

Sayings about Sailors and the Sea (Part 1)

(Story words: smooth, learning, school)

Today, sailing and shipping still play a part in people's lives. Products we use have been transported across the sea by ship to be sold here, and some products made here are shipped to be sold faraway. Some people still travel by boat or ship, but most often they do so for fun, not because it is the fastest or cheapest way to travel.

But before there were cars, trains, and planes, sea travel was the only way to go on big trips or transport things from far away. Even just two hundred years ago, sailors and the sea were important and vivid in people's lives. It is not surprising, then, that many sayings still in use today refer to sailors and life at sea.

Sailboats move when the wind pushes their sails, but when the wind stops, ships and sailors can be stuck for days waiting for the wind to pick up again. The phrase, "took the wind out of our sails," refers to a large shift in the

way things are that hampers people from making progress on their goals. Thus, a person might say, “The sudden decline in the market for lumber took the wind out of our sails.” In contrast, people use the phrase “smooth sailing” to describe when things look good for making progress.

Sailors were referred to as hands. The phrase, “All hands on deck,” means that everyone’s help is needed to make progress. A mom or dad might say, “We are going to need all hands on deck to clean the apartment for Gram’s birthday lunch.”

The many sails on a ship are rigged in a complicated way with ropes so that sails can go up, down, or tilt. “Learning the ropes” of the sails was difficult and took time. People still say, “I’m learning the ropes,” when they start a new job to express the idea that jobs are complicated and that a person cannot be a skilled worker at a new job all at once.

Another phrase is, “getting one’s sea legs.” This phrase refers to the fact that it takes time to adjust to the movement of a boat which is rocking back and forth before one can walk or act in a relaxed, normal way. A person adjusting to a new school might say after the first few days, “I’m still getting my sea legs, but things are fine.”