During the evening “Dog Watch,” the Captain will take the entire crew below decks. Here he will share nautical lore, sing sea chanteys, and discuss the history of the times. A great addition to this activity is the “letters to the sailors.” These letters are a very important aspect of the program and greatly enhance this “Dog Watch” time.

Encourage the parents to write letters to their “lads” as if they were living in the year 1774. These should be secretly delivered to the teacher or group leader who will bring them the day of the program and hand them over when checking in with the administrator. Imagine the amazement of the sailors when the Captain gives them their letter telling them of life back home in England or the colonies! Please strongly encourage parent participation in this activity. While the Captain will make an excuse for students who do not receive a letter, it can be very disappointing for a child to be left out of the excitement. Our desire is that every student receives “news” from home.

The idea is to incorporate news items of the times; developments of the world or the hardships in the colonies. These letters should help build upon the lessons the students have learned as well as provide some entertainment. **Teachers - please be sure the parents understand that the letters should not refer to or reflect modern times.** The year is 1774; it is on the eve of the Revolution and each student has signed aboard the California as a male merchant sailor. The letters can be from the “parents,” “children,” “wife,” “suitor,” “friend” or whomever, but should mainly attempt to recreate the atmosphere of the times.

Example letter:

My dear son,
I hope this letter finds you well fed and warm. I have moved into the servant’s quarters at the Quibb plantation. Mrs. Quibb has ordered a full set of new garments to be made so I am working in exchange for my housing. Your younger brother has been apprenticed out to Mr. Ben Franklin’s print shop so he is well taken care of. I hope that he works hard and does what he is told, as printing can be a good trade for a young man. I am worried as he seems to be very influenced by Mister Franklin’s ideas and speaks out often against British policies. He is getting friendly with some real trouble makers (they call themselves the sons of liberty). Even the Quibbs have been practicing non-importation (they are only using local goods not anything from Britain). I sorely miss having tea to drink on a cold night and am not fond of this new drink, coffee.

I know your father would agree with this anti-British sentiment after all the time he spent fighting side by side with the British regulars against the French and having never received a true soldiers pay. Now that he is gone, I do not have the time or energy to think about such things. Take care, and follow the Captain’s orders. —Your Mother