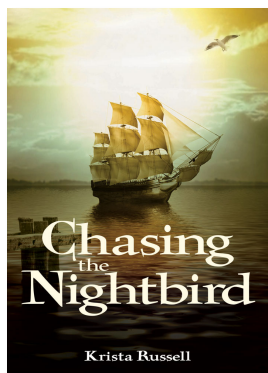


TEACHER'S GUIDE



Chasing the Nightbird

Written by Krista Russell

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Ages 10–14 | Historical Fiction
AR • RC • Lexile • GRL: V; Gr 5

ABOUT THE BOOK

Fourteen-year-old Lucky Valera is a seasoned sailor on the crew of the whaling ship, *Nightbird*. When his estranged half brother, Fernando Fortuna, kidnaps him and forces him into servitude at the nearby textile mill, his life takes a dramatic turn for the worse. Determined to escape, Lucky links up with some unlikely allies: Daniel, a fugitive slave who works alongside him at the mill, and Emmeline, a Quaker ship captain's daughter. Emmeline offers Lucky passage on her uncle's ship in exchange for his help leading escaped slaves through the Underground Railroad, but Lucky knows getting away from Fortuna will be difficult and dangerous. When their plans go awry and Daniel is threatened by ruthless bounty hunters, Lucky discovers that true freedom sometimes requires sacrifice.

THEMES

Whaling | Underground Railroad | Quakerism
Abolitionist Movement | Fugitive Slave Act
Cape Verdeans | Sailors | Textile Mills

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

- Have the class research the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. What political situation in the country did the Fugitive Slave Act attempt to address?
- Explain or have the class research the Underground Railroad and the Abolitionist Movement. What were they and what do they have in common?
- Frederick Douglass, Henry “Box” Brown, and Harriet Tubman each lived or visited New Bedford. What was it about New Bedford that made it appealing to those who escaped slavery?

STANDARDS: CCSS.ELA SL.1 (Comprehension and Collaboration), R.3 (Key Ideas and Details), W.2 (Text Types and Purposes) and SL.5 (Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas), W.9 (Research to Build and Present Knowledge)

THEMATIC CONNECTIONS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

MENTORS – *Several people in the story give Lucky advice.*

- What are some examples of the advice Lucky is given?

MEETING THE STANDARDS

The activities in this guide directly address a variety of standards across the curriculum. Following each activity, you'll find an abbreviation for the standard(s) it supports.

- Which advice do you think is helpful and which harmful?
- Do you believe that the motive of the mentor (person giving advice) helps to determine whether the advice is beneficial or harmful?

CHOICES – *We make choices and decisions every day, some more important than others.*

- How do we make good decisions?
- Fortuna chooses to use the law to his advantage to make himself Lucky's guardian. Does Lucky have any choice in what happens to him during the first part of the story?
- How do the decisions and actions of the characters reveal their personalities?

IDENTITY/BELONGING – *Lucky identifies so strongly with his fellow sailors that he follows a list of "Whalemen's Commandments."*

- What are some of the ways we form our identities?
- Name some groups that people might belong to. Do the groups help them form their identities?
- What are the benefits of belonging to a group and what are the drawbacks?

STANDARDS: CCSS.ELA R.3 (Key Ideas and Details), R.5 (Craft and Structure), SL.5 (Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas), W.2 (Text Types and Purposes)

SOCIAL STUDIES & MATH

Geography: Show maps of some of the typical voyages of whale ships out of Massachusetts. To see maps and explore other aspects of the whaling industry, visit www.girlonawhaleship.org/jernapp/whaling.do

- From the ports Lucky mentions, trace the route that the *Nightbird* would have traveled.
- Whale ships typically traveled at 4–7 knots (depending on wind and currents). A knot is a nautical mile per hour. 5 knots = 5.8 miles per hour. Calculate distances traveled between the ports mentioned above and time it took to reach the next port based on speed.
- Devise math word questions based on distance and speed.

STANDARDS: CCSS.ELA R.7 (Integration of Knowledge and Ideas), SL.5 (Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas)

CCSS Mathematics MP2 (Reason abstractly and quantitatively), MP4 (Model with mathematics), MP5 (Use appropriate tools and strategies)

WRITING / MUSIC

- Write a journal entry from the point of view of someone living in New Bedford during the time of the story when the Fugitive Slave Act was being enforced. Think about what different types of primary sources might be helpful in learning what life might have been like. What search terms could be used? Make a list and search online.
- Find and play a digital recording of 19th century sea chanteys. What are some of the purposes these might have served aboard ships? What do they tell us about life as a sailor. To read about traditional "work songs" in different cultures and to listen to examples, visit: <http://www.loc.gov/collections/songs-of-america/articles-and-essays/musical-styles/traditional-and-ethnic/traditional-work-songs/>
- Using the tune and format from one of the examples given on the Library of Congress site, write a chantey for a contemporary job or about being a student.

