

# U.S. NAVY'S CROSSING THE LINE CEREMONIES

Crossing the **equator**, or the imaginary line drawn around the Earth that separates the Northern and Southern hemispheres, might not seem like much of an accomplishment today, but navies have celebrated the task with Crossing the Line ceremonies for centuries.

In the early days of sailing, the U.S. Navy used the ceremonies to test young sailors on their first excursion in the open seas. As the Naval History and Heritage Command explains, **pollywogs**, or sailors who had not yet crossed the equator, "were put through a series of initiation rites involving harrowing and often embarrassing tasks, gags, obstacles, physical hardships, and generally good-humored mischief."

Following the initiation, the sailors were inducted into the 'Solemn Mysteries of the Ancient Order of the Deep,' symbolizing that King Neptune had officially deemed the former pollywogs as his trusty **shellbacks**. As shellbacks, the sailors were given certificates to indicate they successfully underwent the ceremony and had crossed the equator.

The Crossing the Line ceremony continues to be used in the U.S. Navy today, but the event is voluntary and used as a source of entertainment and morale. Similar traditions exist in the Navy for events like crossing the Antarctic Circle and deep-sea diving.

## INSTRUCTIONS



1. Read the brief history of the U.S. Navy's "Crossing the Line Ceremonies"
2. Complete the Word Scramble below
3. Color and fill out the Junior Shellback Certificate
4. Make sure to tag the National Museum of the American Sailor with your completed Junior Shellback Certificate on social media:



National Museum of the American Sailor



@ntlmuseumamericansailor

## WORD SCRAMBLE

Use the history section to help you unscramble each of the following words:

esa                    ---

avNy                ----

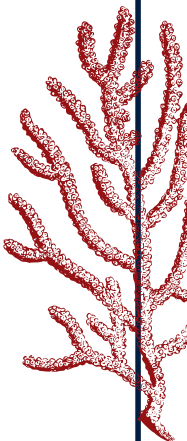
aloris              -----

queaotr            -----

ellbshcka        -----

woplyogl         -----

Answer Key: sea, Navy, sailor, equator, shellback, pollywog



This activity kit has been provided by the National Museum of the American Sailor

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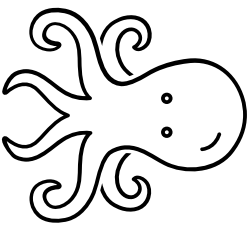
# *Imperium Neptuni Regis,*



-----  
Your Name  
-----

has been found worthy to become one of our  
trusty Junior Shellbacks. They have been  
officially initiated into the

Solemn Mysteries of the Ancient  
Order of the Deep



on -----

Date -----

