

Once upon a time three boys were lost at sea.
One almost drowned. One almost went crazy. One fell off a cliff.



**A 2010 Top Ten Best Books
for Young Adults**



An Idea Book For Teachers *Across the Curriculum*

Prepared by

M.H. Herlong

with the assistance of many talented teachers and dedicated schools

A great survival story and a fine portrayal of family relationships in a time of crisis – *Booklist*, starred review
An engrossing suspenseful tale of survival – *School Library Journal*
A fast-moving plot with life or death situations – *Kirkus Reviews*
Riveting – *The Sarasota Herald Tribune*
Unforgettably beautiful – *New Orleans Times Picayune*

www.thegreatwidesea.com

Please feel free to share this book with anyone who might be interested.

The contents of this book will soon appear on the website
www.thegreatwidesea.com

where they are available for free download.

The website contents will be updated occasionally as other teachers and schools share their ideas and materials.

The Great Wide Sea: **An Idea Book for Teachers**

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Welcome and Overview

Dear Teachers,

Welcome to this idea book! As I have visited schools, I have been repeatedly impressed by the creativity and dedication of the teachers I have met. These experiences plus my own two years teaching high school English and my mother's forty years in the classroom have taught me that teachers always have too much to do and welcome any help they can get to make texts more accessible and more meaningful to their students.

With this in mind, I have tried to put together materials that will be useful to you, the teacher. Knowing that each class requires something different and that *The Great Wide Sea* is used in classes from fourth through twelfth grade, I have not tried to aim at any particular grade or reading level. Instead, I have tried to create a collection of materials and ideas from which you can pick and choose. Or, you may simply let these ideas be inspiration to create your own materials. And, if you create something you would be willing to share, please email me and perhaps we can discuss the possibility of putting your materials on the website, too!

Part I includes tools useful in all classrooms. The first is a set of chapter-by-chapter study or review questions intended to help students not only understand what happens in the story but also focus on some of the underlying "whys." Next comes a set of vocabulary lists. The general list appears first in page order and then in alphabetical order. The list of sailing terms corresponds to the terms in the website glossary—I think.

Part II focuses on Language Arts issues. It includes first a set of questions investigating the elements of fiction and the writer's tools as they appear in *The Great Wide Sea*. Another set of questions is broader and geared toward either discussion or essay topics. Next comes a group of questions that focus on the poems and books mentioned in the novel. Finally, I have included a set of writing prompts that are more creative than expository.

After Language Arts comes—everything else. Accordingly, Part III is entitled "Across the Curriculum." Some schools have used *The Great Wide Sea* in their One Book/One School projects and have shared ideas about how to use the novel across the curriculum. Having taught only English, I have added to these ideas to the best of my limited abilities and hope that you will share your more specific ideas.

Part IV consists of a list of ideas for school-wide projects. As I write this letter, I have only a few items to include. I hope that as you use *The Great Wide Sea* in your schools, you will help me add more and more ideas for others to share.

In Part V, I have acknowledged those teachers or schools whose ideas I have used and who agreed to allow me to acknowledge them. Where practical, I included a reference to the teacher or school in the text. When you see a reference, turn to Part V to learn more about that teacher or school. Finally, Part VI includes some specific materials that these same teachers have shared so that you can benefit from their ideas. We are all grateful for both their talent and their generosity.

Please enjoy your voyage through these ideas. Writing *The Great Wide Sea* was a rich and fulfilling experience—but seeing what happens with it in the hands of teachers like you is even more fulfilling. Keep up the good work! Our future depends on you.

M.H. Herlong

Part I: General Tools for all Classrooms

Activities for Getting Started

1. At the beginning of the book, show some good video clips on sailing. Some websites have short clips that show all the parts of a sailboat. These clips will help students get involved in *The Great Wide Sea*. (Doulton)
2. Have students design a bulletin board or poster board display for *The Great Wide Sea*. The board can include students' questions, comments, journal entry logs, maps of the journey, quotes, and pictures of *Chrysalis*, the sea, sea creatures, the island, navigational equipment such as the EPIRB, etc. The board should be kept up-to-date as students are reading the book. (Doulton) (Mrs. Doulton's detailed poster board project is included in the Specific Materials of Part VI.)

Chapter by Chapter Study and Review Guide

(Section prepared by Dr. Ruby P. Herlong)

The following questions serve as a guide to examining and understanding the novel *The Great Wide Sea*. Use these questions just to think about the story or answer each one carefully on paper so that you will be ready to discuss your answers with others in a group setting. The numbers of the page or pages on which the questions are based are enclosed in parentheses after the question.

Prologue

1. What four characters are introduced in the first two pages and what facts do you learn about each character? (pp. 1-2)
2. What events that have already occurred do you learn about in these two pages? (pp. 1-2)

Section I: The Boat

Chapter 1

1. Through whose voice do you hear the story and through whose eyes do you see what is happening to the family? (p.4) What point of view does this narrator have? (pp. 3-8)
2. How might the story be different if Dylan, Gerry, or Dad had told it? (pp. 3-8)
3. The reader learns about the mother through a flashback. How does Ben get into the flashback? Give the sentence that introduces the flashback? (p.7)

Chapter 2

1. Here Ben tells the story of his mother as it happened, not as a flashback. It is a continuation of Chapter 1. What do you learn about his mother in this narrative? (p. 9)
2. What do you learn about Ben's father and mother in the story Ben tells of his father's quoting the lines: "Margaret, are you grieving over Goldengrove unleaving?" (p. 9)
3. What does Ben remember about his mother's funeral? What does Ben do that shows he is beginning to take charge of his brothers? (pp. 10-11)

Chapter 3

1. What dream or ambition had Dad harbored all his life? (p. 14)
2. How does Dad handle the boys' questions about the sailing trip they will take? (p. 15)
3. Who was left out when Dad made his plans to buy a boat and sail in the Bahamas? (p. 16)

Chapter 4

1. What was Ben's opinion of *Chrysalis* when he first saw the boat? (p. 18)
2. How does Gerry get on board the boat? (p. 18)
3. What was Gerry's opinion of the boat? (p. 20)

Chapter 5

1. The narrator switches back and forth in time. What time period does he tell about in the beginning of Chapter 5? (pp. 21-25)
2. How does Ben react to the writing on the packing boxes? (p. 24)
3. What does Ben take from his parents' room and why does he want this object? (p. 25)

Chapter 6

1. What special item does each of the four take from home? (pp 26-27)
2. What work did Dylan and Ben do to prepare the boat to sail? (p. 28)
3. What happened the night before they left their home—something that reveals Ben's, Gerry's, and Dad's grief over their loss? (pp. 29-30)

Section 2: The Bahamas

Chapter 7

1. What island did they sail to first and what island chain were they sailing in? (p. 31)
2. What does Ben mean and what is his tone when he says, "The Captain is always right, and on the boat Dad is always the captain"? (p. 33)
3. How do Dad and Ben each react to Gerry's falling overboard? (34-36)

Chapter 8

1. What jobs does Dad assign each son before the first overnight passage and how does each boy respond to the stars? (pp. 40-41)
2. Before Ben takes the helm, what is his reaction when Dad tells him that he must always put on the life jacket and safety harness for, if he fell off, they'd never know it? (p. 43)
3. How does Gerry's question "How many light years to Heaven?" reveal what he is thinking? Explain Dad's reaction to Gerry's question? (p. 42)

Chapter 9

1. How do Dad's behavior and his words in this chapter affect Ben? (pp. 46-51)
2. What action does Ben take at the end of the chapter that reveals to Dad how he feels toward him? (p. 51)

Chapter 10

1. How does Ben describe the boys' days when they are anchored at Bimini? (pp. 53-55)
2. What reason does Gerry give to Ben for putting the blanket over his head? (p.57)
3. What does Dad mean when he tells Gerry, "We'll have to change that Soon."? (p. 58)

Chapter 11

1. What is Ben's attitude toward the boat and the places they see? (p. 59)
2. Why doesn't Ben tell Dad how he feels about the boat? (p. 60)
3. How does the incident between Dad and Gerry in the water affect Ben's feeling for his father? (p. 65)

