

Arriving to Bremen by Ship

The Bremen Town Musicians folktale translated to the international maritime signal flags

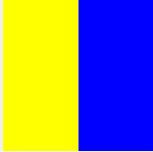
A ship approaches Bremen through the waters of the Weser river. The foreigners aboard are greeted with a local folktale narrated with the international maritime signal flags for communication among ships. This system of colorful flags and pennants, each representing a letter of the latin alphabet plus the numbers from 0 to 9, allow sailors to arrange flags in specific combinations that have predefined meanings under a shared international standard.

Die Bremer Stadtmusikanten, a central element of the city's cultural identity, is a story of traverse with a port city as the final destination where 4 animal characters proceed through explicit actions, precise positioning and coordinated maneuvers. They refer to weather conditions, engage in search operations, communicate danger and supply relief for one another. For these reasons the folktale can be competently narrated with the reduced visual code used by merchant and military vessels.

In a speculative manner, the signal flags system is explored as a medium for storytelling, exploring a central hypothesis: Could the port city tell its most iconic folktale utilizing a visual system specially designed for maritime communication? The translation is articulated through a 4 minutes video of a 3D simulation depicting 5 groups of flags, one for each animal character and an additional set for the narrator. The flags are positioned in a vertical manner resembling the traditional depiction of the animals on top of one another and hinting which flags correspond to each animal. In the animation, flag combinations take turns to express each section of the folktale, while the intensity of important moments is conveyed by the speed of the wind and the consequential faster flapping of the flags. In this virtual setting, all elements including the water and the sky, are digitally simulated, creating a fully artificial and controlled environment that replicate Bremen's weather conditions around the year 2020.

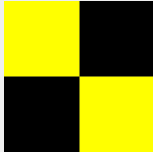

Additionally, this notebook with the step by step translation is provided for the spectator to follow the story. Reading while watching mimics the back-and-forth gesture carried out by sailors when consulting the official guide to interpret the flag combinations of a vessel in sight.

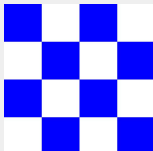
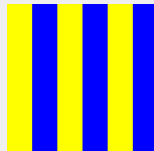
0

(Narrator) K  I wish to communicate with you.

1




A certain man had a donkey, which had carried the corn-sacks to the mill indefatigably for many a long year. But his strength was going, and he was growing more and more unfit for work. Then his master began to consider how he might best save his keep.

(Donkey) L+J   I am reducing speed

(Narrator) N+G   You are in a dangerous position

2

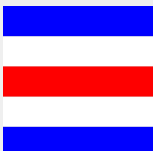

But the donkey, seeing that no good wind was blowing, ran away and set out on the road to Bremen. There, he thought, I can surely be a town-musician.

(Donkey) X+R+i    Weather is bad

I  I am altering my course to port

3

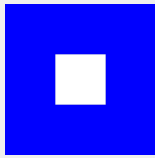

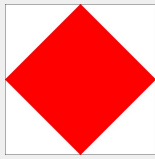

When he had walked some distance, he found a hound lying on the road, gasping like one who had run till he was tired. What are you gasping so for, you big fellow, asked the donkey. "Ah," replied the hound, as I am old, and daily grow weaker, and no longer can hunt, my master wanted to kill me, so I took to flight, but now how am I to earn my bread."

(Donkey) C+J   Do you require assistance?

(Dog) D+V   I am drifting

4

"I tell you what," said the donkey, "I am going to Bremen, and shall be town-musician there. Go with me and engage yourself also as a musician. I will play the lute, and you shall beat the kettle-drum."

(Donkey)	P+M			You should follow in my wake
(Dog)	F+O			I will keep close to you



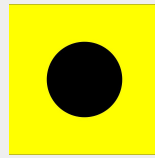

5

Before long they came to a cat, sitting on the path, with a face like three rainy days. "Now then, old shaver, what has gone askew with you," asked the donkey. "Who can be merry when his neck is in danger," answered the cat. "Because I am now getting old, and my teeth are worn to stumps, and I prefer to sit by the fire and spin, rather than hunt about after mice, my mistress wanted to drown me, so I ran away. But now good advice is scarce. Where am I to go."

(Donkey)	N+H+1				Are you clear of all danger?
(Cat)	D+X			I am sinking	
	E+X			My position is doubtful	

6


"Go with us to Bremen. You understand night-music, you can be a town-musician." The cat thought well of it, and went with them.

