

Exploring the U.S. Life-Saving Service 1878-1915

Coastal Search and Rescue

INTRODUCTION FOR TEACHERS

In the midst of a violent winter storm, most people huddle in the safety of their homes. Not my great-grandfather Ernest “Skipper” Eldredge. In his day, as a part of a seven-man crew, he helped row a wooden surfboat over mountainous breakers into the ocean to rescue crew and passengers on sinking ships. And he did that for fifteen years.

Rescuers, like Skipper Eldredge, were part of the U.S. Life-Saving Service, a government organization that existed between 1878 and 1915. During that time, thousands of ships sailed along the U.S. coasts with cargo, but because of storms, lack of navigational aids, and unreliable communication, many ships ran aground. The purpose of the U.S. Life-Saving Service was to save lives. They were known as *storm warriors*, as author Joseph Lincoln called them, *angels in oilskins*.

Purpose

The purpose of this book is to generate interest in the U.S. Life-Saving Service and in the time period 1878-1915 while fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork skills within a framework of creative activities.

Questions arise: Who were these life-savers? How did they live and interact in remote locations? What was teamwork like back then? How did they cope with danger? What can we learn from them?

Workshops

Each of the multi-discipline workshops has a different focus. Some workshops emphasize how men lived and worked together at the station. Another workshop explores the character of the life-savers, while two others emphasize survival skills necessary for today. There is a variety of topics to choose from for students in grades 4-12.

Consult the Overview Chart (page 7) for specific skill elements and the Glossary (page 113) for support.

Getting Started

Before delving into individual workshops, begin with the “Introductory Workshop” (page 8) for an overview of the U.S. Life-Saving Service.



Lifeboat drill

Columbia River Maritime Museum

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Introductory Workshop

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Choose an Art Project
 Perform Music

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Overview Chart

	Activities/Games	Art	Cooking	Drama/Dance	Music/Rhythm	Stories/Poetry	Video/Internet	Critical Thinking	Problem-Solving	Group Work
Introductory Workshop	●			●		●	●	●		●
Molasses and Gingerbread	●		●			●	●			●
Hunting, Fishing, and Eating	●	●								●
Skunk Stories	●	●				●		●		●
Camaraderie and Drama	●	●	●	●				●		●
Ships and Signals	●					●	●			●
Beach Patrol	●			●	●		●	●		●
Rescues with Boats	●	●			●		●	●	●	●
Rescue Scenarios: Live or Die	●			●	●		●	●		●
“The Survivor” and Medicine Chest	●	●	●	●			●			●
The Polite Surfman	●		●	●	●		●			●
The Character of Men	●			●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Prepare to Stay Alive	●				●	●	●	●	●	●
Thrown into Cold Water	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Choose an Art Project	●	●			●	●	●	●	●	●
Perform Music	●			●	●	●				●
Research Areas	●	●	●			●	●	●	●	●

Unit 1: Life at the Station House



Grades: 8-12

Camaraderie and Drama

Objective: To get a feel for what it was like to live as a part of a small group of men who worked together in an isolated location.

Materials: Name tags, sausage-like pillow, 18-slot egg carton, cast iron fry-pan, copies of the skit "The Bird We Didn't Eat" with parts highlighted (pages 34-38), shields and ball (paint supplies) for game, food sample prepared from Appendix 2 (page 111).



Photo Cards for Students

Colin

PART 1: Introduction – "The Item" Activity

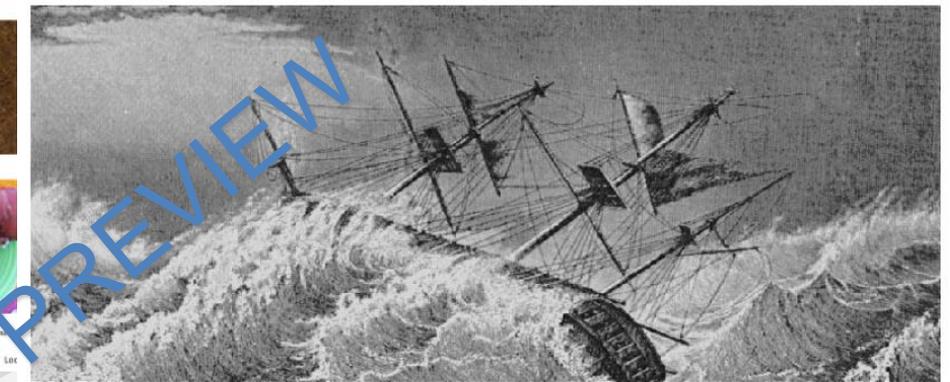
Directions: Begin with a drama improvisation warm-up with various items, such as kitchen tools from the late 1800s. Players should sit in a circle in chairs or on the floor.

