Swashbuckling Adventures on the High Seas:
Classroom Activities for a Unit on Pirates

Elizabeth M. Frye, Woodrow Trathen, and Kelley Wilson

In the previous article (pages 15 and 16), we described a unit of study based on using fiction and nonfiction “twin texts”: Pirate Diary: The Journal of Jake Carpenter and What If You Met a Pirate?1 In this Pullout, we describe in more detail how we use double-entry diaries and a data retrieval chart during the lessons.

Double-Entry Diaries
The Double-Entry Diary (DED) is a method of taking notes in two-columns. DEDs help students locate important information in a text and monitor their own comprehension of the material. The left side of the paper is reserved for specific information from a text, such as a short passage, quote, factual information, or a summary. The right column provides an opportunity for students to write responses or personal reactions and connections to the information written in the left column.

To model the process, the teacher places a quote (from the text the class is reading) on the left side of the board. On the right side, the teacher records what she is thinking about those words. The teacher “thinks aloud,” modeling how her background knowledge and/or experience have connected to the text. Emphasize to the class that proficient readers constantly seek to use their personal knowledge to help them make sense of new information.

After modeling the activity, the teacher gives the students a written DED guide (HANDOUT 1).

Engaging with the Books
We divided the Twin Text lessons into four sections. We spend a minimum of three days on each section; however, this pacing depends on you students and curriculum. The teacher reads aloud at the beginning of section 1 and models the strategies with the students.

For sections 1 through 3, students silently read the majority of the twin texts and then complete the activities and writing in their Pirate Notebooks. There can be periods when students read, analyze, and evaluate the nonfiction text (HANDOUT 3). As students read their nonfiction books and websites, they complete DRCs and then use the information to create “Wanted” posters for their chosen pirates. To produce a more authentic look, students used brown paper bags or stained white paper with coffee grounds or tealeaves. You’d not want to bump into any of these pirate fellows (or gals!) in a dark alley down by the docks!

Individual Research
Section 4 serves as a transition from the twin texts to more individualized research on a pirate of each student’s choice. The teacher and students read the “Notes for the Reader” in the back of Pirate Diary that tells about colonial America and the impact of pirates on these colonies, a history of piracy, and biographical information about some of the most famous pirates.

The teacher models how to research a single pirate, focusing on Edward Teach, aka Blackbeard. She then invites students to research one of the following famous pirates: The Barbarossa Brothers (Aruj and Khayr ad-Din), Captain Kidd (William Kidd), Jean Lafitte, Henry Morgan, or the pair Anne Bonny and Mary Read. These were chosen because the teacher had The Library of Pirates series of nonfiction books in her classroom.2 These nonfiction books are written on a third-grade reading level, with large print, bold text, illustrations and a glossary. Other appropriate books and websites were also used (HANDOUT 2).

A Data Retrieval Chart
Graphic organizers have long been used to help students organize information and concepts from text to support students’ reading comprehension. The data retrieval chart (DRC) is a graphic organizer that aids students in organizing information, as they read, analyze, and evaluate the nonfiction text (HANDOUT 3). As students read their nonfiction books and websites, they complete DRCs and then use the information to create “Wanted” posters for their chosen pirates. To produce a more authentic look, students used brown paper bags or stained white paper with coffee grounds or tealeaves. You’d not want to bump into any of these pirate fellows (or gals!) in a dark alley down by the docks!

Notes
2. The map we used can be viewed at www.isd12.org/bhe/Archives/Activities/Pirates/images/Map.gif

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**Pirate Diary: The Journal of Jake Carpenter**, Written by Richard Platt and Illustrated by Chris Riddell

*What If You Met a Pirate?* Written and Illustrated by Jan Adkins

You are invited to go on a piratical journey with Jake Carpenter. You will read about Jake’s adventures through the diary he kept throughout his travels. You will learn about Colonial America and pirates, as well as many other exciting people, places, and happenings. In addition, you will be reading sections of the nonfiction book *What If You Met a Pirate?* by Jan Adkins. You will expand your knowledge of pirates as you read more specific information about topics introduced to you through Jake’s adventures. As your teacher, I invite you to keep your own Diary of sorts.