(Donkey)	P+M			You should follow in my wake
(Cat)	I+M			I request to be escorted until further notice


After this the three fugitives came to a farm-yard, where the cock was sitting upon the gate, crowing with all his might. "Your crow goes through and through one," said the donkey. "What is the matter?" "I have been foretelling fine weather, because it is the day on which our lady washes the christ-child's little shirts, and wants to dry them," said the cock. "But guests are coming for Sunday, so the housewife has no pity, and has told the cook that she intends to eat me in the soup tomorrow, and this evening I am to have my head cut off. Now I am crowing at the top of my lungs while still I can."

(Donkey)	E+D			Your distress signals are understood
(Cock)	X+R			Weather is good
	J+B			There is danger of explosion

"Ah, but red-comb," said the donkey, "you had better come away with us. We are going to Bremen. You can find something better than death everywhere. You have a good voice, and if we make music together it must have some quality." The cock agreed to this plan, and all four went on together.

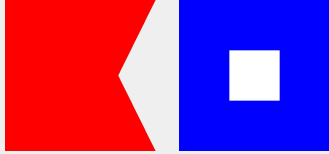

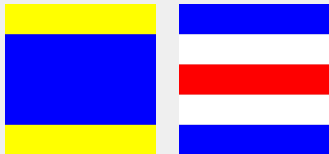
(Donkey)	A+G			Abandon your vessel as quickly as possible
(Cock)	F+O			I will keep close to you

They could not reach the city of Bremen in one day, however, and in the evening they came to a forest where they meant to pass the night. The donkey and the hound laid themselves down under a large tree, the cat and the cock settled themselves in the branches. But the cock flew right to the top, where he was most safe.

(All)	M		My vessel is stopped and making no way through the water
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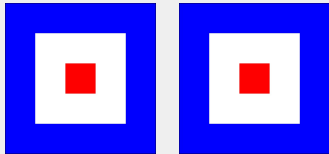
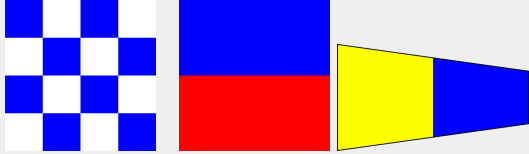
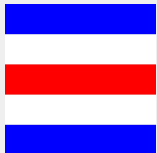
Before he went to sleep he looked round on all four sides, and thought he saw in the distance a little spark burning. So he called out to his companions that there must be a house not far off, for he saw a light.

The donkey said, "If so, we had better get up and go on, for the shelter here is bad." The hound thought too that a few bones with some meat on would do him good.

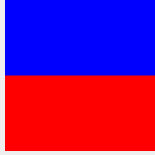





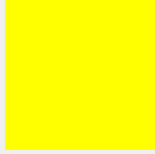
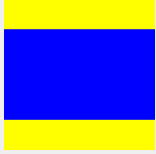
(Cock)	B+P		Aircraft is coming to participate in search
(Donkey)	M+Y		It is dangerous to remain in present position
D+C		Boat should endeavor to land where flag is waved or light is shown	

So they made their way to the place where the light was, and soon saw it shine brighter and grow larger, until they came to a well-lighted robbers, house. The donkey, as the biggest, went to the window and looked in. "What do you see, my grey-horse?" asked the cock.

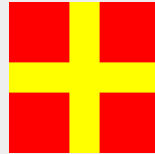
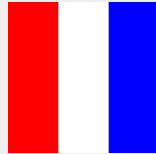
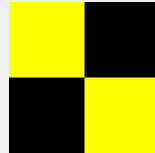
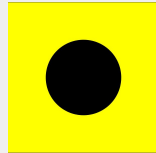
"What do I see?" answered the donkey. "A table covered with good things to eat and drink, and robbers sitting at it enjoying themselves." "That would be the sort of thing for us," said the cock.

(Cock)	W+W		What are the sea conditions in your area?
(Donkey)	N+E+5		You should proceed with great caution; hostile vessel sighted
(Cock)	C		"Yes" or "affirmative"

Then the animals took counsel together how they should manage to drive away the robbers, and at last they thought of a plan. The donkey was to place himself with his fore-feet upon the window-ledge, the hound was to jump on the donkey's back, the cat was to climb upon the dog, and lastly the cock was to fly up and perch upon the head of the cat.

(Donkey)	E+Y			I am confident as to my position
(Dog)	P+O			You should pass ahead of me
(Cat)	B+R			I require a helicopter urgently
(Cock)	Q+D			I am going ahead

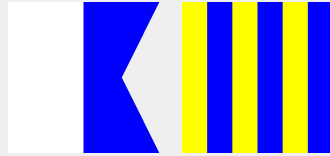
When this was done, at a given signal, they began to perform their music together. The donkey brayed, the hound barked, the cat mewed, and the cock crowed. Then they burst through the window into the room, shattering the glass.

