

WHO DO I WORK WITH – IF ANYONE? The History Day Ship-on-the-Sea Analogy

This week you will begin a “journey” in History. This “journey” is called National History Day. Each of you, in a sense, is a “ship” on this journey. Before you leave the harbor you need to determine what will accompany your “ship” for the next three months.

Some of you will make good choices and bring extra “sails” for your ship. These “sails” are good partners you choose to work with. “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 more enjoyable.

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 one of the following:

- Lazy and don’t help much
- Comedians who provide a lot of laughs but little effort
- People 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 complete a quality History Day project. Some “anchors” can turn into sails if they are on a quality ship, but that risk is yours to take. You may offend an anchor by leaving him or 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. Students who work alone on History Day are accountable only to themselves, so there is no confusion. The project’s success or failure is totally up to the individual. There is no one else to blame! Sailing alone can be very rewarding and is a fine means of travel.

Choosing the right group, or choosing to work individually, is one of the key elements of 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 sign the commitment sheet and leave the harbor, all your “sails” or “anchors” will be on board for the entire trip – and you cannot “throw them over the side” once you are underway. Bottom line: there will be no switching groups – period – after

Bon Voyage and smooth sailing on your History Day journey!