

Rocket Phonics supplement “I Have Not Yet Begun to Fight!”

Vocabulary:

independence: freedom from control of another

am♦bas♦sa♦dor: a person representing a country
u oa i z

com♦mo♦dore: the **officer** in **command** of a **convoy**

Bonhomme: French word meaning good natured
u ou ay ch

convoy: a group of ships with **protecting** ships

fleet: a group of **warships**

grenade: small shell holding explosives

“I Have Not Yet Begun to Fight!”

It was a night in the middle of August 1779. The colonies' war for independence from England dragged on. Battles were fought on land from inland territories in Illinois to coastal towns like Savannah.

Now the French had joined with the colonials against the British.

The British long had a tradition of a strong navy. Their navy was their pride. But a fierce colonial named John Paul Jones stunned the British. Jones took seven British ships with only one ship, the Ranger, in April 1778.

An American you may have heard of rewarded Jones. He was the colonies' ambassador to France, Benjamin Franklin. Franklin promoted Jones

to **commodore**. He **arranged** for **Jones** to get a bigger
ship than the **Ranger**, which had only 18 **cannon**. The
new ship had 40 **cannon**. (To honor **Franklin**, **Jones**
named the new ship the **Bonhomme Richard** after
Franklin's famous book, **Poor Richard's Almanac**.)
Franklin also gave **Jones** four other ships to
command.

Now on this **moonlit** night, **Jones** and his ships
began an attack on a huge **convoy** of ships carrying
needed supplies to the **British** fleet. Two **escort** ships
guarded the **convoy**. One was the HMS **Se•ra•pis**.

Captain of the **Se•ra•pis** was **Richard Pearson**.

He ordered the **convoy** to sail away and **attacked**
Jones' ship. The other **escort** ship **attacked** a second
Jones' ship, the **Pallas**.

The Serapis' hull was covered in copper. This
made it a faster ship. Jones knew the Serapis also
had more and bigger cannon. So a fight of cannon
against cannon was impossible to win. In fact, after
the first shots were fired, two of Jones' big cannons
blew up, and many of his men were killed.

Jones decided to get beside Pearson's ship. He'd
hook the two ships together and send men over to the
Serapis.

Pearson's ship turned in front of the Richard.
Jones rammed the ship and locked the two ships
together. Expecting to win the fight, Pearson called
out, "Has your ship struck yet?"

Striking, or hauling down her flag, (her colors),
meant surrendering.

Jones roared in reply his now famous words. "I
have not yet begun to fight!"

Jones backed his ship off, circled the other ship
and again put his ship close alongside Pearson's.
The two ships' cannons now were almost touching.

But his men couldn't board Pearson's ship – the crew
beat them back. And Pearson's crew was
unsuccessful in boarding Jones' ship.

For two hours the ships shot at each other.

Jones' marksmen's firing kept Pearson's men off their
top deck. From below, though, they kept firing their
cannon. The wooden hull of Jones' ship was full of
holes. Jones ordered British prisoners on his ship to
pump water and keep his ship afloat.

Jones' cannon focused on the main mast of the
oa ziz k u oak i t

Serapis. Half of Jones' men were killed. Then Jones'
i ay oa ziz oa ziz
chief gunner panicked. Shouting for surrender, he ran
t ow
to pull down the ship's flag.

Pearson called out, asking if Jones was
u oa z
surrendering.

Jones thundered, "I haven't as yet thought of it.
oa z z
But I'm determined to make you strike!"
i ie
One of Jones' crew was able to climb onto an
oa ziz k oo k ie oo
arm of the Serapis' mast. He dropped a hand grenade
i ay iz ay
down into the powder supply. The explosion knocked
ie ks oa zhu t
out nearly all of Pearson's cannon. Captain Pearson
ea u z k u k u
had had enough. He still had four cannons firing, and
oa k u z ie
Jones had only three, but he surrendered.
oa z

Earlier that night, Jones' other ship, the Pallas,
had beaten the ship it fought.

After Jones' men boarded the Serapis, the main
mast finally snapped off and sank into the sea. The
Richard sank, and Jones sailed the Serapis in victory.

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