

Windy Sails

Written by Tanya Reddin
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A mini-musical set aboard an 18th-century sailing ship. Includes 4 sea shanties. Characters can be played by any gender.

Characters

- **Captain Hawthorne** – Experienced captain
- **First Mate Briggs** – Practical and hardworking
- **Tom** – Young sailor on his first voyage
- **Old Jack** – Veteran sailor
- **Ambrose** – Ship's cook
- **Crew** – 3–10 sailors

Setting: The deck of an 18th-century merchant ship.

(The crew bustles around the deck. Ropes are coiled, sails prepared. The Captain stands proudly ready for departure.)

CAPTAIN HAWTHORNE:

Crew! The tide is turning. Today we sail northward across the sea. Keep your wits about you, your hands busy, and your feet steady!

BRIGGS:

You heard the captain! Raise the anchor!

TOM:

(looking around nervously)
I've never been farther than the harbor.

OLD JACK:

Then you'll soon learn the sea's three lessons.

TOM:

And what are they?

OLD JACK:

Respect the wind, trust your mates, and never leave your boots where they'll get wet.

(Crew laughs.)

AMBROSE:

And don't complain about my cooking!

SONG 1: "SPANISH LADIES"

(Crew lines up and sings while hauling ropes.)

CREW:

*Farewell and adieu to you, Spanish Ladies,
Farewell and adieu to you, ladies of Spain;
For we've received orders for to sail for old England,
But we hope in a short time to see you again.*

(Crew continues with another verse if desired. During the song, sailors work together to set sail.)

CAPTAIN:

Fine voices! Let the wind hear we're coming.

(Music ends.)

(Tom is scrubbing the deck.)

TOM:

How many days until land?

BRIGGS:

Depends on the wind.

TOM:

And if there's no wind?

OLD JACK:

Then we wait.

TOM:

And if there's too much wind?

OLD JACK:

Then we wish there wasn't.

(Crew laughs.)

AMBROSE:

Breakfast!

(He unveils a pot.)

TOM:

What's in it?

AMBROSE:

If you can't identify it, it's fresh.

TOM:

Err I'm not sure that answers anything.

(They sit to eat. Captain walks in.)

CAPTAIN:

Tom, I heard you fell asleep during your watch!

TOM:

Only for a moment!

BRIGGS:

A moment's enough to miss danger.

CAPTAIN:

Crew, what shall we do with a sailor who sleeps on watch?

CREW:

(laughing) We know this one!

SONG 2: "DRUNKEN SAILOR"

(The crew sings energetically.)

CREW:

What shall we do with the drunken sailor?

What shall we do with the drunken sailor?

What shall we do with the drunken sailor,

Early in the morning?

*Way hay and up she rises,
Way hay and up she rises,
Way hay and up she rises,
Early in the morning!*

(Crew acts out humorous punishments as they sing.)

CAPTAIN:

Tom, you're fortunate they're in a cheerful mood.

TOM:

I won't do it again, sir.

CAPTAIN:

See that you don't.

(Thunder sound effect. Crew stumbles as the ship rocks.)

BRIGGS:

Storm coming from starboard!

CAPTAIN:

Reef the sails! Secure everything!

TOM:

This is worse than I imagined!

OLD JACK:

Now you'll earn your sea legs!

(Crew rushes about. Wind noises.)

CAPTAIN:

Tom! Take that line!

TOM:

Which one?

BRIGGS:

The bowline!

TOM:

The what?

OLD JACK:

The rope in your hands, lad!

SONG 3: “BOWLINE”

(The crew works in rhythm to the song.)

CREW:

Haul on the bowline, homeward we are going

Haul on the bowlin', the bowlin' haul!

Haul on the bowline, before she start a-rolling

Haul on the bowlin', the bowlin' haul!

Haul on the bowline, the Captain is a-growling

Haul on the bowlin', the bowlin' haul!

Haul on the bowline, so early in the morning

Haul on the bowlin', the bowlin' haul!

Haul on the bowline, to Bristol we are going

Haul on the bowlin', the bowlin' haul!

Haul on the bowline, Kitty is my darling

Haul on the bowlin', the bowlin' haul!

Haul on the bowline, Kitty comes from Liverpool

Haul on the bowlin', the bowlin' haul!

Haul on the bowline, It's far cry to pay day

Haul on the bowlin', the bowlin' haul!

(The crew repeats while miming hauling ropes against the storm.)

CAPTAIN:

Pull together!

CREW:

*Haul on the bowline,
The bowline haul!*

(Storm begins to calm.)

(The weather clears. Crew is exhausted but relieved.)

TOM:

We made it.

OLD JACK:

Aye. Now you're a sailor.

TOM:

I was terrified.

OLD JACK:

So was everyone else.

BRIGGS:

You have to keep working..

CAPTAIN:

And that's how ships survive.

AMBROSE:

Land may still be far away, but it deserves celebrating.

TOM:

I thought sailing was an adventure.

OLD JACK:

Sometimes.

BRIGGS:

Mostly it's hard work.

AMBROSE:

And questionable soup.

(Crew laughs.)

CAPTAIN:

But no one crosses the sea alone.

CREW:

Hear, hear!

CAPTAIN:

The sea is wide, the wind uncertain, and the voyage is never easy.

TOM:

But with a good crew...

OLD JACK:

...and a strong ship...

CREW:

Anything is possible!

(Final song.)

ALL:**SONG 4: "LEAVE HER JOHNNY"**

*Oh, th' times was hard an' th' wages low,
Leave 'er, Johnny, leave 'er!
An' th' grub was bad an' th' gales did blow,
An' it's time for us t' leave 'er!*

Chorus:

*Leave 'er, Johnny, leave 'er!
O-oh, leave 'er, Johnny, leave 'er!
For th' voy'ge is done, an' th' gales do blow,
An' it's time for us t' leave 'er!*

*I thought I heard th' Old Man say,
Leave 'er, Johnny, leave 'er!
Ye can go a-shore an' take yer pay,
An' it's time for us t' leave 'er! (Chorus)*

*Oh, her stern was foul an' th' v'yage was long.
Leave 'er, Johnny, leave 'er!
An' th' winds was bad, an' th' gales was strong.
An' it's time for us t' leave 'er! (Chorus)*

*An' we'll leave 'er tight an' we'll leave 'er trim.
Leave 'er, Johnny, leave 'er!
A-an' heave th' hungry packet in.
For it's time for us t' leave 'er! (Chorus)*

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*Oh, leave 'er, Johnny, leave 'er with a grin.
Leave 'er, Johnnie, leave 'er!
For there's many a worser we've sailed in.
An' it's time for us t' leave 'er! (Chorus)*

*An' now it's time t' say good-bye.
Leave 'er, Johnny, leave 'er!
For th' old pierhead's a-drawin' nigh.
An' it's time for us t' leave 'er! (Chorus)*

(Lights fade as the ship sails onward.)

END

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