(Donkey)	R+T			Stop carrying out your intentions and watch for my signals
(All)	L+I			I am increasing speed

At this horrible din, the robbers sprang up, thinking no otherwise than that a ghost had come in, and fled in a great fright out into the forest. The four companions now sat down at the table, well content with what was left, and ate as if they were going to fast for a month.

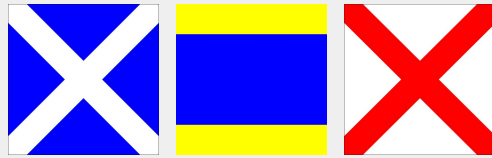
(Narrator)

A+G



You should abandon your vessel as quickly as possible

M+D+V

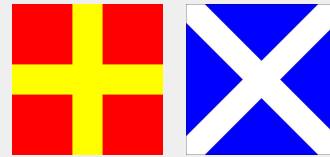


Pain is relieved by taking food

As soon as the four minstrels had done, they put out the light, and each sought for himself a sleeping-place according to his nature and what suited him. The donkey laid himself down upon some straw in the yard, the hound behind the door, the cat upon the hearth near the warm ashes, and the cock perched himself upon a beam of the roof. And being tired from their long walk, they soon went to sleep.

(All)

R+M

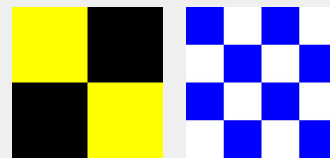


My engines are stopped

When it was past midnight, and the robbers saw from afar that the light was no longer burning in their house, and all appeared quiet, the captain said, we ought not to have let ourselves be frightened out of our wits, and ordered one of them to go and examine the house.

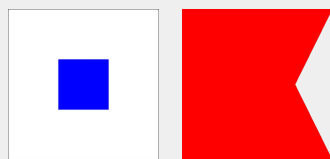
(Narrator)

L+N



Light has been extinguished

S+B

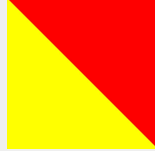
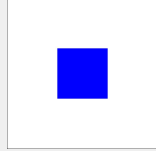

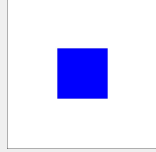


I am proceeding to the position of accident

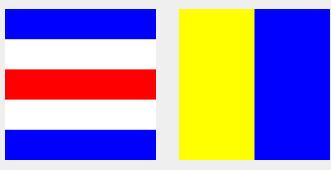
The messenger finding all still, went into the kitchen to light a candle, and, taking the glistening fiery eyes of the cat for live coals, he held a lucifer-match to them to light it. But the cat did not understand the joke, and flew in his face, spitting and scratching. He was dreadfully frightened, and ran to the back-door, but the dog, who lay there sprang up and bit his leg. And as he ran across the yard by the dunghill, the donkey gave him a smart kick with its hind foot. The cock, too, who had been awakened by the noise, and had become lively, cried down from the beam, "Cock-a-doodle-doo."

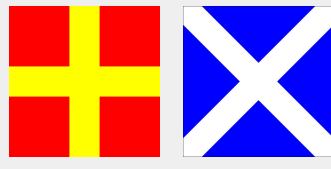
(Cat)	M+S			My vessel is a dangerous source of radiation
(Dog)	N+F			You are running into danger
(Donkey)	N+G			You are in a dangerous position
(Cock)	R+P			Landing here is highly dangerous


Then the robber ran back as fast as he could to his captain, and said, "Ah, there is a horrible witch sitting in the house, who spat on me and scratched my face with her long claws. And by the door stands a man with a knife, who stabbed me in the leg. And in the yard there lies a black monster, who beat me with a wooden club. And above, upon the roof, sits the judge, who called out, bring the rogue here to me. So I got away as well as I could." After this the robbers never again dared enter the house.

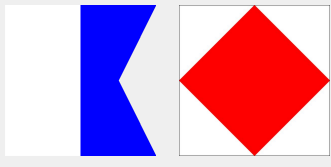
(Narrator)	O+S			There is danger from mines in this area (or area indicated)
	P+S			You should not come any closer

But it suited the four musicians of Bremen so well that they did not care to leave it any more.

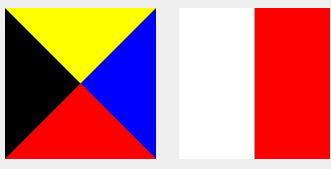
(Dog) C+K  Assistance is not (or is no longer) required by me

(Cock) R+M  My engines are stopped

(Cat) J+H  I am aground; I am not in danger

(Donkey) A+F  I do not intend to abandon my vessel

The end.

(Narrator) Z+H  Exercise had been completed