What are Pirates?
edifying and truthful stories

THIS BOOK BELONGS TO

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Who are the Pirates? - A continuation of the Who are the Kings? series. - A conversation with anthropologist David Graeber about the nature of power and equality, magic, violence, and how the past relates to the present and the future.

Where did the pirates come from? How did they live before becoming pirates? What is true and what is made up in the pirate stories that became part of our collective childhoods? We made this doodle book for you to play and invent things together. On each page you'll find our questions, short notes, or advice. Write your own fascinating stories, draw over pictures and engravings, ask your own questions, and look for your own answers.

Each book in the series In Pictures and Dialogues, is about characters from children's play: they are Kings and Queens, Pirates and Ghosts, Witches and Knights.

I began writing it with my late husband, anthropologist and activist David Graeber, who remained a child until his death.
One such legend is that of a ghost ship whose haunted crew sails forever between life and death, between nothing and eternity.

**Make it a little scary, but endlessly fascinating!**

**Ghost ship**

The pirate world is made up of many superstitions and legends.

**Draw this ship and its ghostly crew members.**
Pirate Party

Empires run on prohibitions, punishments, and obligations to Kings. However, pirates were imperial outlaws and so had nothing to lose! Always on the run, they made sure to have as much fun as they could in the time that they had.

Everyone must have a good time!

Dream up some merry costumes, make up wild dances, and write some songs for them to sing.
Come on!

Let him be unbelievable, impossible and infinitely beautiful!

Pirate King

Was there ever a real Pirate King who ruled the seas?

It is said that the pirates never had such a leader, that he was a joke told by the pirates themselves.

That’s why you can draw him to look any way you want!
Describe an old pirate’s day.

What does he do after he wakes up?

But some of the tricksters managed to get old in distant villages or in remote islands where the authorities couldn’t catch them.

Pirates rarely lived to very old age

Retired Pirate

Here’s an example of the routine.

If I were a pensioner hiding from the justice of the Great Empires, I might be constantly in fear.

Perhaps long walks along the sea, talking to my parrot, would calm me down.

But you write the daily routine of a retired pirate, as you yourself might have been.

If you want to remove what I wrote, just cross it out and write your own over it:

To whom does he tell his stories?

Start in the morning and stay with him until sunset.
How to make decisions

Great Britain, which ruled the world during the time of pirates, was a huge empire ruled over by a Queen. The Queen oversaw a massive navy and each of her majesty’s royal ships was ruled by one captain. These captains were extremely harsh and cruel towards their crews, mostly made up of very poor and quite powerless young men. Everyone had to do what the Queen said and so everyone had to do what the captains ordered. No ifs, ands, or buts.

But pirate ships organized power very differently. We might call them floating republics, where big decisions were made by the entire crew. HOWEVER, THEY DID ALSO HAVE RANKS!

WRITE NEXT TO EACH CREW MEMBER WHAT YOU THINK THEY DID ON THE REAL PIRATE SHIP.

Ranks in a crew at the Pirate ships:

- Captain
- First Mate
- Second Mate
- Third Mate
- Quartermaster
- "Boatswain" (often named "Bo'sun")
- Cabin Boy
Ranks in a crew at the Pirate ships:

- Carpenter
- Master-at-Arms
- Navigator
- Gunner
- Deckhand
- Cook
- Surgeon
- Powder Monkey
- Master-at-Arms
- Striker
- Helmsman
- Cooper

Then, write what they would do on a pirate ship with you as their captain.
Dividing the Treasure

Here is some loot plundered by the pirates after a successful raid.

NOW DIVIDE THE TREASURE FAIRLY AMONG YOUR CREW LET’S SAY 20 PEOPLE

HOW MUCH GOES TO:

- Those who lost an arm, an eye, or a leg
- The bravest pirates who rushed first into the attack
- The captain of the pirate ship
- To the families of those who died in the battle
- The Quartermaster

Now divide the treasure fairly among your crew — let’s say 20 people.
Write a pirate story here about the Great Mighty Pirate Kingdom on the island of Madagascar.

The pirates had no nation of their own, no palaces, and no armies, but they could spread gossip, stir up intrigue, set up pranks, and invent elaborate stories—like the one of their great pirate king in his far-away island castle fortified by a big pirate army.

They were so good at telling less-than-true stories that real kings often took them seriously and made deals with them rather than incur the wrath of the fabled Pirate King.
During battles, pirates were both fierce and frightening. To make themselves appear even scarier, they wore masks, painted their faces, wore fangs, and made a huge racket by rattling and banging musical instruments.

**Pirates in battle**

During battles, pirates were both fierce and frightening.
Pirate Flag

Other ship captains feared the pirates’ black Jolly Roger flag with its white skull and crossbones. But it wasn’t a symbol saying “we’ll kill you all,” but rather one that exclaimed of its crew “we’re already dead and thus afraid of nothing.” Most pirates weren’t in the business for the murder.

Most of the time, they preferred to simply scare other ship captains into handing over everything they had without bloodshed.

You are the captain of the ship sailing under the Jolly Roger flag. Soon, you will be raiding an enemy ship. Your rivals may be wealthy merchants, or slave raiders, or ships, bringing treasure from the New World to the royal vaults of Spain, England, or Holland.

Draw the flags of these enemy ships.

Let these flags tell the tale of people who buy and sell human beings or transport looted gold to European kings.
And this is a fight!

Draw the battle!
Feast!

Plundering is hungry work

When pirates could sit down to eat, they could really eat.
Books about *Pirates*

There are a lot of pirate books.

WRITE THEIR TITLES AND DRAW WHAT YOU WANT ON THE COVERS.
So different...

Pirate crews consisted of people from many different backgrounds and from countries all over the world. There were Asian pirates, European pirates, African pirates, and even Native American pirates!

Imagine your own pirate crew here.

Maybe yours will have martians, robots, ghosts, or even some elves in it.
Pirates were famous for hiding treasure.

Here is a map of an uninhabited island in the Caribbean.

Mark on it where you would hide your treasure so that your friend can find it for you later.
AND THE LAST ONE IS YOURS! YOU JUST FINISHED WRITING AND DRAWING IT.
Each book in the series «In Pictures and Dialogues,» is about characters from children’s play: they are Kings and Queens, Pirates and Ghosts, Witches and Knights.

I began writing it with my late husband, anthropologist and activist David Graeber, who remained a child until his death.

This doodle book is about pirates, adventure, violence, magic, and freedom.

Now it’s filled with your drawings and stories, so it became our shared book and game.

Thank you, dear co-author!