuable is this source in helping to answer the focus questions?

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## Independent Practice

### Primary Source #2

1. What is the title of this source?
2. What type of source is this? (Letter, picture, broadside, etc.)
3. When is this source dated?
4. Describe the content of this source.
5. In what ways, if any, does this source suggest that a government's use of privateers in war is legitimate?
6. In what ways, if any, does this source suggest that a government's use of privateers in war is NOT legitimate?
7. How valuable is this source in helping to answer the focus questions?

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### Primary Source #3

1. What is the title of this source?
2. What type of source is this? (Letter, picture, broadside, etc.)
3. When is this source dated?
4. Describe the content of this source.
5. In what ways, if any, does this source suggest that a government's use of privateers in war is legitimate?
6. In what ways, if any, does this source suggest that a government's use of privateers in war is NOT legitimate?
7. How valuable is this source in helping to answer the focus questions?

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## Primary Source #4

1. What is the title of this source?
2. What type of source is this? (Letter, picture, broadside, etc.)
3. When is this source dated?
4. Describe the content of this source.
5. In what ways, if any, does this source suggest that a government's use of privateers in war is legitimate?
6. In what ways, if any, does this source suggest that a government's use of privateers in war is NOT legitimate?
7. How valuable is this source in helping to answer the focus questions?

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### **Pirates and Privateers Exit Ticket**

Name:

1. Were the actions taken by the pirates/privateers you read about today legitimate?
2. Should the government have the right to authorize these actions as legal?

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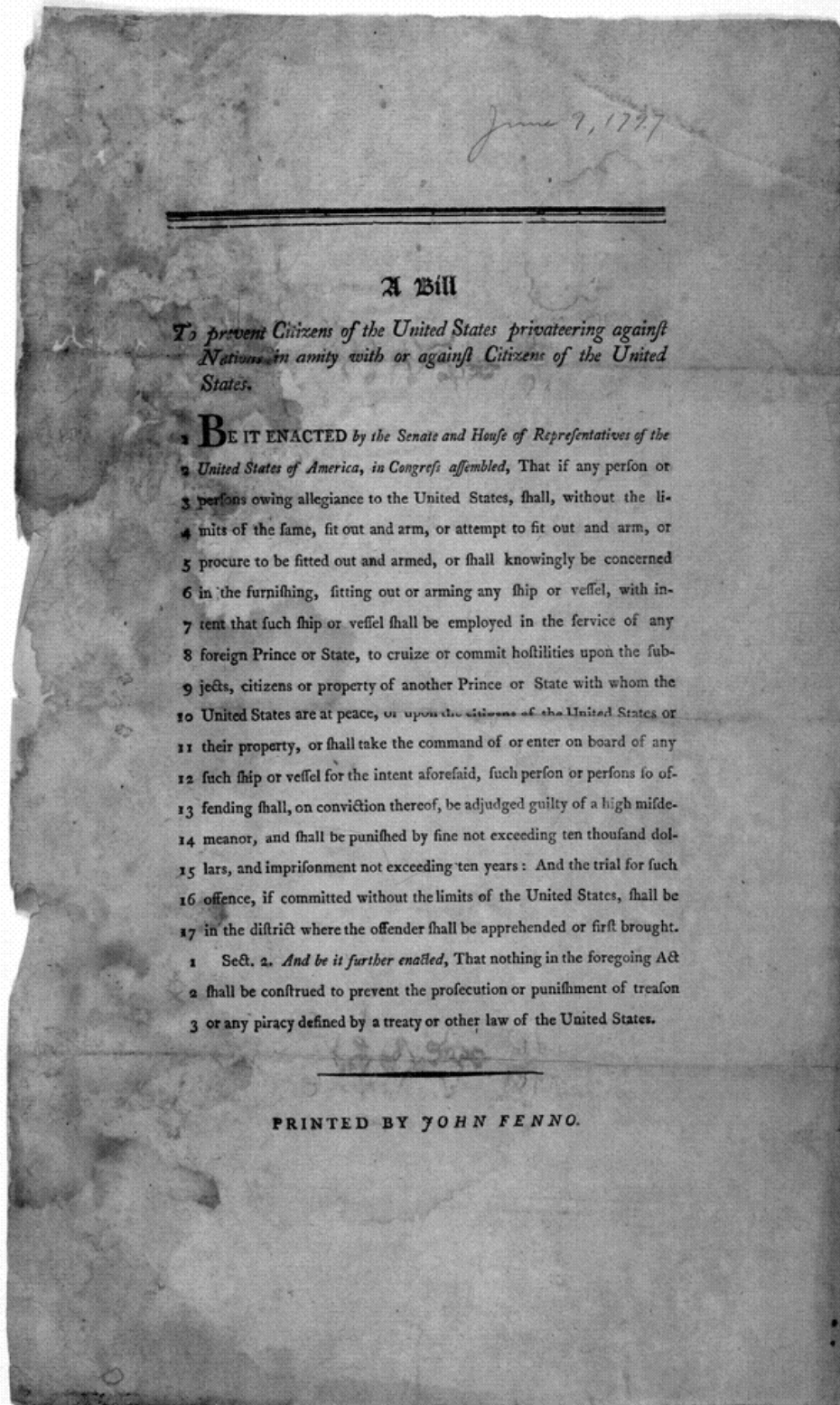
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Primary Source #1