Chapter 12

1. Why does Ben fear crossing the Great Bahama Bank? How has his idea of the depth of the ocean changed since he has been sailing on the *Chrysalis*? (p. 68)
2. Why does Ben leave the boat when Dad announces to his sons that they'll sail across the Great Bahama Bank? (67-70)

Chapter 13

1. What is Ben's plan for the future as he swims from the boat to the island? (p.71)
2. What does Ben accept about life while he is alone on the island? (pp. 72-73)
3. What influence does his remembering his night alone on the lake at home have on his returning to the boat? (pp.74-76)

Chapter 14

1. How had Ben changed when he returned to the boat after he had run away? (pp. 77-79)
2. When Ben fixed the problem with the seaweed holding the boat back, why did he feel "sad" for his Dad? (pp. 80-83)

Chapter 15

1. How did Dad hurt his hand? (pp. 84-87)
2. After Dad cut his hand, why did he say "I'm sorry." to Ben? (p. 87)
3. Dad cried when he cut his hand. Dylan tells Ben that Dad had also cried when Ben left the boat. Then Ben asked if Dylan cried. What was Dylan's answer and what reason does he give for his action? (p. 90)

Chapter 16

1. After his Dad hurts his hand, how does Ben help him? Why does Ben not question his father (pp. 92-93)
2. What does Ben remember when Dad reads to Gerry *Where the Wild Things Are*? (p. 97)
3. What causes Ben to realize the day is his sixteenth birthday? (p. 99)

Chapter 17

1. Why does the family stay in Nassau longer than they had planned to stay? (p. 102)
2. Why do they leave suddenly? Are they fully prepared to leave? (p. 104)
3. When Gerry tells Ben he wants to go home, how does Ben answer? (p. 104)

Chapter 18

1. Why did Gerry pick Dylan to help him learn to swim? (p. 110)
2. Ben says that he almost remembered something. What does he say about this "something?" (pp. 110-111)
3. Describe the "Golden Day" on the Berry Islands and tell why it was perfect. (pp. 108-111)
4. What do you as reader learn from the story Dad tells? (pp. 112-113)

Chapter 19

1. Where does Ben think they will go next? What news does Dad give them about where they are going and what proof does he give that they are ready to go? (pp. 114-116)
2. What damage does the boat's hitting *Chrysalis* do? (p. 120)
3. Describe the argument between Ben and Dad. (pp. 121-122) What does Dad tell Ben is wrong with him (Dad)? (p. 122)

Section 3: The Storm

Chapter 20

1. What does Ben sense about the boat when he first wakes up? What does he discover when he goes to the cockpit and the deck? (pp. 124-126)
2. What is wrong with the dinghy? What is missing? (p. 126)
3. What does Dylan find? Why is what he finds important? (p. 130)

Chapter 21

1. How does Ben characterize the poem they find? What does Dylan say it is? (p. 131-132)
2. How does Ben react to his father's disappearance? (pp. 132-133)
3. How does Gerry react to his father's disappearance? (p. 135)

Chapter 22

1. What does Dylan try to do because he told Gerry they would go back to get Dad? (pp. 136-137)
2. Why is it impossible to figure out where the boat is? (pp 136-137)
3. What does Ben see that makes him say, "I think . . . that it's the end of the world."? (p.138)

Chapter 23

1. How does Ben answer when Gerry asks, "What about Dad?" (p. 141)
2. What action do Dylan and Ben take as the storm hits? (pp. 140-141)
3. What does Ben finally tell Gerry about Dad? (p. 141)

Chapter 24

1. How does Ben's focus narrow as he controls the boat in the storm? (p. 143-144)
2. What is the problem Ben sees with the main (sail)? (pp. 144-145)

Chapter 25

1. What happened to the sail? (p. 147)
2. What action does Ben take to save the boat? What is the result? (pp. 148)

Chapter 26

1. How is using the tiller in the storm different from the usual steering of a boat? (pp. 150-151)
2. How long was Ben at the helm without food or water? (p. 151)
3. Describe what Ben sees in daylight as Dylan takes the tiller. (p. 154)
4. How is Dylan different in Ben's eyes now? What does Ben learn about himself? (p. 155)

Chapter 27

1. What is the condition of the cabin when Ben wakes up? (pp. 156-157)
2. What problem does Ben have when the wind dies? How does he solve this problem? (pp. 160-161)
3. What happens at the end of Chapter 27? (p. 162)

Chapter 28

1. What happens to the boat in this chapter? (p. 164-167)
2. How can the boys finally go to sleep? (p. 167)

Chapter 29

1. Describe the cabin when Ben goes inside. (p. 170)
2. How did Ben save Gerry when he went overboard and how did Dylan help? (pp. 171-172)
3. How did Ben react after Dylan pulled him and Gerry on board and both were safe? (p. 172)

Section 4: The Island

Chapter 30

1. What has Ben learned that he expresses in the first paragraph of this chapter? (p. 173)
2. What is the position and condition of *Chrysalis* when the boys wake up? (p. 174)
3. After they find the beach, why does Ben make trips back to *Chrysalis*? (pp. 178-179)
4. What does Ben think about doing when he is alone on the beach at the end of Chapter 30 and why does he not take this action? (pp. 180-181)

Chapter 31

1. What did each boy get from the last trip to *Chrysalis*? What does Ben remember when he finds his mother's apron in Dad's pillowcase? (pp. 184-185)
2. What happens when Ben tries to beach the boat? (pp. 188-189)
3. Ben looks around and thinks they are lost in the midst of the great wide sea. What are two ways the boys are lost? (p. 190)

Chapter 32

1. Why do the boys go on a trip over the island? (pp. 191-193)
2. When Ben sees the rocks where *Chrysalis* had wrecked, why does Ben think he, Dylan, and Gerry were lucky? (pp. 200-201)
3. Ben "tries on" words to describe the island as he sees it from its highest point—"Majestic. Stunning. Awesome." Explain what he is describing when he changes the word he "tries on" to "Despair. Despair. Despair." (p. 203)
(Additional questions from Mrs. Doulton)
4. Explain why Ben wants everyone to go and see what is on the other side of the island.
5. What does Gerry do as they make their way to the other side of the island. Explain using details.
6. List three questions that Gerry asks his brothers on the trip.
7. List at least 12 different creatures that live on and around the island.
8. Define the word "despair." Use it in a complete sentence.

Chapter 33

1. What happens to Ben when Gerry says, "Are you hungry, too, Ben?" (pp. 208-209)
2. How does Gerry's killing the flounder affect the boys? (pp. 210-213)
3. How does the story Dylan tells Gerry affect Gerry and Ben? (pp. 213-214)
(Additional questions from Mrs. Doulton)
4. List the foods the boys ate for three days in a row.
5. How does Ben describe his hunger? Give 3 different examples from the chapter.
6. What does Gerry wish he could eat?
7. How do Gerry and Dylan comfort Ben as he cries?
8. What did Gerry catch that surprised Dylan and Ben? Explain how he caught it.
9. Describe the story Dylan tells Gerry before Gerry goes to sleep.

Chapter 34

1. Why does Ben have the courage to try to turn the dinghy into a sailboat? How does he make it a sailboat? (pp. 216-217)
2. What plan does Gerry have for the dinghy/sailboat? (p. 218)
3. Why did Ben lie to Gerry about their Dad's coming to get them? (218-219)
(Additional questions from Mrs. Doulton)
4. Why did Ben have to turn the dinghy into a sailboat?
5. List four materials Ben used to turn the dinghy into a sailboat.
6. After taking the dinghy on a short sail, what does Gerry ask Ben to do?
7. What is Ben's response to Gerry's request?

Chapter 35

1. How did the reef Ben fished seem different to him from other reefs? (p. 221)
2. When Ben pierces a grouper, what danger does Ben face and how do Dylan and Gerry react? (pp. 223-224)
3. How do the three boys get back to the dinghy/sailboat? (p. 225)
(Additional questions from Mrs. Doulton)
4. Explain why Ben found it difficult to catch fish on the reef.
5. What type of fish does Ben finally catch?
6. Explain what happens to the fish Ben caught.
7. What does Gerry learn to do to save Ben?
8. Why, in Gerry's words, does Gerry do this?