- Show the group this pillow, but ask if it could be something else. Turn it on its side and "blow into it." Hopefully, students will guess it's a recorder. Pass the pillow to the next student. Each student should act out something else it could be so others can guess. If someone doesn't have an idea, he or she can say "pass." Keep it moving around the circle. (Ideas: candy, bow tie, sword, baseball bat.)
- The next item is a large egg carton. Pass this around. (Ideas: satellite, Frisbee, earring holder.)



Exploring the U.S. Life-Saving Service

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The Bird We Didn't Eat

Rebecca Locklear

Scene 1 In the entryway of the life-saving station in November at 4:00 p.m.

SKIPPER1: (comes in through front door from walking a long shift with a howling wind behind him, starts to take off hat, coat to put on hook, sees RALPH) That's it for that watch, Ralph. Looks like the wind is shiftin'.

RALPH4: (walking to entryway to go on his four-hour patrol duty shift, puts on coat and hat) Aye-yuh. I'm ready for my four hours. See anything?

CHESTER3: (has on coat, hat, boots, walks over and waits by door)

SKIPPER1: Quiet as a mouse out there. Just eight passin' vessels.

RALPH4: Back at eight. (exits outside with CHESTER to begin the four-hour "sunset watch" shift, walking in opposite directions; to CHESTER) Wind is sure howlin'.

SKIPPER1: (to BEN who is walking through, indicating kitchen which has kerosene lamp) I smell somethin' in there, Ben. Doesn't smell like my wife's cookin' though. (smiles, takes off boots) Just two more days 'til my liberty day (day off). I can taste the apple pie Hetty will fix. Who's doin' supper?

BEN6: That would be Jim. He went out and caught somethin'. Some bird.

KEEPER: (walks by SKIPPER and BEN, to mess room, sits)

SKIPPER1: (to BEN) It's his first time to cook, eh?

Unit 2: Working Together at the Station



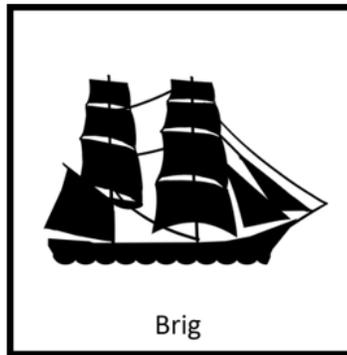
Surfmen drag a surfboat to the beach.

been called a "pathless desert in the night." It did get frostbite. Fortunately, there was almen returned to the station.

Beach Patrol

Sunset watch. * It's cold and clear.
Grab the flares and outer gear.
Along the beach, lamp in hand,
Look for ships upon the sand.

Schooner sails too close to beach.
Warn her off! * Now out of reach.
Stop inside the little shack. *
Give the taken * head on back.



Brig

The brig has two square-rigged masts and a fore-and-aft sail on the mainmast. She is a square-rigger.



Barkentine

A barkentine has three or more masts. The fore-mast is the only one square-rigged and because of that, it required fewer crew members to sail it.

PART 4: Communication

Ships on the East Coast stayed close to the shore. Surfmen learned how to communicate with them by signaling with flags. (This was before the time of radio transmissions.)

Question: What do you think the surfmen and crew on passing ships communicated with each other? (Answer: Weather predictions, location of the station (latitude/longitude), or ship damage.)

Wig-Wag Flag Activity

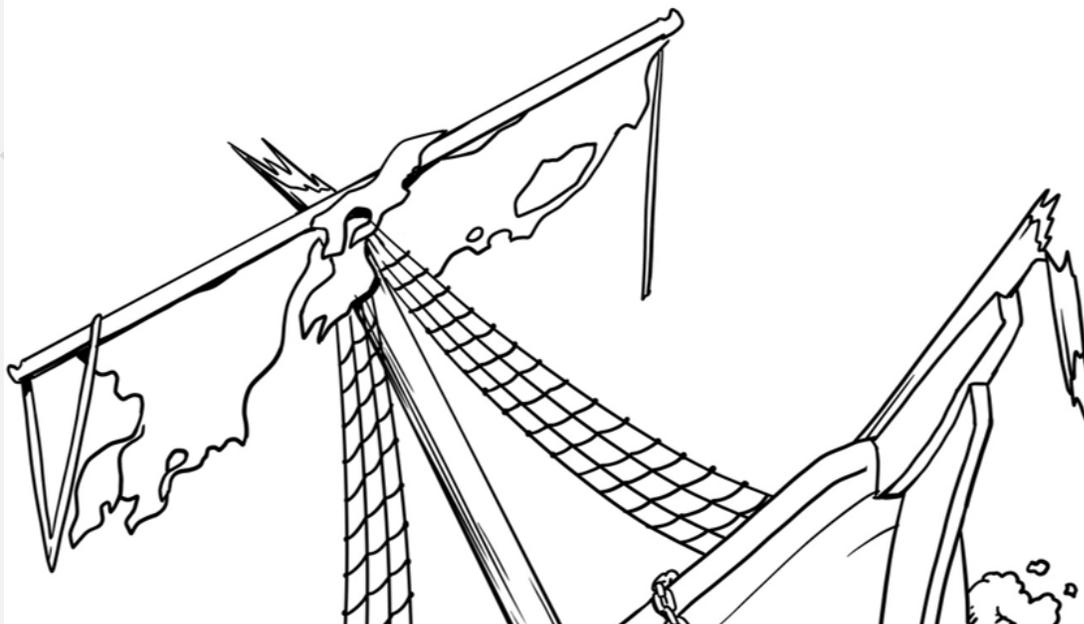
Materials: Two flags for each team of students: one white and one red.

