

Isabella Thomas

Honors Global Studies

Mr. Wimmer

April 26th, 2021

Somali pirates have a Robin Hood complex

When you think of pirates, the first thing that comes to mind are pirates who are swashbuckling, dueling, golden-toothed and maybe even Johnny Depp. However, true pirates are trying to protect their community from foreign ships that are taking advantage of their natural resources. They are also trying to give back to their community, and support charities and local businesses. Not to mention they are not as violent and dangerous as one may think. Pirates are not as villainous as people perceive them to be, as they are simply trying to protect their community, give back and are not purposefully harming people.

In Somalia, they have a large population of fish, and some have even called it a gold mine of sorts (Jirdeh). Many pirates try to protect these waters because they are so valuable. In fact, many pirates say that the reason that they have turned to piracy is because they want to take taxes from the foreign companies that are stealing fish off of their shores (Bahadur). A pirate named Boyah says that he turned to piracy after the foreign fishing reefs continued to be destroyed when he was working as a lobster diver, so he decided to take action and he and his crew captured three foreign fishing vessels and held them for a 800,000 dollar ransom (Bahadur). In similar fashion, in the book *The Desert And The Sea* by Michael Scott Moore, Michael meets a real pirate who goes by the name of Mustaf Mohammed Sheikh. Ashwin (a documentary filmmaker)

and Michael interview him and Mustaf claims that white people are attacking Somalia by dumping poison on their shores. “As soon as they stop leaving poison on our own beaches and taking fish from our seas, we will stop hijacking ships” (Moore). Piracy in Somalia seems to be a way to protect their oceans and all their resources from other foreign places. It’s like they hijack ships to steal back what is theirs, or to steal back what these ships have taken from them. They need these natural resources to feed themselves and if it is taken away, that is a huge problem.

Giving back to others seems to be a recurring theme for many pirates and their crew. The pirates see themselves as “saviors of the sea” or heroes. Boyah, a pirate who was interviewed, says that he and his men are almost like Robin Hood, as they give back to others in their community (Bahadur). While most think pirates are selfish and steal to steal, that does not seem to be the case in Somalia. Another pirate in *The Desert And The Sea*, Garfanji, says the same thing, that he sees himself as a Robin Hood type, who helps his community thrive (Moore). Oftentimes, when pirates hijack a ship they restock on meat and other food. Quote one pirate, “Whenever we hijack ships, we restock on essentials like food. We buy goats for meat and khat from the residents. We pump money into the region’s economy. How else are the people here going to survive? All the fish in our sea have gone” (Rice). As the evidence suggests, pirates do not just steal for their own personal gain, they give back to others and support their communities.

Violence is something well associated with any sort of criminal, however pirates are as dangerous, violent and intemperate as people perceive them to be. Examining the time that Michael Scott Moore was held captive by Somali pirates for ransom, it is not entirely true to say that pirates are always violent and heartless. The guards gave Michael shampoo, a towel, toothpaste and some mango drinks as well as new clothes. Even though he is a hostage, it is not Michael they are after, they seem to be taking care of him, like they need him alive. He is worth

something, and eventually he will be released (Moore). Pirates see people more as profit and not a Boxing Bob. Though sometimes they have aggressive tendencies, whenever Michael was injured in the book, he did get medical aid. In one chapter, Michael hurts his wrist on the skiff, and requests to see a medical professional. They got a doctor for Michael's wrist, and the doctor gave Michael a splint made of bamboo and purple cloth (Moore). Another example of pirates not being hot tempered and aggressive was when Michael jumps off the boat in an attempt to escape, and he waits for gunshots, but there were none. The pirates got him back on the ship and gave him warm water and did not harm him, but he was given three weeks of solitary confinement in his cabin (Moore). One final example is that during Michael's stay with another pirate group, one pirate slaps him, and in turn that pirate gets locked into chains and beaten for what he did to Michael. Now while that is still an act of violence, it was to punish the other pirate for harming Michael (Moore).

In conclusion, pirates may be perceived in the media and popular culture as hot tempered, selfish villains who want nothing more than money, however with the evidence presented, that is not the case. Pirates want to protect their home, their oceans and the others around them, as well as give back to their community. They also do not resort to violence as often as people may think, and instead do show even the tiniest glimpse of compassion underneath their tough exterior. They seem to have a Robin Hood complex and idealism indeed.

Works Cited

Chege, Alexandra. "Alexandra Chege." *Oxfam Horn East and Central Africa Blog*, 30 Sept.

2015, [www.oxfamblogs.org/eastafrica/?p=8080#:~:text=According to the latest survey,waters off the Somali coast.&text=It's no doubt, home to,, shark, and many others.](http://www.oxfamblogs.org/eastafrica/?p=8080#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20latest%20survey,waters%20off%20the%20Somali%20coast.&text=It's%20no%20doubt,%20home%20to%20,,%20shark,%20and%20many%20others.)

Moore, Michael Scott. *The Desert and the Sea*. HARPERCOLLINS PUBLISHERS INC, 2019.

Rice, Andy. "Analysis: Robin Hood's Legacy Is Alive and Well in Somalia." *Daily Maverick*, 1

Feb. 2013,

www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2011-02-03-analisys-robin-hoods-legacy-is-alive-and-we-ll-in-somalia/.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/19eEmON_c-u93S5xTpva9mNdxzrpnK0D6/edit