Chapter 36

1. What story does Dylan tell Gerry? (p. 228) What story does Ben tell Gerry? (p. 29)
2. What story does Ben tell about Dylan? (p. 230)
3. What is important about Ben's memory of Dad and about Gerry's questions about their mother? (pp. 230-231)
(Additional questions from Mrs. Doulton)
4. Describe in your own words the story Dylan told Gerry about his birth and the day he came home as an infant.
5. Describe in your own words the story Ben told Gerry about Dylan when Dylan was about two years old.
6. Explain how we know that Gerry misses his mother.
7. Why do you think the boys are sharing past memories with each other?

Chapter 37

1. What had the boys learned by the time this chapter begins? (pp. 232-233)
2. What happened to Dylan and how did Ben rescue him? (pp. 234-241)
3. How does Ben put the broken bone in place? (pp. 241-242)

Chapter 38

1. How did Dylan know that the wound was infected? (p. 245-246)
2. What does he tell Ben will happen since they have no way to treat the infection? (p. 247)
3. What does Ben decide to do? Why does he make this decision? (pp. 252-253)

Section 5: Home

Chapter 39

1. What does Ben remember about leaving the island? (pp. 254-255)
2. Describe Ben's voyage until he sees the boat. (pp. 255-257)
3. What is Ben's reaction when he sees the boat? (pp. 257-258)
4. How does Ben convince the captain to go back to the island? (p. 258-259)
5. What do they find when they reach the island? What does Gerry say? What does Dylan say? (p. 260)

Chapter 40

1. What does Ben plan to do as he lies in bed after they are rescued? (p. 262)
2. How do the boys react when their Dad walks into the room? (p. 263)
3. What is the story Dad tells the boys? How does Ben react? (pp. 264-266)
4. When Dad says he has come to take the boys home, what does Ben say? (p. 266)

Chapter 41

1. Why will Ben not go "home" with his Dad? What does Ben plan to do? (pp. 270-271)
2. Describe the conversation between Dylan and Ben in the hospital. (p. 272)
3. What does Dad tell Ben about his falling off the boat? (pp. 274-275)
4. What reason does Dad give Ben for bringing the sachet to the boys? (p. 276)
5. How is Ben's thinking of the earth and the stars connected to his memory of his mother? (p. 277)

Chapter 42

1. When Ben sees Gerry in the taxi and Dad coming from the motel, what does Dad ask him? What does Dad give him? (pp. 278-279)
2. What does Ben think about his mother after the taxi leaves? (p. 280)
3. When Ben sees the Golden Day again in his mind and tries to remember something, what does he finally remember? (pp. 281-282)
4. Why does the memory change his life? (p. 282)
5. What does Ben do in the end? (p. 283)
6. What do you know about the boys' life after this last scene? (p. 282)

General Vocabulary List
(arranged in order of appearance in the text)

Chapter	Page	Word	Chapter	Page	Word	Chapter	Page	Word
1	3	muggy		44	silhouette	17	100	cacophony
	3	scuttling	9	47	forward		100	dredge
	8	sachet		47	vibrate		100	yacht
2	11	disintegrate		49	galley		100	slip
3	13	cocoon		50	casuarina		101	hustle
	14	tsunami		51	flukes		101	hawked
	15	quiver	10	53	shipshape		101	whorls
4	17	gunk		54	skimming		103	Junkanoo
	18	corroded		54	nestled		103	cowbells
	19	stowage		54	trolled		103	fritters
	20	diesel		57	tromping		103	goombay
	20	snarl	11	59	cruisers	18	105	provision
	20	rhythmically		60	cartographers		106	wedged
	22	glisten		61	heaved		109	crescent
	22	cellophane		61	stub		109	miniatures
	23	chrome		61	stalk		109	temporary
	23	cheetah		62	flotilla		109	whiff
	24	bureau		62	flailing		109	radar
6	26	stow		62	slogged		109	bolt
	27	snorkeling	12	66	pondered		110	hyenas
	27	spearfishing		67	accelerator		112	hoisted
	27	reference		67	logbook	19	115	seaworthy
	27	outboard motor		68	keel		118	thrummed
	27	dinghy		68	plateau		118	thunked
	27	flares		70	wobbly		118	broadsidings
	29	pallet	13	72	clarifying		118	fumbling
	29	reverberating		72	spread-eagled		119	roused
	30	hysterical		73	clotted		120	adrenaline
7	31	swells		74	muffled		121	dead reckoning
	33	shakedown		74	brush line	20	125	bleary
	35	desperately	14	79	nauseating		125	self-reliant
	36	critical		80	securing		125	self-sufficient
	37	spawned		80	prop		128	rollers
	37	determined		81	mainsail	21	132	vertebra
	37	fumed		81	sargassum	22	135	variables
	37	mutilated		83	take a fix	23	139	trough
8	40	tipped		83	taut		140	forepeak
	41	mobile	15	90	flexed	24	143	frothing
	42	light year	16	92	flat		144	illusion
	42	gurgling		93	continuous	25	147	detonated
	42	fathoms		95	tinkering		147	reverberated
	44	hail		97	wake		147	stalled

Chapter	Page	Word	Chapter	Page	Word	Chapter	Page	Word
26	151	pummeling		205	distillery		248	cumulus
	154	exaggerating		205	condensation		249	pruning
	154	convoy		206	appetizer		251	radiated
	154	momentum		206	forage		251	banked
27	158	yawed	33	207	submerged		251	stench
	159	eerie		207	mussels		252	sailorly
	161	droning		207	edible	39	255	sturdied
28	165	oozing		209	apparatus		256	mauve
29	168	scudding		210	bulge		256	torrid
	171	onyx		211	yodeling		256	tranquil
30	174	rubble		211	confetti		258	idle
	174	fiberglass		213	skitter		259	gunned
	174	seepage	34	215	snare	40	261	traction
	175	breakers		215	digested		263	projectile
	175	irrevocably		216	imaginary		263	IV
	177	exposure		217	lurches		265	horizontal
	177	scrub		217	stabilized		267	corridor
	177	gouge		218	interlude		267	braiding
	177	wheeling	35	220	mystical	42	281	murmuring
	177	cawing		222	sloshed			
	179	debris		223	tentacles			
	181	summit		223	relentless			
31	182	scour		224	ricocheting			
	182	leeward		224	hypnotic			
	183	gingerly		225	frantically			
	188	gauge		226	unfurled			
	189	lumbering	36	230	spewed			
32	195	seawrack	37	232	rationed			
	195	crevice		232	crotches			
	198	hobbled		232	harvesting			
	200	foundered		233	unravel			
	200	reflective		235	plotting			
	201	stunted		236	overdrive			
	201	defiantly		236	plummeting			
	201	infinitely		238	taproot			
	201	striated		242	jabbering			
	201	mottled	38	243	rouse			
	201	pristine		243	compound			
	203	scrabbling			fracture			
	203	cawed		244	oozing			
	203	dirge		247	blotch			
33	204	nutrients		247	discolored			
	204	cache		247	reverberations			

General Vocabulary List
(arranged in alphabetical order)