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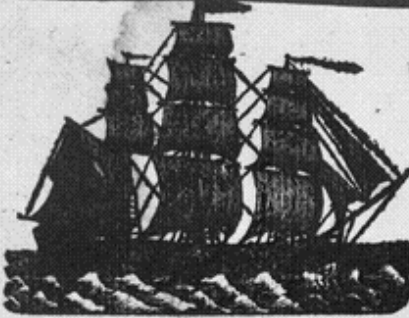
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Primary Source #2

Ac. 1847

Oct. 27, 05

4.90 a. 477



## ANOTHER GLORIOUS VICTORY.

NEWPORT, Oct. 18, 1813.

THIS afternoon arrived in this harbor the British Packet MORGIANA, Capt. Cunningham, of 18 guns, and 50 men, prize to the privateer Saratoga, Capt. Addington, of N. York. The Morgiana sailed from Falmouth 27th. Aug. with the mail for Surinam, and was taken on the 26th Sept. off Surinam Bank, by the Saratoga after an action of one hour and 5 minutes, by boarding. The following is an extract from the Saratoga's Journal:—

"Sept. 21, commenced with light winds, and fine weather; at half past 5 A. M. saw a sail on the weather bow; made sail in chase—at 3 P. M. she hoisted English colors, and commenced firing with her stern chasers: At 3:30, P. M. the action commenced with pistol shot, and continued till 23 minutes past 4, when we carried her by boarding, with the loss of our first Lieutenant, and one man killed, and 6 wounded, one of them mortally. The prize proved to be the King's Packet Morgiana, of 18 guns and 50 men, from England bound to Surinam. Her loss was two killed; and 8 wounded, five of them mortally—among the wounded is Capt. CUNNINGHAM, and the first officer of the Packet. The quarters of the Morgiana were superior to those of the Saratoga."

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**O**LD Neptune, the God of the ocean one day,  
To Columbia's fair genius did pleasantly say,  
Your sons on my waters have made a great noise,  
And I'm sure your's a parcel of fine spunky boys.

CHORUS.

*The trident of Neptune in future they'll wield,  
And conquering ride on the blue wat'ry field.*

The genius replied, Of my sons I'm quite proud,  
Their glory is bright, nor is stain'd with a cloud,  
And they ne'er shall disgrace of their country the  
name,  
But shall fill with their deeds many pages of fame.  
*The trident of Neptune in future they'll wield,  
And conquering ride on the blue wat'ry field.*

While thus they were chating, a terrible din,  
At a distance aloof, was there heard to begin,  
They turn'd, and two vessels just then hove in sight,  
Hot, hot, was the fray, and loud rag'd the fight.  
*The trident of Neptune, in future they'll wield,  
And conquering ride on the blue wat'ry field.*

Says old NBP. by the smoke which I now see that  
way,  
I'm sure that the devil himself is to pay,  
Let's go to the scene of the battle and see,  
Which ship is most worthy the favor of me.

