

The Barbary Pirate Crisis: Debate and Diplomacy on the High Seas

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Individual Website

Junior Division

486 Words

When I began working on NHD this year, I struggled to find a good topic until I looked at this year's theme book where I saw this topic. I chose the Barbary Pirate Crisis because it's a unique and obscure topic that would interest people. I also chose it because I enjoy learning about and playing games about pirates. This topic connects well with this year's theme: the United States was making treaties and being diplomatic with the pirates while also debating among themselves about how to solve the problem. Last year I created an individual website, and I decided to do the same this year.

I began my research by looking up sources connected to the Barbary pirates and their wars with the U.S. I found secondary sources that helped me understand the timeline of events and how they influenced international diplomacy. One site had an image of a passport used during the time, which has been a valuable source. Because of the time period of my topic, the Library of Congress and Chronicling America weren't as useful as I had hoped.

I started my project by setting up the links at the top. I experimented with themes, before settling on a dramatic painting of the burning USS Philadelphia to pull viewers into the site. When I realized you couldn't see the background image very well with text, I made some of the boxes transparent and added other boxes so you could scroll to the bottom and see the full image.

After I received feedback from the regional contest, I made several revisions. I edited sentences on the significance page to improve it and changed paragraphs about the First Barbary War to greater emphasize Thomas Jefferson's role in the topic. I added a sea shanty that describes the Barbary pirates, as well as a firsthand account from the Second Barbary War to a new page, "Tales From the High Seas." After reading feedback from the state contest, I realized there were only a few revisions to be made. Apart from minor fixes, I found a recording of the sea shanty instead of a YouTube video, therefore fixing an accidental rule break I had made. I also added captions to this page.

This topic was an important event in U.S history, yet I had never heard of it. The countries known as the Barbary States sent pirates to the Mediterranean with the purpose of capturing merchant ships and their cargo. Some of these ships belonged to the recently formed U.S. The new nation first tried diplomacy, signing treaties with the Barbary States, and issuing passports. As a result, the pirates would not capture American passengers and vessels. Thomas Jefferson created the first American navy to battle the pirates after treaty payments became too expensive. The U.S fought two wars against the Barbary States and won both. After these events, America's welfare and security were greatly improved.