Word	Chapter	Page	Word	Chapter	Page	Word	Chapter	Page
accelerator	12	67	crotches	37	232	fumbling	19	118
adrenaline	19	120	cruisers	11	59	fumed	7	37
apparatus	33	209	cumulus	38	248	galley	9	49
appetizer	33	206	dead			gauge	31	188
banked	38	251	reckoning	19	121	gingerly	31	183
bleary	20	125	debris	30	179	glisten	4	22
blotch	38	247	defiantly	32	201	goombay	17	103
bolt	18	109	desperately	7	35	gouge	30	177
braiding	40	267	determined	7	37	gunk	4	17
breakers	30	175	detonated	25	147	gunned	39	259
broadside	19	118	diesel	4	20	gurgling	8	42
brush line	13	74	digested	34	215	hail	8	44
bulge	33	210	dinghy	6	27	harvesting	37	232
bureau	4	24	dirge	32	203	hawked	17	101
cache	33	204	discolored	38	247	heaved	11	61
cartographers	11	60	disintegrate	2	11	hobbled	32	198
casuarina	9	50	distillery	33	205	hoisted	18	112
cawed	32	203	dredge	17	100	horizontal	40	265
cawing	30	177	droning	27	161	hustle	17	101
cellophane	4	22	edible	33	207	hyenas	18	110
cheetah	4	23	eerie	27	159	hypnotic	35	224
chrome	4	23	exaggerating	26	154	hysterical	6	30
clarifying	13	72	exposure	30	177	idle	39	258
clotted	13	73	fathoms	8	42	illusion	24	144
cocoon	3	13	fiberglass	30	174	imaginary	34	216
cacophony	17	100	flailing	11	62	infinitely	32	201
compound			flares	6	27	interlude	34	218
fracture	38	243	flat	16	92	irrevocably	30	175
condensation	33	205	flexed	15	90	IV	40	263
confetti	33	211	flotilla	11	62	jabbering	37	242
continuous	16	93	flukes	9	51	Junkanoo	17	103
convoy	26	154	forage	33	206	keel	12	68
corridor	40	267	forepeak	23	140	leeward	31	182
corroded	4	18	forward	9	47	light year	8	42
cowbells	17	103	founded	32	200	logbook	12	67
crescent	18	109	frantically	35	225	lumbering	31	189
crevice	32	195	fritters	17	103	lurches	34	217
critical	7	36	frothing	24	143	mainsail	14	81

Word	Chapter	Page	Word	Chapter	Page	Word	Chapter	Page
mauve	39	256	reverberations	38	247	stow	6	26
miniatures	18	109	rhythmically	4	20	stowage	4	19
mobile	8	41	ricocheting	35	224	striated	32	201
momentum	26	154	rollers	20	128	stub	11	61
mottled	32	201	rouse	38	243	stunted	32	201
muffled	13	74	roused	19	119	sturdied	39	255
muggy	1	3	rumble	30	174	submerged	33	207
murmuring	42	281	sachet	1	8	summit	30	181
mussels	33	207	sailorly	38	252	swells	7	31
mutilated	7	37	sargassum	14	81	take a fix	14	83
mystical	35	220	scour	31	182	taproot	37	238
nauseating	14	79	scrabbling	32	203	taut	14	83
nestled	10	54	scrub	30	177	temporary	18	109
nutrients	33	204	scudding	29	168	tentacles	35	223
onyx	29	171	scuttling	1	3	thrummed	19	118
oozing	28	165	seaworthy	19	115	thunked	19	118
outboard			seawrack	32	195	tinkering	16	95
motor	6	27	securing	14	80	tipped	8	40
overdrive	37	236	seepage	30	174	torrid	39	256
pallet	6	29	self-reliant	20	125	traction	40	261
plateau	12	68	self-sufficient	20	125	tranquil	39	256
plotting	37	235	shakedown	7	33	trolled	10	54
plummeting	37	236	shipshape	10	53	tromping	10	57
pondered	12	66	silhouette	8	44	trough	23	139
pristine	32	201	skimming	10	54	tsunami	3	14
projectile	40	263	skitter	33	213	unfurled	35	226
prop	14	80	slip	17	100	unravel	37	233
provision	18	105	slogged	11	62	variables	22	135
pruning	38	249	sloshed	35	222	vertebra	21	132
pummeling	26	151	snare	34	215	vibrate	9	47
quiver	3	15	snarl	4	20	wake	16	97
radar	18	109	snorkeling	6	27	wedged	18	106
radiated	38	251	spawned	7	37	wheeling	30	177
rationed	37	232	spearfishing	6	27	whiff	18	109
reference	6	27	spewed	36	230	whorls	17	101
reflective	32	200	spread-eagled	13	72	wobbly	12	70
relentless	35	223	stabilized	34	217	yacht	17	100
reverberated	25	147	stalk	11	61	yawed	27	158
reverberating	6	29	stalled	25	147	yodeling	33	211
			stench	38	251			

Sailing Terms

(Definitions to these words can be found in the website glossary.)

Chapter	Page	Word	Chapter	Page	Word
Prologue	1	rudder	7	33	foredeck
	2	mainsheet		33	halyard
4	2	tiller	33	forestay	
	2	jib	34	tack	
	17	hull	34	grommet	
	17	port	34	head	
	17	teak	35	bow pulpit	
	17	stern	35	winched	
	18	lifelines	35	close-hauled	
	18	hatches	35	leading edge	
	18	starboard	35	luff	
	18	settee	8	39	autopilot
	18	head	43	housing	
	18	forward	43	braces	
	18	V-berth	43	line	
	18	genoa	43	helm	
	18	working jib	43	safety harness	
	18	spinnaker	9	50	towline
	18	main cabin	50	50	finger pier
	18	cabin sole	10	53	man overboard pole
	18	bilge pump	14	80	cleat
	18	parallel rule	15	84	bimini
	18	quarter berth	16	94	gunwale
	19	aft	17	104	backstay
	19	waterline		104	fenders
	19	draft	19	114	main
	19	rigging		114	winch handle
	19	companionway	23	141	clew
	19	topsides		142	reach
	20	mast	24	143	beam reach
20	cockpit		143	leech	
6	26	hanging locker		144	reefed
	27	GPS	25	149	scupper holes
	27	emergency pack	28	165	dorade vents
	27	EPIRB	34	218	point
	28	sextant		218	tack
	28	anemometer			

Part II: Tools for the Language Arts Classroom

Elements of Fiction and the Writer's Tools

(Section primarily prepared by Dr. Ruby P. Herlong)

You have read *The Great Wide Sea*. You know the events and the characters now. Probably you have felt close to the characters as you have experienced with them all the happenings of their lives. You can be an interpreter as you use the following items to think and wonder about the book.

First you may wonder why it is called “fiction.” What is fiction anyway? Fiction is a prose story based in the imagination of the author, not in literal facts. The essence of fiction is narration—relating a sequence of events. However, fiction is grounded in the real and personal and it is based in realism or verisimilitude of everyday life. The characters are like real human beings. Fiction is not faithful to history but presents to the reader a meaningful view of life.

Fiction has the following elements:

1. Characters are like real human beings since they must be drawn from life.
2. Story is the series of lifelike actions or events that the characters go through.
3. Plot is the interrelationship of incident and character within a total design, the story's map.
4. Conflict, which is the essence of plot, is the struggle in which the protagonist (main character) is engaged.
5. Structure is the way the plot is assembled. If the story is told in straight chronological order from beginning to end, then plot and structure are virtually identical, but there are many other ways to assemble the plot.
6. Theme or motivating idea is the underlying idea of the work. It is implied and not stated and it ties the story together. A story usually has more than one theme or motivating idea.

What are the tools that the writer uses to create fiction?

1. Narration—the reporting of actions or events
2. Style—the manipulation of language—use of active verbs, specific concrete nouns, vivid description, dialogue
3. Point of view—the angle of vision through which the reader sees the story. It is the position from which things are viewed, understood, and then communicated. The person through whose eyes the reader sees events may be mistaken.
4. Description—the manner in which the writer brings scenes to the reader's imagination. Mood and atmosphere are often created by description.
5. Dialogue—conversation of the characters—must be specific for each character
6. Symbolism—the use of an ordinary thing to become a symbol of an idea, a value, an experience
7. Imagery—pictures the reader sees, sounds the reader hears
8. Commentary—the author's opinions on places and characters

As you think and wonder about *The Great Wide Sea*, try to analyze it according to the preceding lists by using the following questions as a tool to study this work of fiction.

Elements of Fiction in The Great Wide Sea

Character

1. Have students choose a character and keep a log of the character's experiences as they read the book. Students can keep this log in a small 40 page composition book. This activity both teaches character and engages students in the book. It also shows how much the students are comprehending the plot and the interactions of their character to other characters, the land, sea, and animals. Allow students to include illustrations with their logs. (*Doulton*)
2. Make a list of three statements that each character makes that reveal something about that character. What does the statement reveal about the character?
3. Describe Ben's character at the beginning of the story (after deciding what *you* mean by the beginning of the story) and then at the end. Has he changed? How? Can you list at least three moments in the story where this change happens or is revealed?
4. Dylan and Ben are very different characters. For example, why is Dylan *not* in conflict with his father? Does Dylan's character change? Does Ben's view of Dylan change?
5. Gerry is only five when the story starts. What changes occur in his character?
6. Dad is sometimes hard to understand. If you think of the beginning of the story as the time before Mom died, can you describe changes in Dad's character from that moment to the end of the story?

