



0. TORTUGA and the PIRATES' CODE - Story Preface

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This image depicts the Caribbean island of Tortuga. Once a destination for pirates, it is now a vacation spot. Picture online via Carib Vacations Guide. Click on the image for a much-better view.

Tortuga, located off the northwest coast of Haiti, means "Turtle Island." Columbus' sailors picked that name, in 1494, because the island's shape reminded the men of a turtle. It has rich land (in certain places), fresh water and a natural harbor - perfect conditions for Europeans seeking to establish Caribbean colonies.

A few Spaniards originally colonized the island, but French and English settlers arrived in 1625. Thereafter, control of Tortuga changed hands until, in 1630, it was (at least for a time) divided into French and English colonies.

Peace and tranquility, alas, were not characteristics of the island for the rest of the 17th century. Fort de Rocher eventually aided the island's defense, but Tortuga was home to buccaneers and a safe harbor for pirates. It was said that the island was:

the common place of refuge for all sorts of wickedness, the seminary of pirates and thieves.

The "thieves" did attempt a kind of honor among themselves. In 1640, or thereabouts, some of Tortuga's inhabitants (see page 44 of *Under the Black Flag* by David Cordingly) formed "Brethren of the Coast," a loose confederation of privateers/pirates/buccaneers whose code of conduct was called "Custom of the Coast."

Since European countries were engaged in battles against each other - like the Thirty Years' War - the Caribbean colonies were often left to fend for themselves. Buccaneers and pirates became "guardians" of places like Tortuga, while "the code" required that pirates were fair with each other. "No prey, no pay," was one of the "customs of the coast."

By 1680, however, Parliament passed a law which made sailing under any foreign flag illegal for an Englishman. Then, setting aside their differences in the West Indies, France and Spain signed the Treaty of Ratisbon in 1684. Piracy in the Caribbean was effectively over.

Today, Tortuga is a tourist destination while the underwater ruins of Port Royal, the former pirate base, are studied by archeologists.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/TORTUGA-and-the-PIRATES-CODE-Pirates-of-the-Caribbean>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/TORTUGA-and-the-PIRATES-CODE-Pirates-of-the-Caribbean>



Tortuga Island - Pirate Haven

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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View of Tortuga

17th-century drawing, described above, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Aerial View of Tortuga

View of Tortuga on 3 August 2006, by NASA.

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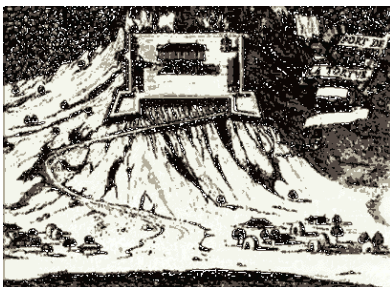


Tortuga - Detailed Map

Map image, described above, online courtesy Perry Casteñada Map Collection (University of Texas, at Austin).

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Fort de Rocher - Tortuga

Image - purportedly from *The Buccaneers of America*, by Alexandre Olivier Exquemelin - online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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TORTUGA and the PIRATES' CODE

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Pirates of the Caribbean - Code of Conduct

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