



Caert van't Landt van
uyt de Journalen ende
der Stierluyden t'lan
A^o 1627

Bij Hessel Ger
Met Octroy van
H. M. H. de Staten G
vereenighde Neder

Dirk Hartog 1616 - 2016

LEARNING SEQUENCE 3: Fortuyn's Ghost

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LEARNING SEQUENCE 3: Fortuyn's Ghost

The picture book by Mark Greenwood, *Fortuyn's Ghost* published in 2007, was written to engage students in the exciting stories surrounding the Golden era of Dutch trade in Asia and the tragic consequences of this enterprise. The story is based on a VOC ship which was lost on route to the Spice Islands in 1724. Although the context is nearly 90 years after Hartog's adventures, the experiences of soldiers, sailors and merchants on board, the route and dangers facing the ship were similar to many other Dutch *retourschips* which were also called "homeward-bounders".

Activity 1 - Reading with the class

Reading the story with the class provides opportunities to encourage student inquiry questions. The skills of perspective and interpretation as well as the concept of empathy can be nurtured here. Encourage students to ask questions - when, what, where, why, how?

How would the crew feel as they prepared the ship to sail?

What hopes did the different groups of people on board the *Fortuyn* have for their voyage?

How did issues with food and sanitation affect the voyage?

What happened at Table Bay, where the *Fortuyn* stayed for just over a fortnight?

What fears might Captain Westrik have when the *Fortuyn* became separated from the other VOC ships?

Why were the crew less effective than they needed to be during the "rare weather conditions"?

How do the illustrations in the book reflect the growing terror confronting those on the voyage?

What were the dangers facing a wooden ship such as the *Fortuyn* in storms or cyclones as experienced at sea?

Hopefully the story will encourage the students to imaginatively engage with the experience of 17th century Dutch sailors.

Activity 2 - In search of the *Fortuyn*

An exciting extension to the story of the *Fortuyn* was announced in January 2015 when the Western Australian Museum announced that a search had begun for the wreck of the *Fortuyn*. The developments are discussed in the articles cited below.

Exploration in 2015

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-01-18/search-for-dutch-wreck-fortuyn-off-wa/6023752>

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-02-10/dutch-shipwreck-fortuyn-search-quest-continues/6082816>

<http://museum.wa.gov.au/maritime-archaeology-db/maritime-reports/investigation-possible-18th-century-dutch-shipwreck-christmas-island-or-cocos-keeli>

<http://museum.wa.gov.au/maritime-archaeology-db/sites/default/files/no. 285 fortuijn o.pdf>

<http://www.dirkhartog2016.nl/news/news/2015/02/2/search-for-dutch-voc-ship-fortuyn>

<https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/23578/Fortuijn,%20final.pdf?sequence=1>

This is actual evidence from the VOC on the Dutch East India ship *Fortuyn*

The type of ship frigate [fregat]

Its name Fortuijn [*Fortuyn*]

The year it was built 1722

Where it was built A (Amsterdam)

Its length 145 feet

Its tonnage 140 'lasten'

Its crew 225 heads

The chamber it sailed for A (Amsterdam)

The harbour it departed from Texel

The date of departure 1723 27 September

The name of the skipper Westrik

And the fate of the ship Lost on her outward-bound journey

<http://museum.wa.gov.au/maritime-archaeology-db/sites/default/files/no. 285 fortuijn o.pdf>

Activity 3 - Conditions on an East India ship

- i. This source analysis of the conditions on board a VOC trading ship during the 8 month voyage from Europe to Asia comes from a novel written about a 17th century Dutch ship that sank off the coast of Western Australia. The author has researched and written about some of the problems experienced on these Dutch *retourschips*.

Source 1 Rats on board

Down in the abandoned hold was the empire of the rats. Bloated rodents scurried between the supplies, gnawing their way into the barrels of meat and nesting in the linen trade-goods. Having learned that wooden walls [hid] huge quantities of food, they sometimes attacked the sides of the ships in error. Given time, rats could chew their way through the layers of oak planking in the hull, springing leaks that tested the pumps and kept the Batavia's sweating gang of caulkers [sailors who filled the seams between wooden plants to keep the ship water tight] busy.

Source 2 Food for the sailors

Hard tack was the worst affected. This twice-baked bread contained no fats or moisture and would keep indefinitely in normal conditions, though it was so dry it cracked teeth and had to be dunked in stew to make it edible. Damp, it was easier to eat but became a perfect larder [storeroom] for the weevils that laid their eggs within and turned each piece into a honeycomb of tunnels and chambers full of larvae. Every sailor who made the passage to the Indies learned to tap his ration of bread against the sides of the ship before he ate it, to dislodge the insect life within. Any that remained within the hard tack were eaten anyway. Novice [new] seamen learned to distinguish the flavours of the different species: weevils tasted bitter, cockroaches of sausage; maggots were unpleasantly spongy, and cold to bite into.

Extracts from M. Dash Batavia's Graveyard found at

<http://mikedash.com/books/bg/bg-extractE>

Sources of information such as these will spark the children's imagination (and understanding of change over time). Students can be encouraged to initiate questions from these two sources or teachers can start discussion with questions:

1. Describe some of your feelings if as a sailor you had to eat hard tack each day.
2. How could the rats be reduced in number?
3. What problems might so many rats cause on the East India ships?
4. What does this information tell you about life on a Dutch ship during the voyage to the Spice Islands?
5. What would be another good source to use on conditions on board a *retourschip* other than a recently written book for the Australian audience?
6. What might a sailor or the captain of the ship think about the food provided? Do you think they would be given the same food?
7. What other resources could you use to find out about the time and travels of Dirk Hartog?



Tall Ship VOC Batavia - Ghost Ship. Digital art by Ian Burt.
((CC BY 2.0) [wikimedia commons](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tall_Ship_VOC_Batavia_-_Ghost_Ship))

ii. Terms used in the picture book Fortuyn's Ghost

The vocabulary list comes from the story and can be used before reading the story and extended according to your class. This may form the basis of a word wall, a class vocabulary list or you could copy the words and their meanings and develop a word match game.

Term from the story	meaning
lucrative trade	Buying products that can be sold for a very high price. Very profitable
stern	The back part of the ship
hull	The watertight body of a ship. The waterline is where the hull meets the water.
starboard	The right hand side of the ship
guilders	The official currency used in the Netherlands from the 17th century until the Euro was introduced in 2002
mainmast	The most important mast on the sailing ship
topsails	A sail above the lower sail
maiden voyage	First trip taken by a ship
hand-log	Used to estimate the speed of a boat during the 17th century. Also called a chip-log
sand glass	A glass which uses sand to tell the time, also called an hour-glass. With a hand-log the sand glass estimated the speed of a ship.
grits	Coarsely ground maize
scurvy	A disease caused by too little vitamin C
parchment	Thin writing material made from animal skin
ratlines	Small ropes forming a rung of a rope ladder on a ship
hemp	Fiber from the stem of this plant was used to make rope

Teacher's notes have been developed for Mark Greenwood's text. These offer other specific questions and can be accessed at:

<http://www.markgreenwood.com.au/images/notes/fortuyns-ghost-notes.pdf>