

Oh Christmas Ship, Oh Christmas Ship

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Subject/Grade: English Language Arts / Grade 4

Duration: 45 minutes

Materials:

Per class:

- *The Christmas Tree Ship* by Rochelle M. Pennington ISBN # 1-930596-19-7
- Map of ship route across Lake Michigan from Thompson, MI to Chicago, IL.

Per student:

- Journals

Room Arrangements: Whatever is comfortable for your class to listen to a story.

Lesson Overview

After listening to the story *The Christmas Tree Ship*, students will write a journal (diary) entry, in cursive, from someone waiting for the Rouse Simmons at the docks. Length will vary from a ½ to a full page. Students will describe a shared experience that the people in the story lived through (before, during, or after the wreck) while applying knowledge from their Michigan History text and other stories of life on the Great Lakes.

Michigan Curriculum Benchmarks (GLCEs) Addressed

English Language Arts

R.NT.03-05.01 In classic, multicultural, and contemporary literature that is recognized for quality and merit: describe the shared human experience depicted and analyze how characters and communities reflect life.

R.CM.03-05.04 Apply significant knowledge from grade-level science, social studies, and mathematics text.

R.NT.03-05.05 Respond to individual and multiple texts by finding evidence, discussing, illustrating, and/or writing to reflect, make connections, take position, and/or show understanding.

W.PR.05.05 Proofread and edit writing using grade-level checklists and other appropriate resources both individually and in groups.

W.GR.04.01 In the context of writing, correctly use simple and compound sentences; direct and indirect objects; prepositional phrases; adjectives; common and proper nouns as subjects and objects; pronouns as antecedents; regular and irregular verbs.

4-H3.0.4 Draw upon stories, photos, artifacts, and other primary sources to compare the life of people in towns cities in Michigan and in the Great Lakes region during a variety of time periods from 1837 to the present.

Focus Question:

What kind of person would choose the life of a seaman in the early 1900's?

What would you need to be a seaman?

How would your family feel when you left port?

Learning Objectives

After this lesson, students will be able to (use active/power verbs; must be measurable):

1. Write a journal entry describing the life of a seaman. Write about how the seaman might feel knowing his ship is going down.
2. Write a journal entry describing what it is like to be a family member waiting for the ship to come in.
3. Research a crew member of the Rouse Simmons, or any sailor on the Great Lakes from the early 1900's, to predict why they chose this career. This information can be found with a web search, in a Michigan history book, or old newspaper articles. Some of the web sites listed give accounts of sailor experiences. This can take awhile, so schedule some computer time after reading the book.
4. Compare and contrast the relationships among characters within and across text through a discussion in the class.

Vocabulary: Port, harbor, schooner.

Background

A sailor's life journeying the five Great Lakes sounds romantic, but not all the journeys have been smooth sailing. The Great Lakes have seen their share of shipwrecks over the years. *The Griffin*, one of the first large ships ever to sail the Great Lakes, was launched in 1679 carried a load of furs from Green Bay on her maiden voyage. She was never seen again. *The Griffin* leads a long parade of ghost ships that provide us with great mysteries of the Great Lakes. In 1871 alone, 1,167 disasters were recorded.

Whereas luck and intuition were the tools available to early skippers, today's ship captains have very sophisticated navigational aids. Despite all that modern technology can offer, surviving a Great Lakes storm is still a challenge. The Great Lakes often can be more difficult to navigate than ocean storms.

Lake Michigan commands great respect among seafarers for several reasons. Prevailing winds sweep its length and the current caused by wind shifts around the Straits of Mackinac cause it to be the trickiest of lakes to keep on course. It also has a scarcity of natural harbors. The *Rouse Simmons* (also known as the Christmas Tree Ship) was one of those ships that was unable to navigate the great storm of November, 1912.

Procedure

1. Before you read the book *The Christmas Tree Ship*; discuss the focus questions listed above.
2. As you read the book; discuss Captain Herman Schunemann's personality, interests, and appearance. Talk about what kind of person chooses the life of a seaman in the early part of 1900's.
3. After reading the book, have students trace the route of the ship on a map of Lake Michigan. The map can be found in the Michigan history book or the internet.
4. After reading the book; have students write a journal entry from someone waiting for the ship to return. or from a crew member. Tip: Students that have difficulty writing could write a message in a bottle for a crew member that went down with the ship.