STANDARDS: CCSS.ELA W.3 (Text Types and Purposes), SL.2 (Comprehension and Collaboration), SL6 (Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas)

VISUAL / MEDIA / FINE ART

- Which parts of the story do you think might make a compelling book trailer? Draw a storyboard to show the events in the sequence you would arrange them for a 40–60 second trailer. Make notations under each frame about what audio (if any) you'd use.
- Make an infographic to show the different groups of people who lived in and around New Bedford in the mid-1800s. Include details about their culture and connections. Incorporate primary sources when possible.
- The art of scrimshaw; the carving (or engraving) on whalebone or whale ivory, was a common pastime of whalers and is mentioned in the story (the handle of Pa's rigging knife). Study some examples of 19th century scrimshaw. Draw a design based on a scene in the book.

STANDARDS: CCSS.ELA R.7 (Integration of Knowledge and Ideas), W.2 (Text Types and Purposes), SL.4 and SL.5 (Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas)

VOCABULARY

Abolitionist:	a person who is in favor of ending slavery
box the compass:	being able to name the 32 points of the compass
blubber:	the fat of whales which was rendered into whale oil
dory:	a small, shallow draft boat
green hand:	an inexperienced sailor
landlubber:	a person unfamiliar with the sea or sailing
parasol:	a light umbrella used to give shade
rigging:	the system of ropes used to support a ship's masts and to control its sails
ration:	a fixed allowance of provisions or food
spinning mule:	a machine used in a textile mill to spin cotton and other fibers
hoop skirt:	a skirt worn over a series of hoops that make it spread out
shanghai:	to force someone to join a ship lacking a full crew by using underhanded means
vermin:	small animals or insects, such as rats or cockroaches, that are destructive, annoying, or injurious to health

RESOURCES

New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park
<http://www.nps.gov/nebe/index.htm>

The Underground Railroad: New Bedford
<http://www.nps.gov/nebe/planyourvisit/upload/ugrr.pdf>

The New Bedford Whaling Museum
<http://www.whalingmuseum.org>

"A Whaling Voyage" from the New Bedford Whaling Museum website. Approx 23 minutes. Narrated excerpt from 1922 silent movie "Down to the Sea in Ships." Produced by the Education Development Center with support from National Endowment of the Humanities.
<http://vimeo.com/34586186>

Primary Sources Available

- Voices from the Days of Slavery: Former Slaves Tell Their Stories, Almost seven hours of recorded interviews in the Library of Congress American Memory Collection
- In the New Bedford Whaling Museum's permanent collection: Sailor's Protection Papers, Photographs and ship's logs
- Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, Boston: Anti-Slavery Office, 1849
- Blockson, Charles L. *The Underground Railroad: First Person Narratives of Escapes to Freedom in the North*. New York: Prentice Hall, 1987

Non-fiction Supplementary Texts

- Church, Albert Cook. *Whale Ships and Whaling*. New York: Bonanza Books, 1938.
- Cohn, Michael and Michael K. H. Platzer. *Black Men of the Sea*. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1978.
- Grover, Kathryn. *The Fugitives Gibraltar: Escaping Slaves and Abolitionism in New Bedford, Massachusetts*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001.
- McKissack, Patricia C. and Fredrick L. *Black Hands, White Sails: The Story of African-American Whalers*. New York: Scholastic Press, 1999.
- Michaels, Susan (Producer), Woodard, Alfre (Host). (2002). *Underground Railroad: A documentary that unveils the history heroes and villains of the Abolitionist movement*. [VHS], New York: The History Channel.

REVIEWS

“...Without slowing the story’s pace, Russell gives readers plenty to think about...Strong-willed and good-hearted, Lucky is an especially vibrant hero in this multifaceted and suspenseful historical adventure...”

—***Publishers Weekly***

“...Solid work, featuring a strong-minded protagonist bent on doing the best he can with what he’s been given.”

—***Kirkus Reviews***

“...Stories like this are a way to get students interested, and make history come alive...”

—**Work a Day Reads, a blog by Sarah**

“...Lucky was such a scrappy, likeable character. I was rooting for him from the very beginning...a good adventure for young readers...”

—**The Literate Mother, a blog,
reviewed by Aimee Brown**

AWARDS

- Parents’ Choice Recommended Award
—Parents’ Choice Foundation
- Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People
—NCSS/CBC
- Massachusetts Book Awards (Must-Read Children’s / Young Adult Literature) —Massachusetts Center for the Book
- Young Adult Top Forty —Pennsylvania School Librarians Association

SCHOOL VISITS

The author offers multimedia and interactive programs that feature primary and secondary sources and align with CCSS and NCSS C3 Framework.

Programs can be tailored to fit individual school needs and include *Finding the Story in History* (Learning about the past from the people who lived it), *Getting It Write* (Research and Story Building Techniques) and *Primary Sources 2 Ways* (DBQ and FHF).

Skype visits also available.

**For information regarding author appearances,
please contact
800-241-0113 or hello@peachtree-online.com**



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Krista Russell is the author of *Chasing the Nightbird* and *The Other Side of Free*. *Chasing the Nightbird* was winner of the 2012 Massachusetts Book Award for Children’s/Young Adult Literature, a 2012 Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People, and a Parents’ Choice Recommended Award book. *The Other Side of Free* is a Parents’ Choice Silver Honor Award book.

www.kristarussell.com

Peachtree Teacher’s Guide for
CHASING THE NIGHTBIRD
prepared by Krista Russell

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