

Whom Do I Work With...If Anyone?

(The History Day Ship-on-the Sea Analogy)

Next week you will begin a “journey” in History. This “journey” is called National History Day. It is more than a one-day journey, but one that will last a minimum of 10 weeks. Each of you, in a sense, is a “ship” on this journey. Before you leave the harbor on January 11th you need to determine what will accompany your “ship” for 10 weeks.

Some of you will make good choices and bring extra “sails” for your ship. These “sails” are good partners you choose to work with (2-5 people make up any group project). “Sails” are great to have because they represent quality people who will work hard and share the load in a way that really makes your ship faster, more efficient, and enjoyable to travel on.

Others of you will make poor choices and instead of choosing “sails” to bring along, you will carry “anchors.” These “anchors” represent people who oftentimes choose to be:

- 1) Lazy and don’t help much, or...
- 2) Comedians who provide a lot of laughs but little effort, or...
- 3) Are simply looking for you to ‘carry’ them through the project.

These “anchors” take up room and slow your ship down. In fact “anchors” can sink your “ship” and then you will not get your History Day project in on time...if ever! (Then you might have to do a “salvage job” known as Summer School!). Also, be very careful of “anchors” because they sometime beg to come on board ship, but once you are out to sea they end up holding you back. Some “anchors” can magically turn into “sails” on the trip if they are on a quality ship, but that risk is yours to take. You may offend an “anchor” by leaving him/her behind, but it is oftentimes the best decision to make. Stand firm, mates!!!

“So, I should always avoid “anchors” and gather “sails” right?” Well, there is one more option; you can sail alone. Sometimes a ship’s “sails” can get tangled and not work very well together. If you decide to sail alone there is only one sail and it sails the boat very easily. It is not complicated and there are few distractions to impede your progress. A person who works alone on History Day is only accountable to themselves, so there is no confusion at all. This person knows that the project’s success or failure is totally up to him/her. There is no one else to blame! Sailing alone can be very rewarding and is a very fine means of travel.

I hope you have enjoyed this analogy, and yet at the same time I have found that picking the right people (or choosing working alone) is one of the key elements in managing a quality History Day project. It is one of the first decisions you must make, and it is certainly one of the BIGGEST!!! You will be able to choose your group, but in the end you “sail” or “sink” together. Once you leave the “harbor” on January 4th all your “sails” or “anchors” will be on board for the entire trip - - and you can not “throw them over the side” once you are underway (in other words NO SWITCHING GROUPS, Period!).

Bon Voyage & Smooth Sailing on your History Day journey!

By signing this document I verify that I have read and understand this analogy.

Student Signature _____

Date: _____

History Day Self Questioning

(Confidential)

1. I would rather work: (circle one)
Why?

Alone

In a group

2. What roles do I usually play in a group? (Describe two or more. Some examples could be Motivator, Peacemaker, Organizer, Hard worker, Creativity specialist, Occasional slacker, Technology specialist, Fun coordinator, Finisher, and more!)

3. What type of people like to work with me?

4. What type of people do I like to work with? (Be sure to explain why!)

5. What qualities make someone a good group member? (List at least 5.)

6. What traits in people do I want to avoid when picking my partners? (List at least 3.)

7. Name some people in this class that you might consider working with for History Day. (Please give the last names too.)

8. Name anyone in this class you know you should not work with at all.