

Davy Jones's Locker vs. Fiddler's Green

Sailors are some of the most superstitious people on earth. No whistling on the ship! Don't cut your hair or nails at sea. Don't leave port on a Friday. When you do put to sea, make sure there aren't any flowers or bananas aboard. Beware of Davy Jones's Locker; instead, when the time comes, head for Fiddler's Green.



So, who was Davy Jones and what was so awful about his locker?

Sailors of yesteryear believed that the evil Davy Jones was a fiend who lived at the bottom of the sea. He, like all sailors, kept a locker, or sea chest, for his belongings. While a normal sailor might stow it with a change of clothes, a razor, a knife, a journal and something to write with, Davy Jones collected whatever came his way at the bottom of the sea—a knife or some coins that fell overboard, entire sunken ships, and, of course, the unlucky souls who died at sea.

Davy Jones was not a real person. The expression is thought to have come from the words *duffy* and *Jonah*. "Duffy" (or "duppy") comes from West Indian folklore, probably originating in West Africa, and is a word they used to mean ghost or devil. Jonah was of course the biblical Jonah, of Jonah and the whale fame. If your shipmates called you a "Jonah" onboard a ship, that meant that you would bring bad luck to the vessel.



Now, providing a sailor had the good luck to die ashore in his ripe old age, where would he go? Sailors' version of heaven was called **Fiddler's Green**—where the weather was always fair, the fiddlers were always playing a lively tune for dancing, and an endless supply of good food, drink, and pleasant company was always at hand. Sailors standing watch in the cold and wet would pass the hours dreaming about a place like Fiddler's Green... wouldn't you? In 1966, a folk singer named John Conolly wrote a song called "Fiddler's Green." It's not a traditional sailors' song or chantey, but it expresses perfectly how sailors think about this heavenly place.

Fiddler's Green by John Conolly

As I roved by the dockside one evening so fair
To view the salt waters and take in the salt air
I heard an old fisherman singing a song
Oh, take me away boys me time is not long

Wrap me up in me oilskin and blankets
No more on the docks I'll be seen
Just tell me old shipmates, I'm taking a trip mates
And I'll see you someday on Fiddlers Green

Now Fiddler's Green is a place I've heard tell
Where the fishermen go if they don't go to hell
Where the weather is fair and the dolphins do play
And the cold coast of Greenland is far, far away

Now when you're in dock and the long trip is through
There's pubs and there's clubs and there's lassies there too
And the girls are all pretty and the beer is all free
And there's bottles of rum growing on every tree.

Where the skies are all clear and there's never a gale
And the fish jump on board with one swish on their tail
Where you lie at your leisure, there's no work to do
And the skipper's below making tea for the crew

Now I don't want a harp nor a halo, not me
Just give me a breeze and a good rolling sea
I'll play me old squeeze-box as we sail along
With the wind in the riggin to sing me a song