*\* The trident of Neptune, in future they'll wield,  
\* And conquering ride on the blue wat'ry field,  
\*  
\* Away then they fled, but the battle was o'er,  
\* The streamers of George was again forc'd to lower,  
\* And Columbian's bright Eagle, once more was dis-  
\* play'd,  
\* Perch'd high on the proud Morgiana's mast-head.  
\* The trident of Neptune in future they'll wield,  
\* And conquering ride on the blue wat'ry field.  
\*  
\* On the conqueror the God of the ocean then smil'd,  
\* And pronounc'd him to be of true valor a child,  
\* Then order'd his Tritons a garland to weave,  
\* And bind with the halo the brows of the brave.  
\* The trident of Neptune, in future they'll wield,  
\* And conquering ride on the blue wat'ry field.  
\*  
\* Now success to the tight little smart privateer,  
\* Who went to the battle undaunted by fear,  
\* And the fine Saratoga which sails on the sea,  
\* Shall as famous as old Saratoga's plains be.  
\* The trident of Neptune, in future they'll wield,  
\* And conquering ride on the blue wat'ry field.  
\*  
\* PRINTED BY N. COVERLY, Jun.*

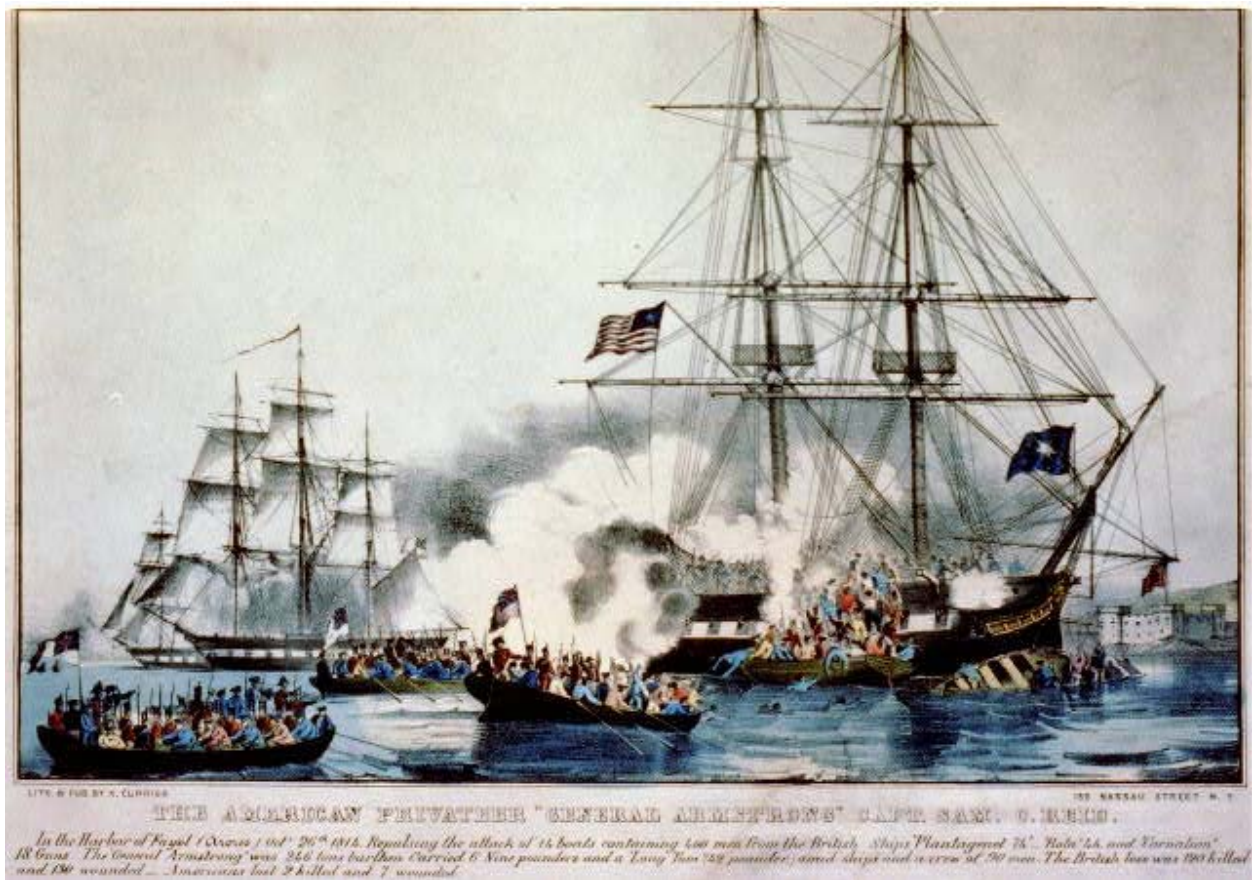
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Currier, N. "American privateer 'General Armstrong' Capt. Sam. C. Reid." Lithograph. [ca. 1830]. Online posting. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division. Accessed June 14, 2011.