You will begin a Double Entry Diary, otherwise known as a DED. You will be reading, writing in your diary, rereading, and discussing as we study these entire books of historical fiction and nonfiction.

For each assigned reading, you will write three entries in your DED for each section of *Pirate Diary* and two entries in your DED for each section of *What If You Met a Pirate?* You will find important words, quotations, or passages from the book. Then you will explain why those words, quotations, and passages are important—in other words, when you read them, what do those words mean to you?

You will write each entry in a two-column format, like below. Include quotes, passages, terms. Please include the page and paragraph.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words from the Book</th>
<th>What It Means to Me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here are some piratical and nautical terms that you may come across in your reading:

- Pirates
- Buccaneers
- Privateers
- Corsairs
- Lubbers
- Gale
- Doubloons
- Pieces-of-eight
- Jolly Roger
- Ransom
- Barnacles
- Seven Seas
- Cutlass
- Pistols
- Muskets
- Pirates’ Articles of Agreement (Brethren-of-the-Coast Rules)
- Rigging
- Hull
- Bow
- Stern
- Aft
- Galley
- Mainmast
- Hold
- Sloop
- Galleon
- Mainsail
- Spanish Main
- Brig
- Masts
- Starboard
- Port
- Upper topsails
- First mate
- Helmsman
- Contraband
- Customs taxes
- Molasses
- Flogged
- Latitude
- Backstaff
- Almanac
- Quarterdeck
- Boatswain
- Maggots
- Marooning
- Moored
- Articles
- Deserters
- League
- Tacking
- Careen
- Powder monkey
- Magazine
**Nonfiction Books**


**Fiction: Chapter Books/Novels (Reading Level)**


**Graphic Novel**


**Multigenre Books**


**Poetry**


**Historical Fiction Picture Books**


**Websites**

- [www.nationalgeographic.com/pirates](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/pirates)
- [www.cindyvallar.com/piratearticles.html](http://www.cindyvallar.com/piratearticles.html)
- [webtech.kennesaw.edu/jcheek3/pirates.htm](http://webtech.kennesaw.edu/jcheek3/pirates.htm)
- [www.blackbeardlives.com](http://www.blackbeardlives.com)
- [cybersleuth-kids.com/sleuth/History/Pirates/index.htm](http://cybersleuth-kids.com/sleuth/History/Pirates/index.htm)
Handout 3

Data Retrieval Chart

You are invited to research a pirate of your choice. First, complete your Data retrieval Chart (DRC) as you read informational books and consult web sites. Then, using your DRC, please create a WANTED poster following the pattern shown in the template below. Please make your wanted poster as creative as possible: use paper from a brown paper bag, or stain a sheet of white paper with coffee grounds or tealeaves. Be sure to use piratical terms, such as Lubbers, Gale, Doubloons, Pieces-of-eight, Jolly Roger, Ransom, Barnacles, and Seven Seas.

Pirate’s Name and Alias _________________________________________________________________________________________

Name of Pirate Ship ____________________________________________________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Questions</th>
<th>Book of Pirates</th>
<th>Website (list the URL too)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When did the pirate live?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where and how did the pirate’s career begin?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What were the pirate’s favorite weapons?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did the pirate look and dress?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did the pirate act and treat others?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was the pirate’s life like?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why is the pirate legendary?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What became of the pirate?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Template for the Wanted poster:

WANTED!

Pirate’s Name
Also Known As (AKA)
Early Days (Where and when pirate was born, nationality)
How Career Began
Piratical Prowls (Describe an adventurous exploit)
Name of Ship
Appearance and Attire
Personality
Likes
Dislikes
Hang Outs
Place Last Seen
Wanted For

Sketch the pirate’s Jolly Roger here: