

Teacher's Guide *Kaleidoscope Eyes*

by Jen Bryant, Alfred A. Knopf Books for Young Readers, May 2009
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About the Book

Buried treasure, the Vietnam War, friendship, and discrimination are just some of the interwoven themes in this remarkable novel by poet Jen Bryant. It's 1968 and Lyza discovers her grandfather has left her a letter, a brass key, three maps, and a mystery to solve. She soon realizes, with the help of her two best friends Malcolm and Carolann, that the maps are clues to one of Captain Kidd's lost treasures. Now it's up to the three of them to find it, and along the way they discover more than just a buried trunk.

About the Author

Poet and author *Jen Bryant* <http://www.jenbryant.com/> writes biographies, nonfiction, poetry, contemporary and historical fiction. Her recent novels include *Ringside 1925: Views from the Scopes Trial* (Oprah's Recommended List; NCTE Notable) *Pieces of Georgia* (IRA Young Adult Choices; VOYA Top Shelf for Middle Grades), *The Trial* (Jr. Library Guild Selection) and *A River of Words: The Story of William Carlos Williams* (Caldecott Honor book; NY Times Top Ten Illustrated; IRA Choices Award & NCTE Notable), illustrated by Melissa Sweet. In addition to *Kaleidoscope Eyes*, Jen's picture book *Abe's Fish: A Boyhood Tale of Abraham Lincoln*, illustrated by Amy June Bates, was published in 2009.

Connecting to the Curriculum

History

THE VIETNAM WAR

The Vietnam War remains a highly controversial subject. The following website www.surfnetkids.com/vietnam.htm has many links to Vietnam War websites appropriate for young people.

Read "1968" (pgs. 15-17) and discuss what it means as a class. How much do your students know about the Vietnam War? Do they know family members or friends who served?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: WRITING LETTERS TO SOLDIERS (ALL AGES)

Malcolm's brother, Dixon, is drafted and his family and friends only hear about his experiences through letters. Write a letter to a soldier serving in the U. S. military today.

The following websites will help get you started.

- ◆ www.anysoldier.com (website to find soldiers to write to)
- ◆ www.carepackageproject.com/letters.asp (site sponsored by the U.S. Marine Corps)

- ◆ www.education-world.com/a_tsl/archives/00-2/lesson0030.shtml (*lesson plan from Education World on writing to soldiers overseas*)
- ◆ www.forgottensoldiers.org/write-soldier.shtml (*writing an online letter*)

PIRATES AND CAPTAIN KIDD

We read about them in adventure stories and watch them in movies. Their stories seem so “romantic” and full of adventure, but pirates are often also murderers and thieves. Even today they capture ships, steal cargo, and hold hostages for ransom.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: PIRATES—FACT OR FICTION? (ALL AGES)

1. What famous pirates can you think of? Brainstorm and make a list (i.e., Captain Hook, Robin Hood, Captain Jack Sparrow). How did you learn about these pirates?
2. Find several non-fiction books and/or reliable websites (i.e. NPR, Smithsonian, National Geographic, Library of Congress, etc.) and read about the real, everyday lives of pirates in the 17th and 18th centuries. List details about their food, health, social lives, skills, ethnicity, economic status, age, and behaviors.
3. Write an essay, make a webpage, or bulletin board that shows the difference between “fact” and “fiction” in the lives of historical pirates.
4. Read about modern pirates here: abcnews.go.com/International/story?id=1300344
And here: www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/04/10/rise-of-modern-day-pirate_n_185606.html

The term “romanticized,” means to have an idealistic view of history, one that highlights the adventure and the good things that happened, while ignoring some of the more violent and unpleasant aspects. Discuss the difference between modern-day pirates and those we read about or see in movies.

More on Capt. Kidd: www.captainkidd.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk (*incl. maps, photos, documents*).

Social Studies

CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES & PREJUDICE

Malcolm and Harry are unique individuals who are nonetheless negatively labeled by others in the story because of stereotypes and prejudice. For example, because Malcolm is black and this is 1968, he isn’t allowed into certain white-owned stores and restaurants. Harry has long hair, doesn’t have a job, and isn’t serving in the Vietnam War, so others assume he must be lazy, irresponsible and self-indulgent.

Malcolm discovers, however, that not everyone is blindsided by the color of his skin (“Research,” pgs. 74-76). Lyza discovers that Harry is color-blind (so he can’t be drafted), and has a kind and generous heart (“Unexpected,” pgs. 139-141)

Even Lyza’s annoying older sister, Denise, can be a friend (“August 25, 1969,” pgs. 153-157).