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3b49787>

Ac. 1849  
D 8133

**CASH IN HAND,**  
OCCASIONED BY THE CAPTURE OF THE BRITISH  
BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY \* H. 00 a. 473 \*  
**PACKET SWALLOW,**  
**BY COMMODORE RODGERS.**  
WITH 260,000 DOLLARS, IN GOLD AND SILVER ON BOARD.

**C**OME all ye jolly seamen bold,  
And list unto my song sirs,  
I promise you upon my word,  
I'll not detain you long sirs.  
*Yankee doodle, keep it up,  
Yankee doodle dandy,  
The Yankee boys, we always knew,  
At jingling cash are handy.*

Our squadron sail'd from Boston port,  
To cruise along the ocean,  
To fight the British was the plan,  
Which pleas'd each sailor's notion.  
*Yankee doodle, keep it up,  
Yankee doodle dandy,  
The Yankee boys we always knew,  
At jingling cash are handy.*

We steered east, north, south and west,  
But come across no cruizers,  
Yet still we kept our spirits up,  
And swore we'd not be losers.  
*Yankee doodle, keep it up,  
Yankee doodle dandy,  
The Yankee boys, we always knew,  
At jingling cash are handy.*

It seems the English did'nt care,  
To venture quite so near sirs,  
As when brave *Hull* with courage stout  
Blew up their fam'd *Guerriere*, sirs.  
*Yankee doodle, keep it up,  
Yankee doodle dandy,  
The Yankee boys, we always knew,  
At jingling cash are handy.*

At length determin'd we no more  
At present, sea would follow,  
We in a lucky hour espy'd,  
The British Packet Swallow.  
*Yankee doodle, keep it up,  
Yankee doodle dandy,  
The Yankee boys, we always knew,  
At jingling cash are handy.*

PRINTED BY NATHANIEL COVERLY, JUN.  
CORNER THEATRE-ALLEY.—BOSTON.

We quickly sent our boat on board,  
While they with fear were quaking,  
She soon return'd, and then we found,  
She was quite worth the taking.  
*Yankee doodle keep it up,  
Yankee doodle dandy,  
The Yankee boys, we always knew,  
At jingling cash are handy.*

Full eighty boxes stuff'd with gold,  
And silver there we found, sirs,  
Which quick we had on board our ship,  
And stow'd by, safe and sound sirs.  
*Yankee doodle, keep it up,  
Yankee doodle dandy,  
The Yankee boys, we always knew,  
At jingling cash are handy.*

The British, sure, did not well like  
This mode of our proceeding,  
And swore the taking of their cash  
Was no mark of good breeding.  
*Yankee doodle, keep it up,  
Yankee doodle dandy,  
The Yankee boys, we always knew,  
At jingling cash are handy.*

We told 'em then to save their chink,  
To send their frigates here, sirs,  
And *Rodgers* would be sure to show  
The play of the *Guerriere*, sirs.  
*Yankee doodle, keep it up,  
Yankee doodle dandy,  
The Yankee boys, we always knew,  
At jingling cash are handy.*

Now let us hope e'er War is o'er,  
And peace to it shall follow,  
That Doctor *Rodgers* will give pills,  
The British cannot SWALLOW.  
*Yankee doodle, keep it up,  
Yankee doodle dandy,  
The Yankee boys, we always knew,  
At jingling cash are handy.*

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