Story, Plot, and Structure

1. Summarize in a paragraph the story that Ben tells in the novel. Remember the story is the events the characters go through.
2. What is the plot or map of the story? How is it different from the story itself? Remember that plot is the interrelationship of events and characters.
3. What is the structure of the novel? The story is not told straight through, so the structure is not the same as the plot.
4. How does the structure of the novel relate to the plot of the novel? In other words, why is the book ordered the way it is? How does the order of the book connect to the theme or themes of the book?

Theme

1. What are some of the themes or motivating ideas of the story? How do you know? Point to particular events, series of events, or passages from the text that prove you are right.

Tools of the Writer

Narration

1. The epilogue introduces the story. Notice that in this book, the author is not narrating the story. One of the characters is narrating. How do you know this right away? How does the narrator begin to clue you in to who he is?
2. As the story proceeds, Ben does not tell it in chronological order. Why?

Style

1. The author's style is the way the author uses language. How does the fact that the entire novel comes to us through the eyes and the voice of Ben affect the words or the style?
2. People often have different styles depending on what they are talking about or who their audience is. Ben has at least two audiences. One is the person to whom he is telling this story. The other is the people he is living the story with. Is there a difference in the way Ben addresses these two audiences? Can you point to examples?

Point of View

1. Everything the reader knows is through the mind and voice of Ben. What does Ben say about each of the other characters? Is his evaluation always correct? Give an example of a time when you think his evaluation is incorrect.
2. Because we see everything through Ben's point of view, we cannot see anything from Dad's, Dylan's, or Gerry's point of view. Are there times in the story when you think their point of view might be different from Ben's? When? Why?

Description

1. Ben's description is detailed and powerful. Give specific examples of the way he enables the reader to see, hear, feel, taste, or smell some specific item.
2. Because the novel is written from Ben's point of view, we don't hear any description from anyone else. Imagine how Dylan would describe the Bahamian fisherman taking the conch out of its shell. What does the difference in descriptive technique tell you about their different characters?

Dialogue

1. Dialogue in fiction has two purposes—to move the action forward or to reveal something about character. Find an example of each type of dialogue in the text.
2. Dialogue in fiction is often very different from dialogue in real life. For example, all of our "umms" and repetitions must be removed—unless they are included to indicate something about the character. Find an example of dialogue where the way the words are spoken or the *choice* of words indicates something about the character.

Symbolism

1. A motif is an object or image that occurs repeatedly. It does not necessarily have a direct connection to a particular meaning. In contrast, a symbol provides a more direct connection between a thing and an idea, value, or experience. Here is a list of some of the possible motifs and symbols in *The Great Wide Sea*. Think about what they may or may not be indicating in terms of ideas and values.

The great wide sea	<i>Chrysalis</i> , the boat
A butterfly's chrysalis	Blankie
A butterfly	Charts
The sachets and apron	Orion

Now think of motifs and symbols not on this list.

Imagery

1. You might think that imagery comes only in the descriptive passages of a book. This is not true. Metaphors, similes, and other forms of imagery can appear anywhere. Locate at least three examples of imagery that are *not* included in a descriptive passage.

Commentary

(Teachers: As the author, my view is that this text does not contain commentary by the author. All the commentary comes from Ben. Yet literary theorists would be quick to point out that every choice an author makes as she constructs or tells a story is a form of commentary. According to these theorists, the author is often unaware of her own commentary. Hence, I am happy to conclude that I am automatically disqualified from making suggestions about how to approach this aspect of fiction in this particular text.)

Discussion and Essay Questions

1. The prologue raises several questions that circulate throughout the story. The first one is the problem of memory. To what extent is our memory edited or created? Another is the problem of “lying.” Is Gerry really lying or is it that the memories are so intense for Ben that he cannot imagine someone else not remembering? A third one is the motif of story-telling. This is connected with the problem of memory. As Ben tells stories, he turns life into a narrative—he neatens it up; he gives it a story line; he creates meaning. To do this, he has to leave out some things and emphasize others. This requirement of narrative is one of the problems of the whole book. We always have to be wondering to what extent Ben is telling the actual facts and to what extent he is giving simply his interpretation. This is especially relevant when we recall that this grief-stricken fifteen-year-old has lost not only his mother but also—in a real way—his father. To what extent does his overwhelming grief and anger color his perception, especially of his father?

2. On pages 10 and 11 when Ben says, “It’s not fair,” what are two different things he might think are not fair. Which do you think he means? Why?

To teachers: Of course one meaning is that it is not fair that his mother has died. He also may mean that it is not fair that his father has retreated from his duties during the funeral, something Ben feels he himself is not allowed to do and something that Ben feels creates more duties for Ben because he has to fill in for his father.

3. On page 16, we learn that the boat is named *Chrysalis*. Later we learn exactly what that word means. Why would the author choose that name for the boat? How does it relate to what happens in the story? Throughout the book there are other references to butterflies and caterpillars. Can you think of a way to tie some of these in to the overall theme of a chrysalis?

4. On pages 24 through 25, we learn that Ben thinks Dad is going to throw away all of Mom’s stuff. Read this section carefully and consider what evidence Ben has to support this belief. Is Ben correct here? Why doesn’t Dad respond to Ben’s accusation?

5. In Chapter 6, we learn about the special item that each member of the family brought with him on the boat.

Why do you think each one made the choice he did?

What is one thing that each had to leave behind?

What do we later learn that Dad also brought?

6. At the end of Chapter 6, Dad does not respond to Gerry’s cry. What is Dad holding at the time? What are the other times it appears in the story? Why might it symbolize? When it is lost, what does that symbolize?

7. In Chapter 7, Ben tells of Gerry’s falling overboard. How might Dad have told this story? Can you imagine what he might have been thinking that Ben can’t—or refuses—to see?

8. In Chapter 8, page 42, Ben tells about Gerry's question, "How many light years is it to Heaven?" Remember that we are seeing all these events through Ben's eyes. If Dad were telling the story of this moment, how might it change?
9. On page 45, Ben describes the horizon as "a place you never get to." What does this description tell about how Ben is feeling at that moment? He mentions the horizon many times in the story. Can we examine some of his descriptions and see them as a sort of barometer of his feelings?
10. On pages 63 through 65 Ben tells the story of Dad's forcing Gerry to go under the water. Imagine that you are Dad. Why would you want your son to be able to swim? Note that when Ben yells at Dad not to hold Gerry down, Dad responds, "I was holding him up." Who is right? How can you know?
11. On page 72, Ben says that he "wanted to feel clean and empty, like an open dinghy drifting free. [He] wanted to be blank and invisible." Why would anybody want that!?! Can you draw a connection between his feelings here and his feelings described on page 173 where he says, "The thing about life is that it goes on. . . . No matter what happened the day before, you wake up and there is life and you have to do something about it."
12. On page 76, Ben mentions that he turned on the anchor light. It is a very small moment. Why would the author include a description of that moment? Could it be symbolic of something?
13. On page 52 Ben says of Dad, "It's hard to live with someone you can't stand. Everything he does makes you mad—the way he drinks his coffee or the way every once in a while he takes a deep breath and then puffs it out through his lips. You can't watch him yawn or stretch or scratch. You can't stand to be close enough that you might touch." Then on page 79 Ben says of Dad, "He sat down and sipped at his cup. I remembered that from home. The way he held the cup in two hands and brought it to his face like a bowl. He sipped. He paused. He sipped. Three times. Then he lowered the cup into his lap, took in a deep breath, and arched his back in a slow stretch." Given what Ben says on page 52, you might think he would be incredibly angry watching Dad drink coffee and stretch on page 79. But he is not. What has changed? How can you explain it?
14. On page 93, what is different about the way the decision to move on is made? Why do you think it has changed?
15. On page 104, Gerry asks Ben how long it's been. Ben doesn't answer right away. He pauses and then asks Gerry, "Since what, Buddy?" What are the events that Ben might think Gerry is asking about? Gerry doesn't answer Ben. Why?
16. On pages 112 through 113 Dad tells the story of how Gerry learned to "swim naked." What do you learn about Dad from the way he tells the story? What do you learn about Dad from the way he treats Gerry during dinner and while he tells the story.

