



Classic Connections

The Great Wide Sea & Treasure Island

Cheryl Sloan, Youth Services
Librarian, Charlotte Public
Library & Heidi Huestis, Teacher
Librarian, Charlotte Central
School

The Great Wide Sea by M.H. Herlong
Treasure Island by Robert Louis Stevenson; adapted by Andrew Harrar

High Seas Adventures:: The Great Wide Sea and Treasure Island

Preparation before class:

- Obtain a large map of the Caribbean/Bahamas
- Print a map of Treasure Island
- Prepare a list of sailing term (there is an excellent list on mhherlong.com)
- Identify someone in your community who is an experienced ocean sailor, a lake historian, or a boat builder.
- The Lake Champlain Maritime Museum in Vergennes has primary source material about Lake Champlain that can be borrowed for a two week period. The Community Sailing Center in Burlington can customize an educational program around sailing, sunken treasures in the lake, and many other topics.

Day One

- Read through Chapter 10 in *The Great Wide Sea*
- Introduce the digital platform you will use with students, if applicable.
- Hand out the blueprint of the Chrysalis and list of sailing terms, both found on mhherlong.com.

Opening discussion:

- Discuss the name of the boat (Chrysalis) being similar to mother's name. (pages 26/27)
- How did Gerry almost fall out of the boat and what rule did Dad stress to all three boys after that episode?
- Why did Ben blame Dad for his mother's death?
- What sailing terms have we read so far.

Find video online: raising the spinnaker, lower the genoa, hank the sail, raising the jib

Activities:

- Find Marathon and Bimini on Caribbean map
- Measure out 33 feet on the floor so students can visualize the length of the Chrysalis

Project ideas: Have each student choose a piece of navigational equipment to research and give a report on the last day of class.

Have each student keep a fictitious journal for a part of the journey.

Writing prompt: What is the significance of the items the boys are allowed to bring on board the Chrysalis, (pages 26/27) and what were some belongs that were painful to leave behind? We know that *The Great Wide Sea* is written in Ben's voice, what are some of the ways he shows us his frustration with his father, give an example.

Day 2

- Read through Chapter 19 in *The Great Wide Sea*
- Read through page 28 of *Treasure Island*
- Share images of sargassum, The Great Bahama Bank, and a conch.

Opening discussion:

- Why was Ben nervous about crossing the Great Bahama Bank? (page 68)
- Since *The Great Wide Sea* is written in first person and we only hear Ben's voice, do you think we are always hearing the actual facts?
- What children's book did Dad read to Gerry? (page 97)
- How was the name of the boat altered after it was hit by the other sailboat in the storm? How do you interpret the letters remaining on the side of the boat? (Chrys-is) It could be seen as 'crisis or Chris, the mother's name. (page 120)

Treasure Island discussion questions:

- Why do you think this book was chosen as a companion to *The Great Wide Sea*?
- What does the Black Spot mean?
- Do you think Jim should have shared the treasure map with Squire Trelawney and Dr. Livesay?

Poem discussion:

Part One: Life by Emily Dickinson

Pain has an element of blank;
 It cannot recollect
 When it began, or if there was
 A time when it was not.
 It has no future but itself,
 Its infinite realms contain
 Its past, enlightened to perceive
 New periods of pain.

Lines 1-4: Pain is so overwhelming that it blots out our sense of ever having experienced anything but pain; the sufferer remembers the past as having consisted only of pain.

Lines 5-8: In the grip of pain, we see only continuing and relentless pain in the future; our lives and identities have become consumed by pain. Our lives, we ourselves, are only pain.

Activity:

- Find the Great Bahama Bank, Bimini, Cat Cay, Berry Islands, Andros, Nassau, Eleuthera, Exuma, Long Island, Spanish Cay, and Bermuda on the map

Writing prompt: Authors can manipulate a reader by subtly writing clues in a story that lead the reader to a premonition about upcoming events. Did you feel a premonition leading up to Dad's injury? How about the radio that is not working or the accident with the other sailboat that took out the GPS system?

Describe a 'golden day' that you have had or describe the 'golden day' that Ben experienced.

Day 3

- Read through Chapter 30 in *The Great Wide Sea*.
- Read *Treasure Island* through page 43.
- Looking at the map of the Caribbean, what do you think is the approximate location of the boat when Dad disappears?
- Show a short video on 'reefing a sail'.
- Show a video of sailing in high seas.

Opening Discussion:

- Do you believe that Dad committed suicide? Why or Why not.
- Explain why the sail could not be lowered once the wind became too strong? (pg 145)
- How long did the storm last? How long was Ben at the helm? (pg 151)

Treasure Island discussion:

- Had you hear of Long John Silver before reading *Treasure Island*?
- What is the conspiracy that Silver is masterminding?
- What plan did Captain Smollet devise to deal with Long John Silver and his crew?

Activity:

- Measure 30 feet high on an outside wall to demonstrate how high the storm waves were.

Writing prompts: Why do you think Ben cried after rescuing Gerry and watching Dylan perform CPR?

The storm was a horrible ordeal as was the trauma of the shipwreck but what other awful thing happens to the boys? (pg 172)

Day 4

- Read through Chapter 38 in *The Great Wide Sea*.
- Read through page 62 of *Treasure Island*.
- Looking at the map of the Caribbean, what do you think is the approximate location of the boat when it shipwrecks?

Opening discussion:

- Why do you think it took the boys 6 days to go back out to the boat after setting up camp on their first day on the island?
- What are some of the first things you would do if stranded on an island with salvaged materials similar to those in the *Great Wide Sea*?
- Were you surprised to read how badly Dylan was hurt? Would you have the courage to set a broken leg the way Ben was forced to do?

Treasure Island discussion questions:

- Why did Jim jump out of the lifeboat as soon as it reached the shore of Skeleton Island?
- How did Ben Gunn get on Skeleton Island?

- What group took over the stockade and what group had possession of the Hispaniola?
- What deal did Long John Silver try to strike with Captain Smollett?

Activity:

- Draw a picture of the island that the Chrysalis shipwrecked on and the boys are now marooned. Use the descriptions that Ben has provided for us.

Writing prompts: What are some similarities of the adventures that Ben is experiencing in *The Great Wide Sea* and Jim is experiencing in *Treasure Island*?

Explain how Ben's frustration with Gerry in Chapter 33 resembled some of the interactions that Dad and Ben had earlier in the book.

Day 5

- Read through Chapter 42 in *The Great Wide Sea*.
- Finish reading *Treasure Island*.
- Presentation of reports on navigational equipment, if prepared by students.
- Listen as students read aloud their journals, if keeping them as reading progressed.
- Make a sailor's knot bracelet out of twine. There is ample instruction on the web!

Opening Discussion:

- Were you surprised when Dad walked into the hospital room?
- "Home. You like that word now, don't you?" What does Ben mean when he asks this question to his dad? (page 269)
- How does Ben's reflection on the 'golden day' change his mind about returning home with the rest of his family? (page 280)

Treasure Island discussion questions:

- What was Jim's plan when he took Ben Gunn's coracle?
- Did Mr. Hand trust Jim?
- What surprise did Jim have when he returned to the stockade?
- Why were the pirates upset when they finally came to the location on the map where the treasure was suppose to be buried?
- What was the actual location of the treasure?

Writing prompt: Beginning with Chapter 39, the authors style has become more reflective and Ben tells the story of his rescue in a dream-like method, why do you think it was written that way?

What connections can be made between *The Great Wide Sea* and *Treasure Island*?