

28th April

Memory verse

If we confess our sins **he is faithful and just** to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. I John 1:9.

Today is the birthdate of William Mompesson (1639-1709), rector of Eyam in Derbyshire. In cooperation with Thomas Stanley, minister of the persecuted dissenting congregation in the village, he persuaded the villagers to “self-isolate” the entire community in 1666 to prevent the spread of the plague which arrived there in a bale of cloth from London. The village remained isolated during the plague outbreak which stopped it spreading to the surrounding areas. This is a story which really resonates for those of us who lived through the “pandemic” restrictions, although Covid 19 is definitely far less serious than bubonic plague! I have put the whole story as retold by Charlotte Mary Yonge in an Optional Resources file, adapting it slightly to make it shorter and also to include what little is known about Mr Stanley. Miss Yonge's style is good for reading aloud and any unusual words can be explained as you go along for younger children.

Something to make¹

The beautiful flower pictures made in Derbyshire villages such as Eyam can be imitated at home. If you have a garden where there are flowers – or even weeds – you can do this using petals, although you will also need something such as damp (*not* soaking wet) sand into which to press them.

Spread some damp sand on a dinner plate and smooth the surface. Mark out with a pointed tool (such as a Biro with the cap on) a *very simple* shape such as a fish or a house. Now collect a variety of coloured flowers. Include some leaves to give you a green colour. Large flowers such as dandelions can be pulled apart and other flowers will need to be reduced to individual petals. Now fill in the outlines of your picture with a mosaic of petals. Press them in carefully. You might choose the colour of which you have the most petals for the background. Dandelion fragments would make a superb goldfish! The sand will help your flowers stay fresh but the picture will not last long so, if you can, take a photo of your finished creation.

If no flowers are available or you want to make something more long lasting, a similar mosaic effect can be achieved by using very small torn pieces of coloured paper. You don't have to have special coloured paper for this, old greetings cards, pictures from old colour magazines even used cardboard food packaging can be torn up for this purpose. Again you will need to make a simple shape but this time on paper or cardboard. Sort your torn paper by colour and fill in the outlines, gluing down each piece carefully. You may even be able to achieve a shading effect by grading the colours.



¹ Image: By User:WhaleyTim, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=43015189>

Something to Sing

It was once thought that the nursery rhyme *Ring a Roses* related to the plague, describing the symptoms and ending with death (fall down). This theory is now discarded but nevertheless it is a good excuse to sing the rhyme with younger children and of course, do the ring dance with a hearty falling down at the end.



Two Sea Stories²

On **April 28th** 1655 one of the most remarkable English heroes of the sea, General-at-Sea³ Robert Blake (1598-1657) beat the North African pirate fleet. In those days the Barbary Corsairs – pirates from North Africa – were a constant menace. They operated mainly in the Mediterranean and their main objective was to capture people who could be sold as slaves. Slavery was practised throughout the Islamic Ottoman (Turkish) Empire which stretched from Hungary to Egypt and on to Algeria at this period and there was a ready market for slaves. The pirates raided the coast of the Mediterranean and sometimes ventured as far as Britain as well as preying on our merchant ships when they were out a sea. Blake was sent by Oliver Cromwell with fifteen ships to demand compensation for attacks on Commonwealth shipping. The Dey (Ottoman ruler) of Tunisia refused to pay and so Blake's ships bombarded the fort at Porto Farina in Tunisia. Blake's gunners destroyed the shore batteries in an operation that was the first incidence of shore-based defences being destroyed by naval guns. There was a fleet of Barbary pirates in the harbour and they destroyed that too.

It was Blake who, during the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell, made the English the strongest naval power in the world. Blake's captains respected and obeyed him – by no means a given at this time in naval history. Not only that, he did not inflict inhumane punishments on his ordinary sailors either. Blake was involved in the institution of the first naval Courts Martial to give sailors some sort of fair trail for offences committed at sea. In all this we can see the discipline and humanity of the Commonwealth period being worked out in practice. Blake was a Christian and his personal Christian principles enabled him to achieve victories without brutality or unfairness to his own men. No wonder his captains did what he told them! “I do not reckon myself equal to Blake,” wrote Admiral Nelson.

The picture below shows Blake's flagship at another of his famous victories at Santa Cruz de Tenerife where he destroyed the Spanish treasure fleet.



² Image of Kon Tiki By Bahnfreund - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=90031793>

³ This was his title at the time, although sometimes now he is referred to as Admiral Blake.

On 28th April 1947 the raft *Kon-Tiki* set sail from Peru to Polynesia. Norwegian Thor Heyerdahl and his crew of five had made the vessel out of nine balsa wood logs with a cabin of matting in imitation of native Peruvian craft. The voyage proved that it was possible that people from South America could have settled Polynesia in ancient times. The prevailing wind and ocean current carried the raft at such a speed that the voyage to Polynesia took only 101 days. There were many adventures en route, with storms, whales, sharks, wireless and the pet parrot. Once a crew member was nearly lost as he went swimming in the sea and could not keep up with the raft. He quickly fell so far behind that a lifebelt thrown could not reach him. A brave crew member launched the rubber dingy on a line, dragged the swimmer on board and they were hauled back to the raft. Food was usually very fishy (shark was nice they said – like haddock) and they even tried eating plankton. Most of them enjoyed this saying it was tasty and nourishing, although one of the crew found it so horrible he could not face it.

Heyerdal's ideas have now become discredited. It has been proved by the voyage of the Hawaiian canoe *Hōkūleʻa* to Tahiti in 1976 that traditional Hawaiian navigation skills are more than a match for the journey from Hawaii to Tahiti in Polynesia. But the Kon Tiki trip remains an inspiring adventure. It is also another example of the cheerful survival of an isolated group under difficult circumstances. The picture below shows the remains of the Kon Tiki, now in a museum in Oslo. I suspect that much reconstruction has gone into the exhibit but it still gives an idea of conditions on board.



Map work

You can use a map or globe to find the places mentioned in the story about General-at-Sea Blake. The voyage of the Kon Tiki is fascinating to chart on the globe. If you find the distance you can work out the average speed of the Kon Tiki which made its journey non-stop day and night. Think what you would take with you if you were going on board the Kon Tiki and make a list.

A game to make

You can only make this game if you can find a magnet to use but I have included it because many of you will be able to borrow, say a fridge magnet, for the purpose. Thor Heyerdal and his five friends depended on catching fish to eat. Here is a fish-catching game that is easy to make. You will need a small squareish cardboard box, some card scraps, some paperclips, some string, a magnet and something to make into the pole of a fishing rod such as a chop stick, wooden scower or even a wooden spoon used the “wrong” way round!

Decorate the outside of your cardboard box with pictures of fish under water, shells, seaweed etc. Remove and discard the lid of the box. Cut a selection of fish shapes from the card scraps and decorate them appropriately. Remember fish come in all sorts of different shapes and sizes so make them as varied as you can. On the back of each fish write a number from one to ten. This will be the score you achieve if you catch this particular fish. You could link the score to the usefulness of the fish – for example a tasty haddock would score more than an inedible starfish! Attach a paper clip to each fish. Now for the rod. You will need to attach a short string to whatever you found to make your pole. Sellotape would probably work. Now attach the magnet to the other end of the string, again try sellotape. Put the fish into the box in such a way that the numbers are not visible. Now you can dangle your fishing line into the box and try for a catch! Take it in turns and see who scores most.