17. On page 113, Dad becomes the stargazer and points out Orion. Ben says, "Orion was bright, especially his belt." Orion's belt is made up of three very bright stars. Why would the author of this book choose Orion to be the constellation the family sees at this moment in the story? Orion is mentioned several other times in the book. Can you come up with any reason for its repeated appearance?
18. On page 120, we read that the collision with another boat has scraped off part of the name painted on the *Chrysalis'* stern. All that is left is *Chrys—is*. Some readers see this as now spelling "crisis." Some see it as spelling "Chris (the mom's name) is." How do you see it? Why?
19. On page 122, Ben thinks about the events that came together to cause them to be sailing to Bermuda. One of them is "if I hadn't gotten so angry." What does it say about Ben that he would think this? Thinking back over other events in the story, can you find moments when his anger may have impeded his understanding or changed the way things worked out?
20. In Chapter 21, Ben and Dylan find the poem Dad wrote to his wife. Now that you have finished the book, who do you think is right, Ben or Dylan?

To teachers: Students often ask me whether Dad tried to kill himself. My answer is an emphatic no! He loved his boys much too much to do that! Of course, it is an open question from a psychological point of view as to whether he was careless with his own life. That I cannot presume to answer. In helping students understand the complexity of Dad's feelings, I might call their attention to Ben's articulation of feelings that may be very similar to Dad's. For example, at home after the funeral, Ben wants to "disappear" or "disintegrate" (11). The first night on the island, when he is looking at "the next day and the next day and the next day," he considers alternatives. "To dissolve in crying, to wade out into the dark ocean, to disappear into deep space" (181). His "insides trembled" (181). In other words, he is struggling with the urge to escape a future that seems impossible to cope with. But like his father, he quotes from Dylan Thomas and the light comes and he chooses to continue. Note also the use of the verb "fell" on page 274. See question 30 below.

21. On page 144, Ben says of the storm, "[C]ontrol is an illusion." Can you draw any parallels between this insight and the moment of insight on page 75 when he says, "I was wrong."
22. On page 185, Ben holds his mother's apron to his face. "I rubbed the apron against my face and breathed it in. Surely her scent lay hidden in the folds." Mom's scent is mentioned in several contexts in the story. What are some of the other ways and times it comes up. What does it mean to the boys?
23. On page 214, Dylan completes the story he is telling Gerry of how Mom gave him Blankie. Is it a sad story? How would you answer all the questions running through Ben's mind?
24. On page 218, we see the idea of rewinding a tape or rewriting a show to change the end. Where have we seen this before? What does the change in how it is used tell us about Ben?

25. Storytelling is a recurrent theme and activity in this book. In Chapter 36, Dylan and Ben tell stories about their earlier life. Why is this not painful for them? What could be the value of telling these stories?
26. On page 251, Ben tells Dylan a “story.” Why does he cast the question in the form of a story? How is that helpful to him?
27. On page 253, Ben says to his sleeping brothers, “I love you. I need you. I couldn’t leave you if it wasn’t so.” What does this mean?
28. On page 259, Ben says “the sand felt like home.” The nature of home is a problem that runs through the story. What it means to Ben changes. Why? How?
29. On page 261, Ben complains that he is not allowed to stay close to his brothers. Do you remember when he complained about being close? When was that? What has changed?
30. On page 274, Dad explains that he did not want to let go of the EPIRB. Immediately afterward, Ben thinks of a series of various scenes. He wonders “what had happened to the life jacket Dad had been wearing when he fell into the sea.” Note that Ben uses the word “fell.” What does this tell you about Ben’s thinking?
31. On page 277, Ben thinks about the fact that “the stars don’t change. We do.” Can you draw any parallels between the way we see the night sky and the way we see Life? Remembering that you are seeing this story through the eyes of only one of the characters, think about how much of the story you may not be seeing!
32. On pages 279-280, we see Gerry calling out for Ben. Does this remind you of an earlier scene when Gerry called out for Dad? How do these scenes relate to each other?
33. On page 280, Ben’s brain finally remembers something. Besides the Golden Day, what was the other moment when his brain was trying to remember? Why would these three moments be moments that would trigger this memory?
34. On page 282, Dad tells a story. What is he trying to tell Ben about life with this story?
35. Do you think Ben jumped?

Thinking about the poems and books the family read

1. On page 9, Dad quotes from a poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins. Read that poem. What is Margaret really grieving about in the poem? Why would the author of *The Great Wide Sea* include a line from that particular poem in this particular chapter? In other words, how does the poem relate to what happens in the book?
2. On page 10, Dad quotes from a poem by Dylan Thomas: “Do not go gentle into that good night. Rage, rage against the dying of the light.” Dylan Thomas wrote this poem to his dying father as a sort of plea for him to resist death. In the poem, Thomas encourages anger as an emotion that may do the trick. Here on page 10, the poem appears for the first of three times. Each time it appears, it can be seen as a similar plea, either to someone else or on behalf of the speaker himself. Look at each of these three moments. Consider who is quoting the poem and what the poem may mean to him at the moment.
3. On page 96, Dad reads aloud a poem by Emily Dickinson. When Ben says, “That was a real cheerful poem,” what does he mean? Dad answers, “But true.” What truth does the poem state? Why would Dad know? Why would the author of *The Great Wide Sea* have Dad read that particular poem?
4. On page 96, Dad begins reading aloud to Gerry from the book *Where the Wild Things Are*. This particular book raises a lot of questions.

First, Gerry says the monsters in the story are mean. What is “mean” about the monsters? Has Gerry used that word to describe anybody else so far? Thinking of the members of the Byron family, would you use that word to describe any of them? Why? When Dad asks, “You think so?” could he be suggesting he does not agree with Gerry? How could that be?

Second, when the monsters threaten to eat up Max and then tell him that they love him, Ben laughs. What could be funny about that? Now think about how Ben and his Dad treat each other or how Ben sometimes treats his brothers. Think about the monsters who threaten to hurt the one they love the most. Can you draw any parallels?

Third, think about what happens in *Where the Wild Things Are*. As older readers, we know that Max’s trip is a dream. But if we think about it as a real voyage, can we draw some parallels between Dad’s decision and Max’s dream decision? Why did each of them decide to sail away? Did they get what they wanted?

5. On page 266, Dad reads aloud to his students. The first line is from a poem by Emily Dickinson. Read the poem. Why would the author of *The Great Wide Sea* choose to include that poem in this book? In other words, how do the ideas in the poem relate to the story of the Byron family?

Writing Prompts

Writing a Journal

Choose a character and keep a journal of that character's thoughts and experiences as you read the book. (*Teachers: Depending on the class, you might want to limit students to a character other than Ben. This gives them the opportunity to imagine what that character is thinking or feeling that Ben can't see or know.*) (Doulton – Mrs. Doulton contributed her detailed instructions for this assignment. Please see Part VI.)

Write a dialectical journal. From different sections of the book, choose two interesting quotes that grab your attention and respond to the quotes. (Doulton – Mrs. Doulton contributed her detailed instructions for this assignment. Please see Part VI.)

Writing a Letter

Choose one of the characters in the story and write a letter that character might have written to someone at home. What would your character want the person at home to know about what had been happening or about how the character had been feeling? What would your character have to explain that he couldn't expect the person at home to know already.

(At one school, teachers referred to this as the "Letter in a Bottle" project. The students wrote the letters, beat up the paper to make it look as if it had been in a bottle, and glued the letter on a poster with pictures representing different places and items referred to in the letter.)

Writing a Children's Story

Dad reads *Where the Wild Things Are* to Gerry. Even though this book seems to be about a wolf suit and monsters, it is really about love and home. Can you write a children's story that seems to be about something children enjoy but is really about something else?