One kind of signaling was called wig-wag. This required a team of four people. One surfman held a 3-foot square red flag on a pole and another surfman had a white flag. A



Surfboat Rescues 1878-1915

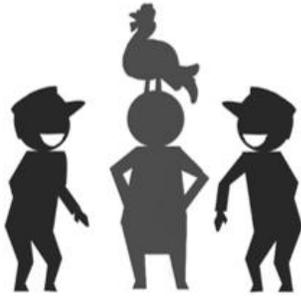
1. In a storm, why not drop the anchor away from shore so the ship won't run aground?
2. Why didn't the ship's crew abandon the ship in a lifeboat?
3. How many men rowed a surfboat?
4. How dangerous was it for the keeper to stand in the stern and steer?
5. Did the life-savers wear life jackets?
6. How could the men rowing see in the dark?
7. How far could surfmen row a boat?



Unit 3: The Culture of Character



Character Traits



1 _____



2 _____



3 _____



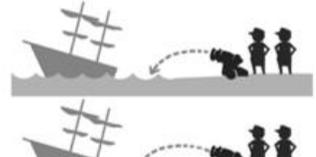
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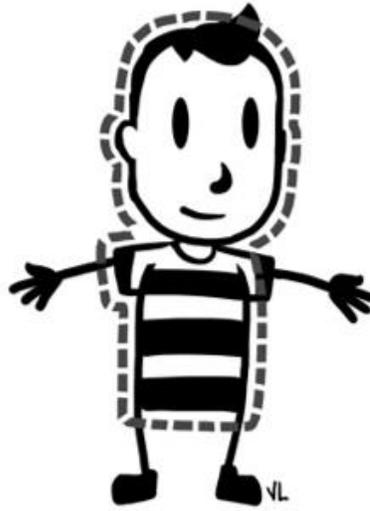
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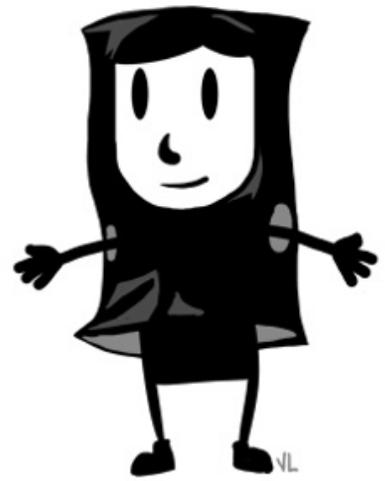
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Unit 4: Relevance Today

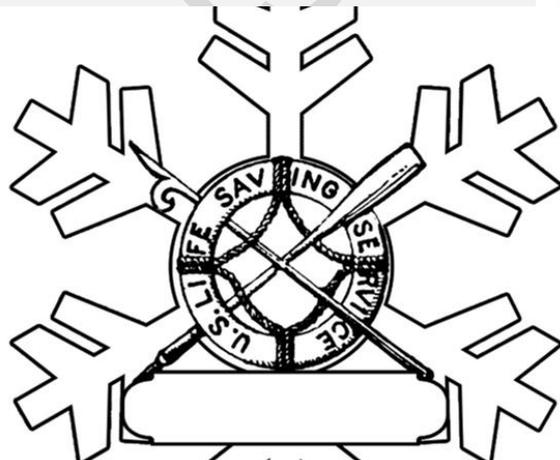


Warm this part of the body.

