

USS *Constitution* vs HMS *Java*

Classroom Activities

1. Letters written by sailors to their loved ones are a good primary source of information about sailors' emotions during battle. Ask students to read the "Dear Sara Letter" by Seaman Michael Clear and the Capt. Marshall letter attached to this annotated scene. Then, write a response paper that compares and contrasts the experiences of the American and British sides of the battle.
2. Newspaper articles spread the news of the victory over *Java* and recounted stories of the battle to the public. Ask students to read the reports attached to this annotated scene and then find modern reports on battles that America is fighting today. How has this type of reporting changed and how is it very much the same?
3. During the battle against *Java*, the British shot away *Constitution's* steering wheel, rendering it unusable. Without it, the ship could not turn. Bainbridge ordered his men to rig a temporary helm deep down in the ship, and he relayed messages to steer the ship through the rest of the battle. This was done by having men stationed in a line and repeating the messages all the way down, much like a game of telephone. Play a game of telephone stretched over a long distance, such as a gym or a playing field. Try it two different ways: in the first way, play the traditional game of telephone where the instructions are given by whispering from one person to the next; in the second version, say the instruction out loud and have the receiver repeat the message before turning around and repeating it to the next person in line (so each person says it twice, once to confirm the correct message, and once to relay it). Which method worked best? Which do you think Navy sailors chose to use in this instance and why? The message was repeated for confirmation and then passed on to the next person in order to ensure that the correct instructions were being followed in a dangerous time.
4. Study the battle diagram and the painting depicting the battle and ask students to compare them to those of the other two battles *Constitution* fought in the War of 1812. How are they the same? How do they differ? Fill out the compare and contrast chart in Appendix 1.

Appendix 1

Compare and Contrast *Constitution's* Battles in the War of 1812

	Major Turning Points or Interesting Facts	American Captain	Length of Battle	Damage done to British Ship (masts, etc)	Battle Outcome
USS <i>Constitution</i> vs HMS <i>Guerriere</i>					
USS <i>Constitution</i> vs HMS <i>Java</i>					
USS <i>Constitution</i> vs HMS <i>Cyane</i> and HMS <i>Levant</i>					