Writing Fiction

The Great Wide Sea includes the description of many events. However, many things happened to the Byron family that are not described. Imagine you are the character listed below and you are telling a part of the story that didn't get into the book.

Dylan: telling the story of putting away his telescope before they left home.

telling the story of how he fell and what it was like waiting all night on the ledge.

telling the story of the days he and Gerry waited on the island for Ben.

Dad: telling the story of getting the phone call and going to the scene of the accident.

telling the story of his last night on the boat.

telling the story of first getting the phone call that the boys were alive and then traveling back to get them.

Gerry: telling the story of the first sail on the re-fitted dinghy and getting the idea of going back to get Dad.
telling the story of the days he and Dylan waited on the island for Ben.
telling the story of being in the cab and driving away.

Ben: telling the story of what happened after he dropped his bag and started running.

Teachers: You might try asking the students to begin their stories with “Once upon a time.” I suggest this option for two reasons.

First, the students will immediately be placed in the context of this particular novel. The novel begins with this motif and carries it through as the family tells stories about their lives. Obviously this is a family tradition that Dad started. To some extent it allows the family members to step outside their lives and see their lives objectively. It also allows them to find or to create a meaning in the events of their lives. Finally, it allows the family simply to remember. Students may feel more like their character if they use this standard Byron family technique.

Second, it seems to me that we ask students to write fiction not only to exercise their imagination muscle but also to exercise their structuring muscle. We want them to understand that a story is a made thing. It is an organized series of events and each part of it is chosen for a specific reason. Thus, using the “once upon a time” phrase does two things for a student storyteller. First it puts the student directly into a story-telling rather than a journalistic mode. The necessity for a narrative arc as opposed to a simple recitation of events and emotions becomes more evident. Secondly, we tend to believe that such a beginning indicates a story that has been mythologized—at least a bit. It indicates a story that carries a point, a message. If a student uses this phrase, it is possible that he or she will instinctively understand that the writing needs to be shaped into a narrative rather than simply reported as a series of events.

Writing Poetry

Some readers have described the style of writing in *The Great Wide Sea* as lyrical. This seems an odd term to apply to the words of a fifteen to almost-seventeen-year-old boy. Find a passage in the book that you think qualifies as lyrical. Can you rewrite it as a poem?

Read pages 202-203. Here Ben is describing what he sees as he stands on the highest point of the island and looks down. Notice some of the words he uses. Notice some of the images. Notice that his description appeals to all the senses except taste. Now write a similar description—equally specific in terms, images, and appeal to the senses—about something you have seen. Can you turn your words into a poem?

Dad recites from four different poems, each written in a different form. Examine each of these poems and note that each has a clear structure. Use the structure of one of these poems to write a poem of your own.

(Teachers: The full text of each poem is on the website.)

Find or write a poem that Dad or one of the other members of the family might have been thinking at some point in the story.

(Teachers: Three good choices might be Dickenson's "The First Day's Night Had Come," Frost's "The Road Not Taken," and Masefield's "Sea Fever.")

On page 131, you can find the one poem Dad writes in this story. Look up the words to the song he is referencing, "Unchained Melody." Notice how he used the images in that song to create his own message. Now think about a song that is important to you and write a poem that reinterprets the song and delivers your own personal message using particular words or images from the song.

(Teachers: The website contains a link to this song.)

Part III: *The Great Wide Sea* Across the Curriculum

The Arts

Visual Arts

1. Have students design different book covers for *The Great Wide Sea*. This activity is good for students who can capture the meaning of what they read through personal sketches and pictures. Hang the book covers on the wall and have other students and faculty members view them. Ask: Which book cover captures your attention the most? Would you want to open the book to find out more or purchase the book based on the book cover? (*Doulton*)

Dramatic Arts

1. Have students write and perform a short skit based on a part of the book. For example, students can act out some scenes on the island, sailing *Chrysalis*, or the rescue at the end. (*Doulton*)
2. Have students write a short dialogue between two characters in the book. For example, a great dialogue would be Ben's interaction with his father at the end of the book. Have students pair up and perform their dialogues. (*Doulton*)

Music

1. Students will want to learn what Goombay rhythms are. How do a cowbell and a conch shell make music? What makes Caribbean music sound like Caribbean music? One school's band undertook a steel drum performance for the entire school. (*Cypress Lake*)

Computer Skills

One teacher had each student prepare a web page providing information on something relevant to the story or to the marine world in general. For example, one student did a web page on signal flags while another filled a page with information about the hammerhead shark. (*Cypress Lake*)

Journalism

One journalism class prepared a newspaper filled with articles and advertisements that would be relevant to the Byrons. In addition to many other clever items, the newspaper included an article on Mom's car accident and an advertisement for exactly the kind of car Ben seems to want. (*Cypress Lake*)

Mathematics and Geometry

Math and geometry classes may be a particularly good match for *The Great Wide Sea* because navigation requires math. It is mathematics in the real world! Below, I have listed points in the book where math and geometry matter greatly to the Byron family.

1. On page 40, Dad tells the boys that at every hour during their watch, they are to record their speed and direction. Why do they have to do this? And why is Dad so upset on pages 46-47 when he finds Ben sleeping on watch without having made his calculations.
2. On page 42, Dylan is explaining light years to Gerry. If a light year is six million million miles, how would one write that out in numerals? How can the distance to various planets and stars be calculated and the numbers reduced so that we can manipulate them?
3. Using the information Ben provides on page 123, can you estimate approximately how many miles the family had traveled toward Bermuda by the time the storm struck?
4. When Ben says on page 128, "We have to make a one-eighty," what does he mean? If they were heading north-northeast before they made a one-eighty, what direction would they be heading afterwards?
5. On page 135, Ben and Dylan acknowledge that they are lost. Why? What does Ben mean when he says there were too many variables?
6. On page 136, Dylan is doing the best he can with figuring out where they are. How does the fact that they are traveling with a current impact his calculations? What would he have to change if they were traveling against the current?
7. On page 152, Ben is trying to estimate how far they have traveled. What calculation is he doing? How far has he traveled?
8. On page 256 when Ben is sailing in the dinghy away from the island, he says that he kept the Pole Star "hard to starboard." That means that he kept the Pole Star at a right angle to his direction of travel. Why did he do that? What could happen if he did not understand the difference between a right angle and a forty-five degree angle? *(This question works with the simple fact that the directions of the compass are at certain angles to each other. Of course, a compass is a visual representation of the concept of degrees in an angle.)*
9. Boats always travel at an angle to the wind. The different points of sail relate to these different angles. What is the angle of the wind to the boat when the boat is on a beam reach? A reach? Close-hauled? Running? *(Teachers: Information about the points of sail is available on the website.)*
10. The sextant works because it measures the angle of the sun to the horizon. A very advanced class could work with a sextant and try to calculate position. Such a class might be interested to know that in the days of the Napoleonic Wars, young gentlemen on board ship who were training to become captains were schooled in the use of the sextant. Class was routinely held at noon to shoot sun shots and calculate position. Naturally, those young gentlemen with a gift in math excelled in this endeavor.

The Sciences

Like mathematics and geometry, principles of science are critical to sailors. These principles fall under several different categories:

Physics

1. What makes boats go? While many people believe the wind pushes a sailboat, in fact most of the time the wind is pulling the boat. The principle is the same as the one that makes an airplane fly, Bernoulli's principle. But for this principle, sailors could only travel in the same direction as the wind. Note all the different points of sail and the way that in each one, the angle of the sail relative to the wind is the same. The idea is to keep that angle so that it is most conducive to creating the "pull" described in Bernoulli's principle.

(Teachers: Please note that the basics (the very basic basics) of sailing are on the website.)

Astronomy

The sun

1. Dylan takes "sun shots" in order to navigate. Why? What are the physical facts about the relationship of the sun, the earth, and the hour that make "sun shots" inform a sailor as to his location on the sea.