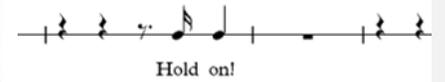
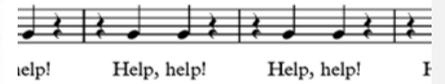
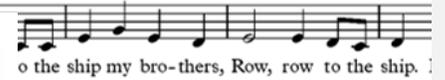
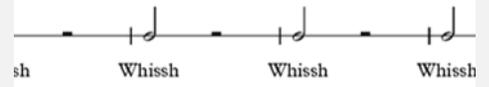


Emily puts on a black plastic bag, pulling part of it over her head. Then she puts

Expanding the Life-Saving Vision through the Arts



To the Ship!





Rebecca Locklear (LEFT) answers questions after giving a family workshop at Old Harbor Life-Saving Station (RIGHT), Cape Cod, MA.

REVIEWS



“This is such a *niche* product, but it's a gem of a find. I like that *Exploring the U.S. Life-Saving Service* is targeted to older students, since a lot of times cool unit studies are made for elementary students. The content is really unlike anything you will find elsewhere.” *Jenn L., Educator*

“We used clues to guess various sea creatures the men ate, laughed at true stories, identified types of ships by their silhouettes, translated Morse Code, used critical thinking to figure out if rescues were successful in true scenarios of the past, created our own citrus smelling salts, practiced polite manners, learned how to find the good in poor situations, and partook in other interesting activities.

There are additional sections in the book to further your study. There are projects involving art and music; research ideas that include archaeology, Coston Flares, rescue devices, ships and safety, social issues, and much more; information on why ships sink, and recipes for food sampling of the time. There is also a glossary with 35 sea terms with brief descriptions.” *Erika L, Educator*

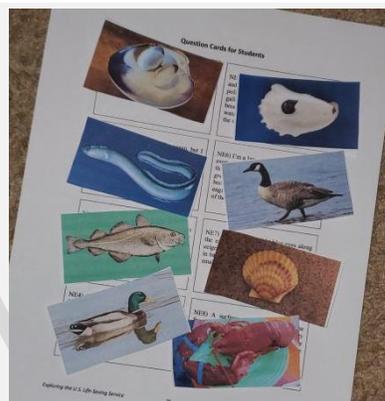


“This curriculum is well-researched, beautifully illustrated, and well-written.” *Katie S., Educator*

“If you have students who are outdoor enthusiasts, love to learn about survival skills, enjoy hiking or boating, or just love to learn about unique pieces of history, this unit study from Rebecca Locklear is a great fit!

Not only are many activities included, but many types of learning styles and interests are addressed. *This book will appeal to your logical thinkers, your artists, your actors, your wiggly learners, your book learners, and everything in between.* It provides for a lot of collaborative learning.

The hands-on activities include making gingerbread in a jar, performing a skit (the script is included in this curriculum), playing games, designing and creating an anchor, making smelling salts, role playing, completing a cold water experiment, and more.” *Katie D., Educator*



“One of the biggest things I appreciated about this unit study was that the human element was emphasized: character qualities, work ethic, strength of will and bravery. All these aspects were pointed out numerous times in various ways to help us understand what it really took to be part of this service.” *Annette V., Educator*



“I have quickly become a fan of Rebecca Locklear, and I’ll definitely be adding more of her books to our studies.

I’ll tell you something...this was not a subject I would have naturally gravitated to on my own. My attitude turned around as I began scrolling through the pages. It was the stories that first snagged my attention. I love learning about the experience of people. For me, it humanizes the material.

There are plenty of fantastic art projects – whether designing a watercolor collage, painting a beautiful design on smooth rocks, or creating a poem. There is an activity for every student. It’s a wonderful study!” *Laurie G., Educator*

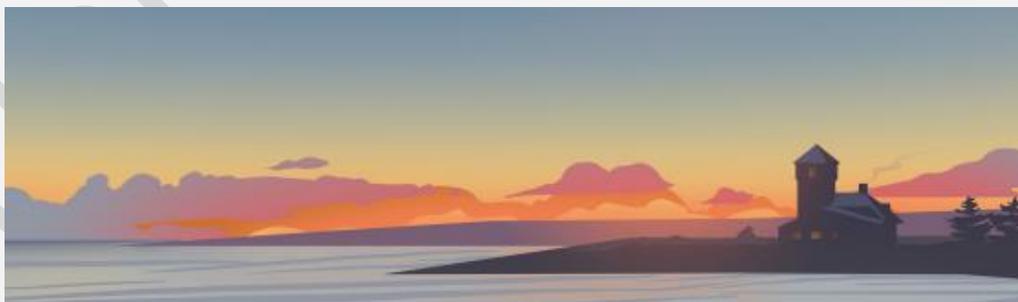
Exploring the U.S. Life-Saving Service 1878-1915



Be inspired by remarkable men who often, in the midst of horrific weather conditions, gave a lifeline to strangers desperately needing to be rescued on the sea.

R. Locklear, Author

Print copies available on Amazon



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