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# A Capital Ship

**Charles E. Carryl** · *1885 · English original*

A confident sea song follows a disorderly crew from bad dinners to an impossible island and back to sea.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

## What keeps this voyage moving when the sailors' skill seems so doubtful?

*"A capital ship for an ocean trip"*
Stanza 1

Hunger drives the decisions, while rhyme and an unshaken cheerful voice carry the listener through each failure.

KEY CHARACTERS

**The sailor narrator**
*Praises the voyage while recounting its absurd failures.*

**The captain**
*Enjoys an impressive hat and a much better dinner than the crew.*

**The cook**
*Serves the sailors an inedible mixture and is dunked in it.*

**The crew**
*Abandons the ship and later transfers to a passing junk.*

Grades 3–5
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

### The boast meets the gale

STANZA 1

*The narrator praises a supposedly excellent vessel, then hints that its helmsman sleeps through dangerous weather.*

- The ship is named The Walloping Window-blind, and no gale dismays her crew.
- The man at the wheel is taught to feel contempt for the wildest blow.
- This is the song only, not the surrounding novel Davy and the Goblin.

> *"A capital ship for an ocean trip"*
> Stanza 1

02

### Games replace seamanship

STANZAS 2–3

*The officers turn shipboard duties into games, and the captain's fine meals contrast with the crew's dreadful rations.*

- The boatswain's mate plays hop-scotch with the starboard watch.
- The gunner fires salutes with the captain's boots.
- The verse is comic seamanship, kept in Carryl's wording.

> *"And fired salutes with the captain's boots,"*
> Stanzas 2–3

03

### A mutiny of appetite

STANZAS 4–5

*The sick sailors dunk their cook and drive their vessel onto an island crowded with impossible creatures.*

- The captain dines on toasted pigs and pickles and figs and gummery bread.
- The cook's gluesome food ends with the crew dipping him in a tub.
- Then they cast the vessel ashore on the Gulliby Isles.

> *"On the Gulliby Isles, where the Poohpooh smiles,"*
> Stanzas 4–5

04

### A cheerful departure

STANZA 6

*The hungry company lives on bark until a passing junk allows escape and leaves a new crew with the bad food.*

- They leave in a Chinese junk from the torriby zone.
- The last stanza leaves the junk's crew to chew rubagub bark.
- Stop when the song ends; Sindbad's later talk is not part of this work.

> *"And we cheerily put to sea;"*
> Stanza 6

Boasting and competence

Food and escape

Comic sound

## What to watch for as you read

GRADES 3–5

1. Listen for rhymes within lines as well as at their ends.
2. Nautical job titles lend authority to absurd conduct.
3. The final stanza transfers the sailors to another vessel.

**Quotations** are verbatim from the English original, Project Gutenberg #25031: Charles E. Carryl, Davy and the Goblin (1885), the song "A capital ship for an ocean trip.", the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/carryl-a-capital-ship/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.