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: IDENTITY & DIVERSITY (ALL AGES)

1. Discovering one’s identity is an important aspect of growing up and defining yourself as an individual. What are some of the ways in which you discover and express your identity?

2. Write a self-description, based on the following aspects of identity: gender, ethnic group/ culture, religion or belief system, age, citizenship (local, state, regional, national). How important are each of these to your own sense of identity? Are some more important than others? Why?
3. Make a list of several of the sub-groups in your school (i.e. those groups who are identified by their sports teams, hobbies or interests, intellectual abilities, sexual orientation, political affiliation, etc.) How do these groups self-identify (appearance, language, behaviors) and how are they identified by others outside the group? What are some of the beliefs and assumptions about each group? How well is each group tolerated by the others?
4. Diversity is defined as a range or mixture of types. Considering the list you made above, discuss the advantages and challenges of a diverse population in your school and in your community. How can people who have different life experiences and different beliefs learn to get along? What are some of the barriers to understanding others who are not like you?

Science

READING MAPS

Cartography, or the science of mapmaking, has been around for over 8,000 years. The first known map is a wall painting of the ancient Turkish city of Çatal Hüyük. The invention of the magnetic compass, the sextant, and the telescope made it possible for maps to become more accurate.

Read "Maps," pgs. 38-40

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: MAPS, COMMUNITIES, HISTORY

1. The U.S. Geological Society provides a wealth of information and hands-on activities for through which students can learn about the history and current use of maps. Go to: <http://egsc.usgs.gov/isb/pubs/teachers-packets/exploringmaps/> read the introduction and suggested activities. Choose one activity to do as a class, one activity to be accomplished in small groups, and one activity to be done individually.
2. Have you ever wondered how your community got started? How it has changed over time? Find the nearest town, county or regional historical society. Arrange to visit there and, if possible, take a tour of any archives or exhibits which show the history of your community. Write a summary of your visit and include at least six things you learned.
3. With your class, plan an exhibit, bulletin board, or web page in which you compare and contrast various aspects of your community as they were in a certain year (1945, 1960, etc.) or during a certain decade (the 1930's for example) with the way they are now. Use maps, photos, letters, newspaper articles, etc. Be sure you have permission to use or copy any original or privately owned materials.

RIVERS OVER TIME

Rivers change their course because of erosion, the gradual removal of rock material from riverbanks and beds, and the deposit of sediment. Have students find historical maps of

your region in the school or public library, at a historical society, or at a museum. Study how the course of a river or lake has changed over 100 or 200 years.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: STUDYING THE COURSE OF A RIVER (ALL AGES)

The following websites are full of ideas for studying the course of a river.

- ◆ www.bbc.co.uk/schools/riversandcoasts (BBC lesson plans and information about rivers)
- ◆ 158.64.118.6/wr/user/library/English/Gr3rivers/Rivers.htm (full of links, teaching resources and activities about rivers including reprintable maps)
- ◆ www.iptv.org/mississippi/landmarksandlegends/about.html (activities and information about the Mississippi River produced by Iowa Public Television)

Language Arts

Poetry: Using Images in Free Verse

This book is full of images that paint pictures using words. Instead of writing “waking up,” Bryant says Lyza is “returning from sleep.” Instead of bruises, Bryant writes, “almost-seven-dollar wounds” (pg. 101).

MORE EXAMPLES:

- ◆ “Our family began to unravel like a tightly wound ball of string that some invisible tomcat took to pawing and flicking across the floor.” (pg. 5)
- ◆ “The rain is coming down hard and fast, like a Jimi Hendrix guitar riff” (pg. 130)
- ◆ “the collection notices spread across the desk, which now seem like maps to our family’s self-destruction.”

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: DESCRIBING OBJECTS (ALL AGES)

1. Review the terms “simile” & “metaphor.” Have students give verbal examples of each.
2. Choose 3-4 ordinary objects and place them in front of the room. Ask students to write at least three metaphors and three similes for each object.
3. Compile the lists in a place where everyone can easily read them. Then – discuss what distinguishes a good/effective simile or metaphor from one that is less so (i.e. “the bookends are walls,” is OK, but predictable, whereas “the bookends are my parents,” is less predictable, suggests a story with underlying emotion, and is therefore much more interesting and effective.

Describing Characters. There are many ways to describe a character without creating a laundry list of adjectives (i.e., the boy was tall, with brown hair, a blue shirt and a loud voice). Here are some examples from this book:

- ◆ Janis Joplin ... “mouth open in a scream around the microphone, arms raised, hair frizzed out wildly. An anguished, contorted look on her face –” (pg. 3)
- ◆ If he were a bird, he’d be one of those great blue herons ... (pg. 12)
- ◆ Dixon Dupree ... “is the kind of brother every kid should have ...” (pg. 60)

Symbolism: There is a lot of symbolism in this book. Have your students think about how one aspect of Kaleidoscope Eyes symbolizes (represents, foreshadows, parallels) another aspect.

