

## Speaking like a Sailor: Naval Phraseology



**Grades:** 3-8

**Time Frame:** 20-30 minutes (5-10 min introduction, 10 min activity, 5-10 min follow-up)

**Materials Needed:**

- Phraseology Worksheets
- Pens/Pencils

**Objectives:** Students will learn about naval phraseology. In doing so, they will consider the importance of effective communication, the impact of a time period and historical context on communication, and the relationship between a group of people and methods of communication.

**Classroom setup:** There is no special setup for this activity. Students will work together in groups, and can do so by moving desks together etc. To social distance, make smaller groups and have the students sit across from each other, leaving six feet of distance.

**Albacore Setup:** Table set up under a tent with phraseology sheets, writing utensils (could be pens and pencils or white board markers if sheets are laminated), spray and wipes, hand sanitizer

**Connection to Curriculum Frameworks**

Massachusetts:

- 7.MS-ETS3-2(MA). Compare the benefits and drawbacks of different communication systems.

New Hampshire

- Theme J: Human Expression and Communication
  - Goals:
    - Popular culture
    - Language development
  - Essential Questions:
    - What is the role of popular culture in society?

**Introduction and Diagnostic Assessment:**

- Ask the students if they know what the terms “slang” or “jargon” mean.
  - If a student volunteers with a definition, ask other students to join in with examples.
  - If not, follow up by asking them to define examples you come up with. For example, “who knows what it means to ‘hit the hay?’” Other examples the students might recognize would be: all ears, jump to conclusions, beat around

the bush, keep your chin up, pull someone's leg, bite off more than you can chew, raining cats and dogs, under the weather etc.

- Once the students have heard examples, ask them how they think idioms come to be.
  - Answers you might get (or prompt if you don't get) could be from pop culture (jumping the shark etc.) or developed among small groups (like those aboard a submarine!)
- Explain that the navy has its own set of idioms, which they will know try to decipher!

#### **Formative Assessment and Procedure:**

- Break students into small groups.
- Distribute a phraseology worksheet to each group
- Ask the students to try to guess what each naval phrase on the worksheet means
- Walk around the room, checking in with students and asking them why they guessed the meanings they put down, how they are thinking about each phrase, etc.
- After 10 minutes, call the groups back.
- Go down the list, asking for guesses as to what each phrase meant.
- Tell them the correct answers, and explain how the phrases came to be.
- For an element of competition, record which group got the most right and declare them the winners!

#### **Summative Assessment and Follow-up:**

- Ask the students to share their favorite phrases they learned
- Why do they think groups of people come up with special phrases and terms?
- Some phrases, such as "aye" and "belay that" were developed to make sure that there were no misunderstandings. Why would clear communication be so important on a submarine? What could some consequences of a miscommunication be?
- How could specialty phrases be used to understand a group of people (what's important to them, how they interact, etc.)?
- Why is it important for historians to understand phraseology? Is it important for us to understand modern phraseology as well?

# Phraseology worksheet:

Show your sea-smarts by guessing what these naval phrases mean

1.) Aye \_\_\_\_\_

2.) Belay That \_\_\_\_\_

3.) Has the Word \_\_\_\_\_

4.) Silence on the Line \_\_\_\_\_

5.) Fo-wer \_\_\_\_\_

6.) Starboard \_\_\_\_\_

7.) Port \_\_\_\_\_

8.) O-Dark-Hundred \_\_\_\_\_

9.) After \_\_\_\_\_

10.) Show Your True Colors \_\_\_\_\_



# Phraseology worksheet answer key:

1.) **Aye:** Aye is used to say “yes” or as an acknowledgement. When a command was given, those receiving the command would either repeat the command to acknowledge it, or respond with “aye” or “very well.”

2.) **Belay that:** Used to correct a mistake. For example, if the receiving station repeated a command back incorrectly, the sender would say “belay that” and repeat the command.

3.) **Has the Word:** This means that a message has been received and is being carried out. For instance:

Order: Tell Mr. R to check the gun access hatch.

Report: Mr. R has the word

4.) **Silence on the Line:** Used to in case of emergency to quiet all other stations. Stations can resume talking once they’ve heard the phrase “carry on.”

5.) **Fo-wer:** 4. Some numbers (and other words) are pronounced differently in the navy to avoid confusion. For instance, 9 is “niner,” and 3 is broken into two syllables: “thuh-ree.” Another method of preventing confusion while communicating was dictating a specific order of words. For instance, “first section” and “third section” sound too much alike, so sailors will say “section one” and “section thuh-ree” instead.

6.) **Starboard:** The right side of the boat. Comes from the fact that boats used to be steered from the right side, making it the “steer board.”

7.) **Port:** The left side of the boat. Comes from the fact that boats used to be docked with their left side facing the port.

8.) **O-Dark-Hundred:** Nighttime. The military uses a special system of time that runs on a 24 hour clock, rather than a 12 hour one. For any time between midnight and 10am, they say 0-time (for instance, 0-900 is

9 am). When it's nighttime, and the sailor isn't being specific, it's "0-dark hundred."

9.) **After:** Behind. This is used to describe location on a ship.

10.) **Show Your True Colors:** Reveal who you are (in a negative way). Comes from the pennants and flags warships used to show their nationality. Some ships would hoist false flags to put the enemy off their guard, before switching the flags when they were close enough to attack to their "true colors."

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