

# RAZZLE DAZZLE

## Coloring Sheet



A major problem sailors and ship passengers faced during World War I was attack by submarines, or, as some German models were known, U-boats.

Not all boats were being used by the military during the war. Many of these ships were merchant vessels carrying passengers and goods like food, ammunition and other supplies that were desperately needed overseas. Submariners could judge just from an outline of a ship what it might be carrying and its importance to the war effort. Hidden under water, submariners would use periscopes to search for shapes on the horizon above the water. When a target was located, sometimes with warning, torpedoes would be fired toward them.

### Dazzle Camouflage

An artistic way Allies tried to “hide” their ships in the middle of the ocean was painting them in “Dazzle” camouflage. Used first by Britain’s Royal Navy, the idea behind Dazzle camouflage was to create a mix of lines, shapes and colors that would help a ship better blend into the array of colors of the ocean, the light of the sky and the lines of the horizon. That way when a German sailor was searching for a ship, they wouldn’t be able to tell how big it was, how fast it was going or in what direction it was moving. Dazzle would not make a ship disappear, but it would make it much harder for enemy submarines to see it clearly through a periscope. It was thought to be similar to the way an animal’s fur helps hide them from predators.

Unlike animals however, no two ships were painted with the same Dazzle patterns. Because of that, the submarine crews could not learn to identify one patterns’ speed or size. Even if the ships were exactly the same, to the submarines they appeared completely different. Thousands of British and American ships were painted with Dazzle camouflage during World War I. Today we may think of soldiers or sailors with big guns helping to win the war, but artists with paint and brushes helped too.

Some well-known artists including Thomas Hart Benton, a famous 20<sup>th</sup> century American Regionalist painter, were known to have participated in the dazzle projects. Look at the examples on the back of the page, create your own “dazzle camouflage.”

### Looking for more?

Spectacular art and more information can be found in Chris Barton’s illustrated children’s book *Razzle Dazzle Ships: World War I and the Art of Confusion*.

Watch a video about Razzle Dazzle ships:

<https://www.vox.com/videos/2018/2/27/17054142/dazzle-camouflage-world-war-one>

Learn about Women Camouflage Artists:

<https://unwritten-record.blogs.archives.gov/2016/07/19/hidden-women-the-art-of-wwi-camouflage-photos>



# Report on Camouflaged Ships

Forward Immediately Direct to Office of Naval Intelligence, Washington, D. C.

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Camouflaged Warships, Armed Merchant Vessels, and All Other Vessels  
of Whatever Nationality

1918 NOV 9 AM 9 57

It is requested that you describe, with sketch, any ship which you sight, which has been camouflaged.

## SHIP OBSERVED:

Name S. S. Alban

Nationality British

Type Well Deck

Tonnage 3262 Length 375 Beam 51.6 Draft 26.2

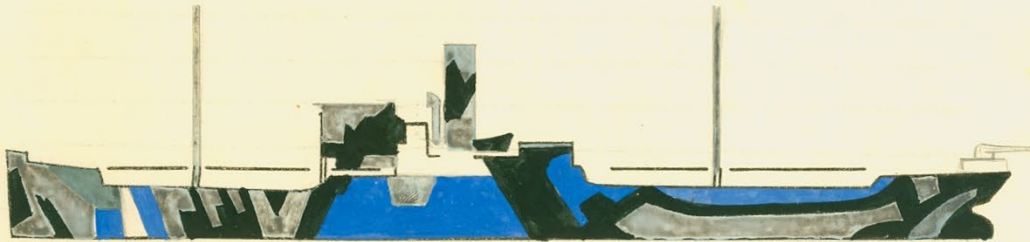
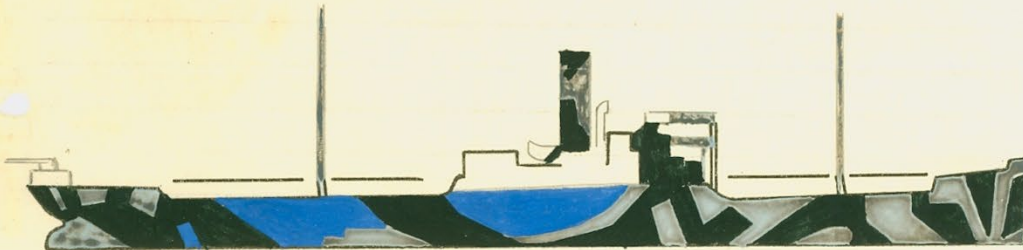
Station from which observed Hampton Roads, Va.

Time P. M., Date Oct. 30, 1918.

Distance and circumstances of observation (weather, clouds, thermometer, barometer, rain, etc.)

Three ship lengths. Weather-Cludy.

Outline sketch of ship as detailed as possible; also photographs, if possible to obtain:



Characteristics (color, number and characteristics of masts, smokestacks, guns, and any other distinguishing objects and marks), detailing particular visibility or invisibility of prominent parts, masts, stacks, etc.

Black, #3 Blue, #2 Gray and Gray White.

Camouflage in good condition.

Dazzle camouflage design by Thomas Hart Benton.

# CREATE YOUR OWN DAZZLE CAMOUFLAGE!

Color in your design on the ship below:

