



‘Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the ketch
 Not a creature was stirring, not even the watch.
 The stockings were hung from the mast with care,
 In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there.

The sea dogs were huddled down in their cots,
 While treasure and galleons danced in their thoughts.
 The wench in ‘er bloomers, and I in me slinks,
 Had just settled down for a good forty winks.

When out on the deck there arose such a clatter,
 I sprang from me bunk to see what was the matter.
 Away to the porthole I flew like a flash,
 Grabbed up me cutlass and threw up the hatch.

The moon glist’ning off of the water’s calm doldrums
 Gave no indication of what was to come.
 Then, what should emerge from deep ‘neath the surface,
 But a miniature skiff, pulled by eight slick sea serpents.

With a little old cap’n, so lively and quick,
 I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick.
 More rapid than seagulls his coursers they came,
 And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name!

“Now Sparrow! Now, Starbuck! Now, Blackbeard and Skip!
 On, Fisher! On, Cook! Cap’ Morgan! DeWitt!
 To the top of the perch! From the bow to the hull!
 Now splash away! Splash away! Splash away all!”

As billowed sails that before the wild hurricane fly,
 When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky.
 So round the vessel the hydrae they flew,
 With the ship full of loot, and St. Nicholas too.

And then, in a twinkling, I heard near the perch
 The writhing and splashing of each serpent’s lurch.
 As I drew in my head, and was turning around,
 Up the plank St. Nicholas came with a bound.

He wore a red justaucorps, and a hook for a fist,
 And his threads were all faded from salt-winds and mist.
 A bundle of swag he had flung on his back,
 And he looked like a picaroon, just opening his pack.

