[**blackjohn**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1144-blackjohn/)

* Iron Age Hero Lost at Sea
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_pyrate_legend.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1144-blackjohn/)
* Member
* 3,745 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Columbia, Md
* Interests:Stuff... and junk.

[Posted September 30, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18674-pirates-seeking-freedom-from-oppression-split-topic/&do=findComment&comment=389972) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18674-pirates-seeking-freedom-from-oppression-split-topic/&do=reportComment&comment=389972)

On 9/28/2010 at 4:38 PM, Mission said:

"Pirates were mostly seeking freedom from oppression" along with other, similar modern concepts we try to impose upon them.

So seeking freedom from oppression is a modern Hollywood notion, or just pirates seeking freedom from oppression?

[**Mission**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1929-mission/)

* Goat Specialist
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_immortal_pyrate.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1929-mission/)
* Admin
* 5,082 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Monroe, MI
* Interests:Scholarly piracy, designing and creating haunted house rooms and props, movies, abstract thinking, abstruse thinking, obstructive thinking, ideating, random thinking, movies, cartoons, movies, movies scores, cycling, world peace and small furry dogs, movies, writing, drawing, personal skills training, gremlins and, of course, lest I forget, movies.

[Posted September 30, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18674-pirates-seeking-freedom-from-oppression-split-topic/&do=findComment&comment=389975) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18674-pirates-seeking-freedom-from-oppression-split-topic/&do=reportComment&comment=389975)

On 9/30/2010 at 7:59 AM, blackjohn said:

On 9/28/2010 at 4:38 PM, Mission said:

"Pirates were mostly seeking freedom from oppression" along with other, similar modern concepts we try to impose upon them.

So seeking freedom from oppression is a modern Hollywood notion, or just pirates seeking freedom from oppression?

I am saying that I think it is more Hollywood than factual. Sure, some pirates may have done this, but I think it mostly grew out of the whole romantic "young lad takes to the sea to escape his family/homeland/whatever and finds the Navy or merchant service oppressive so he goes pirate" thing. Then he goes all Errol Flynn and fights for the maiden, against oppressive masters or whatever. I'm sure that happened, but probably more as an exception than a rule.

My take on it is that the navy released a lot of men from service, the economy turned a bit south and the merchant trade slacked off and you had a bunch of people ill-suited for other jobs who went into piracy. Add slack enforcement of the piracy laws and "legitimate" privateering as an example in certain places and you have rampant piracy during the GAoP. I am admittedly shooting from the hip here a bit because I have read some of this stuff, but not drawn it all together into a logical framework. Foxe could probably give at a better historic spin than I am because I haven't stopped to look at all the dates of events to see how they mesh. Or I might just be all wrong. When it comes down to it, the motivation to turn criminal is probably unique to each individual - although psychologically, many people basically do what their peers are doing. Thus my theory about the navy/economic/rigid job environment explanations.

[**Capt. Sterling**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2648-capt-sterling/)

* Sticky Fingers Sterling Needs a New Hat
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_immortal_pyrate.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2648-capt-sterling/)
* Member
* 10,302 posts
* Gender:Pyrate Hunter
* Location:here
* Interests:Killing pirates, haven't met one yet worth keeping alive....

[Posted September 30, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18674-pirates-seeking-freedom-from-oppression-split-topic/&do=findComment&comment=389979) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18674-pirates-seeking-freedom-from-oppression-split-topic/&do=reportComment&comment=389979)

Question... do we actually know how many became pirates to truly seek freedom from oppression? Or is this something we think they did because of their rules/regulations on board certain ships or some one said they were doing such and such which makes them sound as if they are trying to achieve such a result?

For instance... the current day Somalia pirates...it has been said they do what they do to provide for their families who are suffering from oppression but other say they are just using that as an excuse and could go about providing for themselves in more "legal" ventures.

[**Fox**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1019-fox/)

* Old Twillian
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_pyrate_legend.gif
* [Fox](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1019-fox/)
* Moderator
* 2,564 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Beautiful lush Devon, England
* Interests:Nautical history of the 16-18th centuries and living history based thereon.  
    
  Shooting pirates.

[Posted September 30, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18674-pirates-seeking-freedom-from-oppression-split-topic/&do=findComment&comment=389990) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18674-pirates-seeking-freedom-from-oppression-split-topic/&do=reportComment&comment=389990)

There were a handful of pirates who explicitly mentioned bad treatment at the hands of masters as a reason for turning to piracy, but probably as many who explicitly said they were in it for the money. If you want to go down the freedom from oppression route then I'd suggest a healthy dose of Marcus Rediker.