Assessment of Student Learning

Students will use rubric provided to assess their partner's writing. Teacher will grade accordingly.

Extension

Language Arts:

Write a letter to someone who works on a ship today.

http://www.marad.dot.gov/education_landing_page/adopt_a_ship/Adopt_A_Ship.htm

Mathematics:

- (1) Assuming that the *Rouse Simmons* had made it safely to Chicago, use the information below to create math problems:

Number of trees loaded on the ship: 5,000 in the hold plus 500 on deck

Price Captain Schunemann paid for the trees: \$ 0.25/each

Price of the trees when sold in Chicago: \$ 0.75/each

Discuss gross profit and net profit, taking into consideration the cost of shipping the trees and possible the cost of trees washed off the deck during the storm.

- (2) Make a graph to show the months when shipwrecks occur. Which month has the most and why?

Social Studies:

- (1) Contact a maritime museum in your area and ask what underwater archeology is currently being done.

(2) Have students research a Great Lakes shipwreck and tell the story to the class.

References

National Park Service, Shipwrecks. Retrieved on 2/22/11 from <http://www.nps.gov/applications/submerged/> - Inventory and evaluation of submerged resources in the national park system

The Great Lakes Shipwreck Historical Society, Great Lakes Shipwrecks. Retrieved on 2/22/11 from <http://www.shipwreckmuseum.com/> - information on shipwrecks off of Whitefish Point and a local museum

Swayze, Dave, Great Lakes Shipwrecks. Retrieved on 2/22/11 from <http://greatlakeshistory.homestead.com/home.html> - files on Great Lake shipwrecks

Shipwrecks in the Great Lakes Region. Retrieved on 2/22/11 from <http://www.great-lakes.net/tourism/cul/shipwrecks.html> - files on Great Lake shipwrecks and current shipwreck news

Pennington, Rochelle. (2002) *The Christmas Tree Ship*. Woodruff, WI: The Guest Cottage, Inc..

Soper, Nan and Westfield, Patrica. (2003) *Exploring the Great Lakes: A Logbook of Adventure*. Spring Lake, MI: River Road Publications.

McConnell, David. (1998). *Our Michigan Adventure*. Hillsdale, MI: Hillsdale Education Publishers, Inc..

4th Grade Writing Rubric

Objectives	Low Performance	Average	Exemplary Performance
Topic Sentence	0points No topic sentence.	1point Topic sentence does not give reader enough information about the paragraph.	2points Topic sentence gives reader a good idea of what will be discussed in the paragraph.
Supporting Sentences	0points Supporting sentences do not relate to the topic sentence.	1point Supporting sentences relate to the topic sentence.	2points Supporting sentences relate to the topic sentence and use detail.
Ending Sentence	0points No ending sentence.	1point Ending sentence repeats topic sentence often using the same words.	2points Ending sentence summarizes paragraph without using same words as topic sentence.
Content	0points Sentences do not make sense or do not relate to the topic at all.	1point Sentences make sense but may not all relate to the topic.	2points Sentences make sense and all sentences relate to topic sentence.
Sequence	0points No sequence or illogical sequence is used.	1point A basic sequence is used but 1-2 sentences are out of order.	2points A sequence is used and all sentences follow logical order.
Paragraph Indent	0points No paragraphs are indented.	1point Paragraphs are indented at least 50% of the time.	2points Paragraphs are always indented
Spelling	0points More than 5 words are misspelled.	1point 2-4 words are misspelled.	2points 0-1 words are misspelled.
Mechanics	0points More than 5 errors are made in capitalization and punctuation.	1point 2-4 errors are made in capitalization and punctuation.	2points 0-1 errors are made in capitalization and punctuation
Subject Verb Agreement	0points More than 3 errors in subject verb agreement occur.	1point 2-3 errors in subject verb agreement occur.	2points 0-1 errors in subject verb agreement occur.
	points	points	points

Like people forge christmas tree molds with the stamp "nowell molds" on the bottom. So I respond with a partial refund of 50% offer - telling her please accept my offer - it took me 2 hours to pack this up in three boxes and I know it's going to come back in pieces if you ship it back to me. Two days go buy and tonight I get a message that she rejected my offer. Whomp whomp whomp.