- ◆ The Vietnam War and the fear of soldiers leaving and never coming back parallels the departure of Lyza and Denise's mother ("... like the blades of choppers" pg. 8).
- ◆ Harry's being colorblind is also reflected in Lyza's friendships (one best friend is black, one is white).

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY – SYMBOLS IN EVERYDAY LIFE (ALL AGES)

1. Make a list of visual symbols (a thing that represents something else) that you see almost every day. These might include symbols or parallels for peace, friendship, family, danger, happiness, religion, culture, etc. Discuss how color, shape, size, texture can be combined to create a certain mood or message.
2. Design a symbol that represents your family, class, school or community. Write a short essay explaining why you feel it is an appropriate symbol.

The Kaleidoscope

The Kaleidoscope is a symbol of hope and the belief that things can change into something beautiful. It symbolizes several aspects of the story, including having friends from different cultures.

Read the poem "Kaleidoscope Eyes" on pg. 9. How does the kaleidoscope represent events in the book? How does it help Lyza make decisions or see things more clearly?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: MAKING A KALEIDOSCOPE (ALL AGES)

The kaleidoscope was invented and patented by David Brewster in 1816. The first one to appear in the United States was reported in 1870. The kaleidoscope signifies the fragments that come together to form a whole, perhaps indicating a diversity of something, such as experience, or piecing together the parts of a symbolic puzzle.

Making a kaleidoscope can be as difficult or as easy as you wish. Included here are instructions to web links for both.

- ◆ Easy: www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/Files/film.htm (*step-by-step instructions from Princeton Online using a film canister and mirrored Mylar as well as links to other lesson plans using kaleidoscopes*)
- ◆ More Advanced: www.kaleidoscopesusa.com/makeAscope.htm or www.optics.arizona.edu/academics/kaleidoscopehowtomakeakaleidoscope.htm (*step-by-step guidelines using mirrors and PVC pipe, prepared by the University of Arizona*)

Beyond The Book

INTERNET RESOURCES

www.kaleidoscopesusa.com includes a wide variety of kaleidoscopes available for purchase, a brief explanation of how they work and directions to make one

www.nationalgeographic.com/pirates National Geographic site on pirates

www.videojug.com/film/how-to-make-a-kaleidoscope a very silly video but it gives step-by-step instructions on making a kaleidoscope

OTHER TITLES OF INTEREST: MAGAZINES

Archaeology's Dig, a magazine for kids! (Archaeological Institute of America,
www.digonsite.com)

Dig (the archeology magazine for kids), Cobblestone Publishing, www.cobblestonepub.com

OTHER TITLES OF INTEREST: BOOKS

10,000 Days of Thunder: A History of the Vietnam War, Philip Caputo, S&S/Atheneum, 2005.

Archaeology for Kids: Uncovering the Mysteries of Our Past, 25 Activities (For Kids series),
Richard Panchyk, Chicago Review Press, 2001.

Buried Blueprints: Maps and Sketches of Lost Worlds and Mysterious Places, Albert Lorenz and Joy
Schleh, Abrams, 1999.

Captain Kidd (Pirates!), Sue Hamilton, Abdo & Daughters, 2007.

Lost Treasures of the Pirates of the Caribbean, James Owen, Jeremy Owen, Simon & Schuster,
2007. (nonfiction)

Mapmaking with Children: Sense of Place Education for the Elementary Years, David Sobel,
Heinemann, 1998.

Patrol: an American Soldier in Vietnam, Walter Dean Myers, illus. by Ann Grifalconi,
HarperCollins, 2002.

People Writing Down the Days: 365 Creative Journaling Ideas for Young People by Lorraine M.
Dahlstrom, Free Spirit Publishing, 2000.

Peter and the Starcatchers, Dave Barry and Ridley Pearson, Hyperion Books for Children.
©2004.

Pirates, David L. Harrison, illus. by Dan Burr, Wordsong, 2008.

River Wild: an Activity Guide to North American Rivers, Nancy Castaldo, Chicago Review Press,
2006.

Stop This War: American Protest of the Conflict in Vietnam, Margo Fortunato Galt, Lerner Books,
2000.

Treasure Island, Robert Louis Stevenson, retold by Wim Coleman and Pat Perrin, illustrated
by Greg Rebis, Stone Arch Books, 2007.

Triskellion, Will Peterson, Candlewick, 2009.

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