The unemployment question is also fairly interesting. A very good case could be made for post-war unemployment being a significant cause of the waves of piracy of the early 17thC and after 1715. In both cases there were large numbers of naval and privateer seamen laid off at the end of hostilities. Many of them found work in the immediate post-war trade boom, but when the boom ended found employment scarce. One of the problems with this explanation (which is not to say it's wrong) is that the vast majority of pirates, certainly in the post-1715 outbreak, turned to piracy either following a mutiny or were recruited when the vessels they were on were captured: ie, they were among the lucky ones who had jobs. More significant perhaps was the drop in wages and conditions which is usually entailed by a glut of labour. It's more difficult to use unemployment to explain the outbreak of the 1690s, when the War of the League of Augsberg was soaking up manpower across Europe and the colonies.

These kind of questions are the ones that academics ought to be wading through, but until recently Rediker was the only one seriously studying 18thC piracy - there's plenty of work still to be done :)

[**MarkG**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/10527-markg/)

* Pyrate Captain
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_pyrate_captain.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/10527-markg/)
* Member
* 587 posts
* Location:Ohio

[Posted September 30, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18674-pirates-seeking-freedom-from-oppression-split-topic/&do=findComment&comment=390009) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18674-pirates-seeking-freedom-from-oppression-split-topic/&do=reportComment&comment=390009)

On 9/30/2010 at 8:28 AM, Mission said:

On 9/30/2010 at 7:59 AM, blackjohn said:

On 9/28/2010 at 4:38 PM, Mission said:

"Pirates were mostly seeking freedom from oppression" along with other, similar modern concepts we try to impose upon them.

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My take on it is that the navy released a lot of men from service, the economy turned a bit south and the merchant trade slacked off and you had a bunch of people ill-suited for other jobs who went into piracy. Add slack enforcement of the piracy laws and "legitimate" privateering as an example in certain places and you have rampant piracy during the GAoP. I am admittedly shooting from the hip here a bit because I have read some of this stuff, but not drawn it all together into a logical framework. Foxe could probably give at a better historic spin than I am because I haven't stopped to look at all the dates of events to see how they mesh. Or I might just be all wrong. When it comes down to it, the motivation to turn criminal is probably unique to each individual - although psychologically, many people basically do what their peers are doing. Thus my theory about the navy/economic/rigid job environment explanations.

Taking it a bit earlier, the Spanish got tired of foreign hunters roaming around the interior of the Spanish Main, killing wild cattle. They drove them away, depriving them of their livelihood and giving them a reason to hate Spain. Since all of these guys were excellent shots, what better way to make a living than to start preying on the Spanish shipping (along with anyone else who crossed their bow)?

Mark

[**Capt. Sterling**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2648-capt-sterling/)

* Sticky Fingers Sterling Needs a New Hat
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_immortal_pyrate.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2648-capt-sterling/)
* Member
* 10,302 posts
* Gender:Pyrate Hunter
* Location:here
* Interests:Killing pirates, haven't met one yet worth keeping alive....

[Posted September 30, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18674-pirates-seeking-freedom-from-oppression-split-topic/&do=findComment&comment=390012) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18674-pirates-seeking-freedom-from-oppression-split-topic/&do=reportComment&comment=390012)

On 9/30/2010 at 2:38 PM, Foxe said:

These kind of questions are the ones that academics ought to be wading through, but until recently Rediker was the only one seriously studying 18thC piracy - there's plenty of work still to be done :)

Have you read

The Invisible Hook: The Hidden Economics of Pirates by Peter T. Leeson? I have only read some excerpts but it was interesting that he was driving at the idea that, although pirates were against the established law, they made their own 'laws' which were pretty harsh in order to keep things from getting out of hand on board their own ships.

[**Fox**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1019-fox/)

* Old Twillian
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_pyrate_legend.gif
* [Fox](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1019-fox/)
* Moderator
* 2,564 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Beautiful lush Devon, England
* Interests:Nautical history of the 16-18th centuries and living history based thereon.  
    
  Shooting pirates.

[Posted October 1, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18674-pirates-seeking-freedom-from-oppression-split-topic/&do=findComment&comment=390013) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18674-pirates-seeking-freedom-from-oppression-split-topic/&do=reportComment&comment=390013)

Yar, Leeson's one of the few academics now taking up the challenge. He's an economist rather than an historian, so I don't know how far he'll take it. I don't, by any means, agree with everything he's written, and it's a little bit flawed in that it doesn't really offer much new information, just a reinterpretation of Rediker and Johnson's 'facts', but it's a pretty good book - well worth the cover price.

[**Mission**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1929-mission/)

* Goat Specialist
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_immortal_pyrate.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1929-mission/)
* Admin
* 5,082 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Monroe, MI
* Interests:Scholarly piracy, designing and creating haunted house rooms and props, movies, abstract thinking, abstruse thinking, obstructive thinking, ideating, random thinking, movies, cartoons, movies, movies scores, cycling, world peace and small furry dogs, movies, writing, drawing, personal skills training, gremlins and, of course, lest I forget, movies.

[Posted October 1, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18674-pirates-seeking-freedom-from-oppression-split-topic/&do=findComment&comment=390014) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18674-pirates-seeking-freedom-from-oppression-split-topic/&do=reportComment&comment=390014)

On 9/30/2010 at 10:44 PM, Capt. Sterling said:

The Invisible Hook: The Hidden Economics of Pirates by Peter T. Leeson? I have only read some excerpts but it was interesting that he was driving at the idea that, although pirates were against the established law, they made their own 'laws' which were pretty harsh in order to keep things from getting out of hand on board their own ships.

I haven't read the book, but the point about the pirates making laws just as harsh as those they left behind had occurred to me before. It seems a pretty good one to me. Someone around here pointed out in another discussion on this topic (We so rarely strike on completely new ones, do we? [;)](http://pyracy.com/uploads/emoticons/default_wink.png)) suggested that if you ran a ship with no rules, you would not be running a ship for very long.

Foxe's mutiny argument is an interesting point, but I posit that this could also be the lemming principle at work. How many people are really satisfied at work even today? How many folks would jump at the chance to mutiny if the right leader or group appeared to goad them on? (See the documentary *9 to 5* for reference.) The question then becomes, what did they use to convince them? A good instigator would simply seize upon whatever grievance has the most appeal and agreement among the crew. (This, of course, settles nothing. But it does have human nature in its corner.)

[**Jib**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2545-jib/)

* Dread Pyrate
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_dread_pyrate.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2545-jib/)
* Member
* 1,078 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Minneapolis, MN
* Interests:Piracy, stage combat, martial arts, reading, film, travel

[Posted October 1, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18674-pirates-seeking-freedom-from-oppression-split-topic/&do=findComment&comment=390020) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18674-pirates-seeking-freedom-from-oppression-split-topic/&do=reportComment&comment=390020)

Are we drawing a common thread between freedom (or the desire of freedom) and religion? Seems to me the two might mean different things.

[**Mission**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1929-mission/)

* Goat Specialist
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_immortal_pyrate.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1929-mission/)
* Admin
* 5,082 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Monroe, MI
* Interests:Scholarly piracy, designing and creating haunted house rooms and props, movies, abstract thinking, abstruse thinking, obstructive thinking, ideating, random thinking, movies, cartoons, movies, movies scores, cycling, world peace and small furry dogs, movies, writing, drawing, personal skills training, gremlins and, of course, lest I forget, movies.

[Posted October 1, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18674-pirates-seeking-freedom-from-oppression-split-topic/&do=findComment&comment=390022) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18674-pirates-seeking-freedom-from-oppression-split-topic/&do=reportComment&comment=390022)

No, I was just using freedom as the primary motivation for turning pirate (a commonly held believe with insufficient hard proof) to draw a parallel with the notion that pirates were somehow free of the religious conventions of the time. Then we got off on an interesting tangent. But that's kind of how forums work. (I used to mod on a forum where this was strictly disallowed. I am so glad I no longer do as I am often one of the primary offenders.)

[**Matty Bottles**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/949-matty-bottles/)

* Notorious Pyrate
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_notorious_pyrate.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/949-matty-bottles/)
* Member
* 891 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Milwaukee, WI
* Interests:Writing, Art, Spending exorbinant amounts of money on action figures, rum, murder.

[Posted October 1, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18674-pirates-seeking-freedom-from-oppression-split-topic/&do=findComment&comment=390023) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18674-pirates-seeking-freedom-from-oppression-split-topic/&do=reportComment&comment=390023)

On 10/1/2010 at 11:53 AM, Jib said:

Are we drawing a common thread between freedom (or the desire of freedom) and religion? Seems to me the two might mean different things.

For an example of modern ideas...