



The Mardi Gras Shipwreck
NewsDepth, Thursday March 19, 2009
Classroom Activities
Additional Multi Media Resources

Overview:

Nearly 200 years ago, a ship sank in the Gulf of Mexico, about 40 miles off Louisiana's coast. It remained undiscovered on the seabed, about 4,000 feet below the surface, until 2002, when a crew happened upon the wreckage while checking out a pipeline. Where the wreckage came from and what it was doing there when it sank into the Gulf has been a mystery. But after 6 years of intensive investigation, this mystery may soon be solved. Researchers now think the ship sank off the Louisiana coast during the War of 1812 and it may have been a gunrunner or maybe even a pirate ship. Students will learn about the process of identifying sunken vessels and investigating the history of shipwrecks and their cargo.

Grade Level: 7-8

Subjects : Social Studies and Language Arts

Standards:

Students will write, speak, and listen effectively in a range of formal and informal situations.

1. Recall and understand facts and information.

<http://nautarch.tamu.edu/mardigras/>

2. Read and view a variety of texts in order to explore issues, values and personal experiences.

3. Students will select events and show relationships among events.



Classroom Activities:

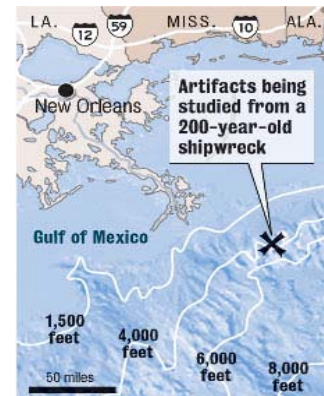
1. Activity #1 Memory Quiz (5- 10 minutes)

One of the NewsDepth features this week is about a shipwreck that has been found, investigated, and identified as a possible gunrunner or pirate ship. Answer the following questions about that finding.

1. How many years ago is it estimated that the ship sank? **200**
2. What war is the ship thought to have been from? **The War of 1812**
3. At the base of what river was it found? **The Mississippi River**
4. It is about 40 miles off the coast of what state? **Louisiana**
5. How far beneath the surface of the ocean was it discovered? **About 4,000 feet.**
6. What was the original name given to the ship wreck? **Mardi Gras**
7. Based on some of the findings, what is the new name being given to this ship?
Rapid
8. How many artifacts were recovered? **500**
9. These artifacts will be part of an exhibit about what battle? **The Battle of New Orleans.**
10. On a United States map, identify where the shipwreck was discovered.

Source for map:

http://www.nola.com/news/index.ssf/2009/03/mysterious_shipwreck_unearthed.html



2. Activity #2 Discover the Mardi Gras

<http://www.flpublicarchaeology.org/mardigras/> Mardi Gras Shipwreck Official Website

- Visit this website where you will find everything you need to know about the history of the salvage project, the research plan implemented by the team from Texas A&M University, pictures and videos, etc.
- There is a Mardi Gras Shipwreck Project Animation that can be accessed from the Video Page. It will be updated regularly for the coming months. After viewing, a classroom discussion could take place or a research activity could be developed. Questions about what the ROV was and why it was an essential part of the project would be a good start.

3. Activity #3 A Rapid Study of the “Rapid”

The Shipwreck discovered 40 miles from the mouth of the Mississippi is now speculated to be a ship named Rapid, an American Privateer, which sank in November 1813 as she tried to outrun a British Warship during The War of 1812. “This little vessel came out to sea, and was spotted by a British warship. The warship gave chase, the little vessel fled, got into heavy seas, and rolled over and sank when she was hit by a rogue wave. The crew was rescued.”

<http://www.flpublicarchaeology.org/mardigras/videos/> Video clip two will provide some insight for this activity.

- **Role Play:** Divide students into two groups and imagine that they were part of the crew of the Rapid. Assign duties for each crew member and have them make up a name for their character. For each character, ask them to describe their physical appearance, tell why they were on board the ship, and what their responsibilities were.
 - **Group 1** Brainstorm a rough dialogue and act out a scenario that could have taken place the afternoon before the storm. Have the scene end right before the ship was hit by the wave.
 - **Group 2** Act out a scenario that could have taken place after they were rescued from the ship. Have each student describe their feelings during the storm and tell whether or not they thought they would survive and describe how they were rescued (answers could all vary)
- **Identify the artifact:** This is the list of some of the artifacts found board the shipwreck: telescope, pottery, French bottles, swords, English mustard jars, hourglasses, a cast-iron stove and a Scottish cannon, sand clock, stoneware jugs, a coin dated 1810.
 - Discuss first how the artifacts were brought to the surface. Why couldn't human divers be used? At 4,000 feet it was the deepest recovery effort ever in the Gulf of Mexico. Because of the tremendous water pressure that in water that deep, a remote operating vehicle was used – ROV for the recovery.
 - Have each student take ownership of one artifact. They are the person who used or owned it. They are to draw a picture what it originally may have looked like and write a one paragraph description of what it looked like and an explanation of why it was on board the ship. These can be presented orally to the class upon completion.
 - As an art extension activity, students could also draw a picture of the “Mardi Gras” or “Rapid”.

Additional Resources

<http://www.flpublicarchaeology.org/mardigras/> Mardi Gras Shipwreck Official Website

<http://school.discoveryeducation.com/lessonplans/programs/underwaterforensics/>

A lesson where students will discover how a team of scientists uncover the facts about a shipwreck; describe the roles of scientists and technicians on an underwater forensics team; research a shipwreck; and demonstrate understanding of why such incidents occur.

http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/fahan_mi_shipwrecks/activities/activities.html

Shipwrecks Sealers and Scientists Macquarie Island – even though these activities refer to different shipwrecks, they can still be adjusted to fit the Mardi Gras shipwreck.

<http://reachoutmichigan.org/funexperiments/agesubject/lessons/newton/sunken.html>

Once again, this is a lesson geared for a sunken slave ship, but can easily be adapted for a lesson about any shipwreck.

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/lessons/18/g68/ballardsleuthing.html>

National Geographic - Sleuthing for a lost ship lesson

<http://score.rims.k12.ca.us/activity/bubbles/>

A webquest entitled "Take Only Photos and Leave Only Bubbles"