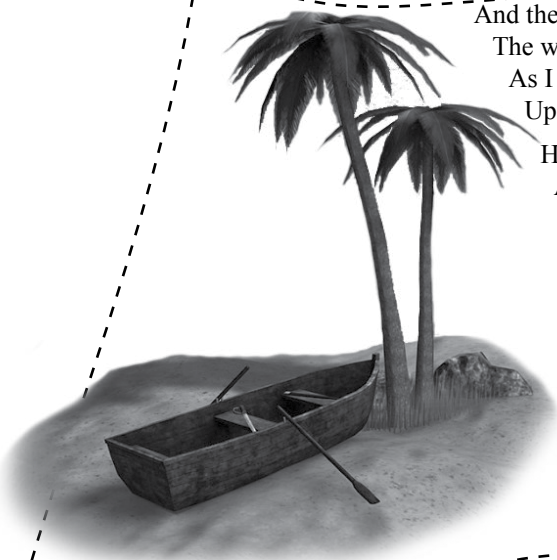
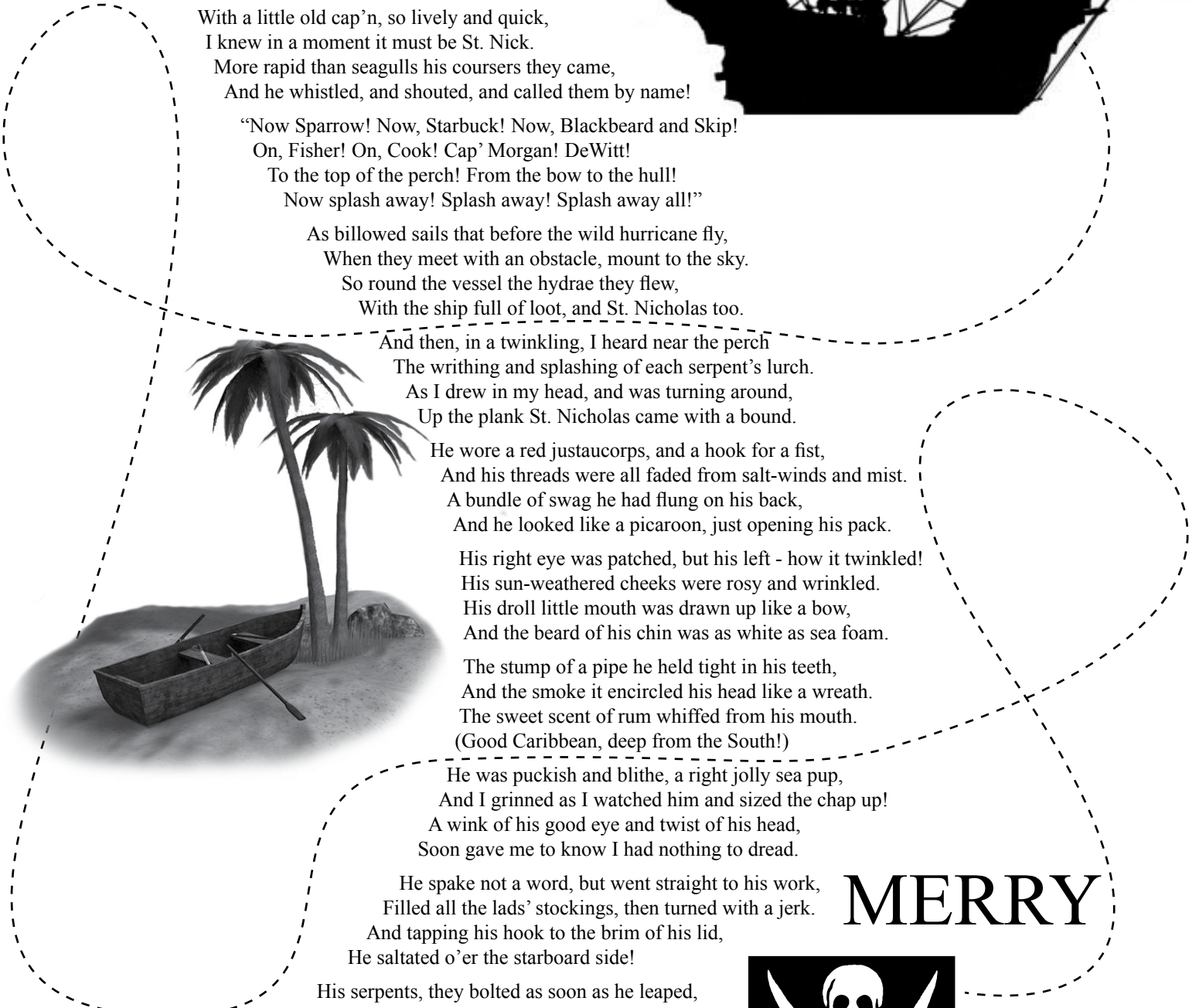
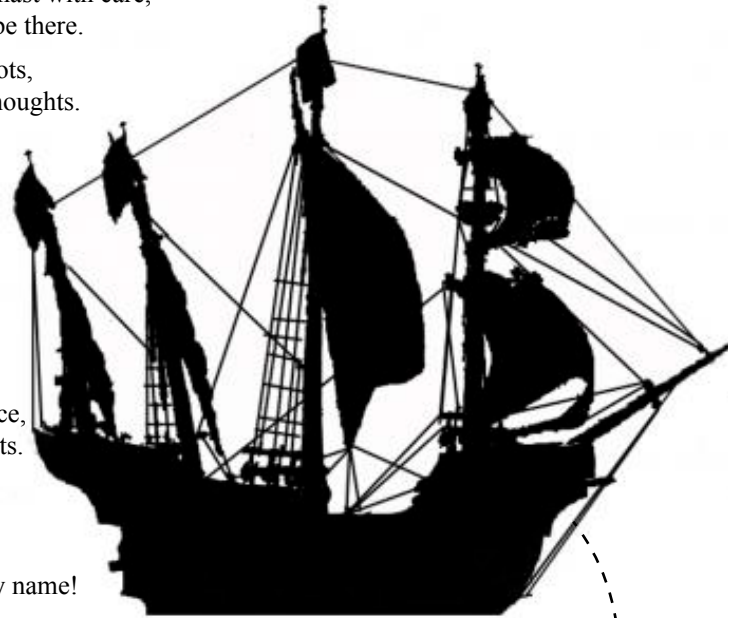
His right eye was patched, but his left - how it twinkled!
 His sun-weathered cheeks were rosy and wrinkled.
 His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
 And the beard of his chin was as white as sea foam.

The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
 And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath.
 The sweet scent of rum whiffed from his mouth.
 (Good Caribbean, deep from the South!)

He was puckish and blithe, a right jolly sea pup,
 And I grinned as I watched him and sized the chap up!
 A wink of his good eye and twist of his head,
 Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread.

He spake not a word, but went straight to his work,
 Filled all the lads’ stockings, then turned with a jerk.
 And tapping his hook to the brim of his lid,
 He saltated o’er the starboard side!

His serpents, they bolted as soon as he leaped,
 And down they all sank to the dark briny deep.
 But I heard him exclaim, ‘ere he floated from sight,
 “Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good-night. Yo-ho-ho!”



MERRY



MAS