

Pirates Creed of Ethics

About the year 1640 the pirates formed a kind of democratic confraternity. Their vows formed the Custom of the Brothers of the Coast, often called the Pirates Creed of Ethics. It was in fact the social contract of the expedition. It was always signed by the whole ship's company before any departure when the elected Captain and the officers prepared a charter-party. Every decision of importance was discussed, followed by a vote. Courage alone conferred distinction. a pirate ship was an extremely well-ordered floating community.

xxxxxxxxxxxxxx

1. Ye Captain shall have full command during the time of engagement, and shall have authority at all other times to conduct the ship accordingly. He who disobeys him may be punished unless the majority vote against the punishment.
2. If ye Captain's vessel is shipwrecked, the crew pledges to remain until he has possessed himself of a vessel. If the vessel is the common property of the crew, the first vessel captured shall belong to ye Captain with one share of the spoil.
3. Ye ship's surgeon shall have two hundred crowns for the maintenance of his medicine chest and he shall receive one part of the spoil.
4. Ye other officers will receive each single part, and if ye distinguish yourself, the crew will determine how much reward to be given to ye.
5. Ye spoil taken from a captured ship is to be distributed in equal portion.
6. Ye who shall be the first to signal the appearance of the vessel that is captured, shall receive 100 hundred crowns.
7. If ye lose an eye, or a hand or leg in ye said service, ye shall receive up to six slaves or six hundred crowns.
8. Ye supplies and rations are to be shared equally.
9. If ye introduce on board a woman in disguise, ye shall be punished to death.
10. If one Brother steals from another, his nose or ears are to be cut off. If he sins again, he is to be given a musket, bullets, lead and a bottle of water and marooned on an island.
11. If there is any doubt in a dispute between ye Brothers, a court of honor is to decide the verdict. If a Brother is proved in the wrong, the first time he shall be pardoned, but should he offend again, he shall be tied to a gun, and there shall receive from each of the ship's company one strike of the lash. The same punishment shall be given to ye among us, including officers, who shall get drunk, while on the ship, to the point of losing ye senses.
12. Whoever shall be placed on sentry, and upon his post shall go to sleep, shall in the first case be lashed by all the Brothers, and should he again offend, his head shall be split.
13. All ye who shall plot to desert, or having deserted shall be captured, shall have ye heads split open.
14. Quarrels between several Brothers whilst aboard ye ship shall be settled ashore with pistol and sword. He that draws first blood shall be the victor. No striking another whilst aboard ye ship.