The stars

1. What would sailors do without the stars? Note how frequently the Byron family references them. Note Ben's explanation on page 277 of why we can see certain stars at certain times.
2. If star charts are available, students might be interested in checking to see whether the author of *The Great Wide Sea* got the sky right! Are the stars in the book visible at the correct hours, dates, and places? I tried hard but I make no guarantees!
3. Students might be interested in mapping their own skies, particularly in noting whether and when the constellations and stars mentioned in the text are visible in their own sky.

Teachers: The website contains information on each star or constellation referenced in the text as well as an explanation of why the night sky changes.

The moon

1. The moon is an almost constant companion to the sailor. Surprisingly, many people do not know that the moon follows its own logic for appearing, rising, and setting.
Teachers: The website contains the basics for explaining these phenomena.
2. An innovative student might be interested in making a mobile that demonstrates the way the earth revolves around the sun and the way the moon revolves around the earth. One student made an excellent animation on the computer.
3. Students might also be interested in tracking the state of the moon for a month or so. One teacher asked the students to photograph the moon every night for a month. Unfortunately, this is not a workable assignment because the children were not necessarily awake when the

moon was visible and they were flummoxed as to what to do when the moon was hidden! However, some version of this that takes into account these difficulties might make a very interesting project.

Biology

1. While the Byron family knows a lot about the world around them, there are questions they would like answered:
 - What is turtle grass?
 - What is sargassum?
 - Is the conch dead when it comes out of the shell?
 - Are Bahamian lobsters just like Maine lobsters?
 - How does a hammerhead shark find somebody in the water?
 - How do you get the eggs out of a sea urchin?
 - Are there, in fact, no rattlesnakes on the island?
 - Is there really such a thing as fire coral?
 - How can a cactus be edible?
 - When are sea grapes ripe?
 - Was there a plant that could have helped Dylan if they had known?
 - Sea gulls are scavengers; terns are not. What's the difference?
2. The boys' reliance on the reef around the island to protect the beach from waves and to provide a fishing spot highlights the importance of our coral reefs. A unit on the reefs could focus on the magnificent reef off Andros Island.

Oceanography

1. The importance of the Gulf Stream to a sailor can be highlighted by imagining Ben's explaining to Gerry why sailing with or against the Gulf Stream affects how fast you get somewhere even though the number on your speedometer stays the same.
2. Another way the Gulf Stream matters to the boys is in the storm where the waves are the result of the head-on collision between the wind and the current.
3. What makes waves? What determines how big they are? What determines the space between them? (*Teachers: An elementary explanation of this is on the website.*)
4. Science and art converge in the book's cover. Students studying the waves may want to examine the hardback cover and ask, "Is this situation possible?" (*Teachers: This answer is, "Only with a miracle." The boat is sailing into waves created by wind that is blowing the opposite direction it would need to be blowing for the boat to be sailing in the direction it is sailing. Moreover, no sailor would have all his sails up in such a wind!*)

Writing in the sciences

Writing projects do not frequently show up in science class. Students, however, might enjoy the following: Imagine that you are Dylan and you are explaining things to Gerry. Every time you tell him something, he asks, "Why?" Keep explaining until you have to say, "I don't know."

Explain to Gerry what makes a sailboat go.

Explain to Gerry why the stars move.

Explain to Gerry why the moon rises and sets and why it does it at different times.

Social Studies

Our Caribbean neighbors are not always included in standard social studies classes. This is an opportunity to make sure students understand that a wide variety of nations, cultures, and topographies fills the Caribbean Sea.

1. More specifically, each location mentioned in *The Great Wide Sea* is an actual location in the Bahamas. There are many websites and books, especially travel books, that describe these locations. Students might create web pages or prepare travel brochures for these different locations.
2. Unfortunately, the Byrons could not travel through the entire seven hundred islands. Students might plot an alternative journey that takes in the eastern and southern islands and then prepare a cruise brochure to convince Dad to change his plans!
3. The culture of the Bahamas is rich and varied from the indigenous peoples (who left an underwater canoe in a blue hole on Andros), to the run-away slave community at Red Bay, to the former British Loyalists in Spanish Wells, to the modern day casinos of Nassau. Students will want to research goombay rhythms and the Junkanoo shuffle. Perhaps they will want to make a headdress for the Junkanoo parade.
4. Geography class is the perfect place to work with latitude and longitude to plot the family's journey. A rough chart is on the website.
5. If in mathematics class the students can figure out approximately where the family was when the storm struck and then make an educated guess as to how far south they traveled in the storm, perhaps in geography class they can find the estimated latitude and longitude of both the storm's beginning and the deserted island.

Part IV: School-Wide Projects

Some ideas taken from innovative, creative, and dedicated teachers:

1. Invite the Coast Guard to share their knowledge with the students or invite a local sailor to bring in a few items of show and tell and to demonstrate knots. (*Cypress Lake and Doulton*)
2. Invite an instructor from a sailing school to speak to the students about sailing. It is possible the instructor might have access to a small sailboat like an Optimist Pram or a Laser that could be trailered to school and used to demonstrate some very basic principles.
3. Draw or tape off on a floor the shape of a boat approximately 33 feet long. (You can use the diagram on the website to get the proportions right.) Students can lie down in the places where the berths would be to get a sense of exactly how cramped the space is! (*Cypress Lake*)
4. Have a writing contest! Winners can submit their work to be included on the website. (*Cypress Lake*)
5. Have a great meal—conch chowder, fresh fish, key lime pie. Perhaps you can locate some sea grape jelly to round things off. (*Cypress Lake*)
6. Learn about signal flags. One media specialist hung flags in the media center, changing the message regularly and challenging students to compete to decipher it. (*Cypress Lake*)
7. Invite some local stores or organizations to share their wares or interests with students. One school hosted a Maritime Fair, inviting the Coast Guard (which brought a boat!), a local astronomy club (which brought its telescopes), wildlife rescue organizations (which brought in wildlife!), and fishing and marine stores (which brought in a GPS, an EPIRB, and other gear). (*Cypress Lake*)
8. Depending on your resources, the winners of any or all of these contests might be invited for a morning's sail with a local sailor or, again depending on your locale and your community responsiveness, the winner might win a free sailing lesson!

Part V: Acknowledgements

A number of teachers and schools have contributed to this idea book. I would like to acknowledge three in particular.

Dr. Ruby P. “Bela” Herlong: This incredibly talented teacher is also known as “Mama.” My mother has taught English for over forty years. In 1967 she was named South Carolina Teacher of the Year and was one of the five finalists for the *Look Magazine* National Teacher of the Year award. Her most recent accolade was receiving the 2009 Governor's Award in the Humanities for a lifetime of achievement.

Sally Miglio-Doulton: Sally teaches at Manhasset Middle School, Long Island, New York. This past spring, she worked with a class of seventh and eighth graders enrolled in Scholastic’s “Read 180” program. One of the texts she used was *The Great Wide Sea*. I was privileged to speak with her students via video conference and found them and their work product to be impressive. Sally has been especially generous in sharing her ideas and materials. She is taking her first sailing adventure this summer. I know she will love it!

Cypress Lake Middle School, Fort Myers, FL: Cypress Lake annually chooses a book for its One School/One Book program. Under this program, headed up by Principal Jeananne Folaros, each student and faculty member reads the same book over a period of approximately three weeks. All the various disciplines attempt to incorporate the text into their classroom activities. The program culminates in a final day of festivities. This past spring I was able to attend as author and speak to the students. The school had organized an incredible “Maritime Fair” involving many members of the community eager to share their expertise and interests with students who had been deeply engaged in *The Great Wide Sea* and all things maritime for the past three weeks. Both the extended program and its culminating fair are stunning examples of what dedicated teachers, interested students, and an involved community can achieve.

Part VI: Specific Materials

Poster Board Project

(Created by Mrs. Sally Miglio-Doulton)

Criteria for *The Great Wide Sea* Poster board

- 1) Poster board must be a tri-fold in one of the following colors: red, blue, green, yellow or white.
- 2) The book title and author's name must be typed using a large point size and creative font.
- 3) Heading must be on poster: YOUR NAME

Class

Teacher's Name

- 4) Illustrations that show important characters, places, or events
- 5) An illustration that shows your favorite part of the book.
- 6) Include two (2) quotes from the book that represent your character. The quotes should be exciting!
- 7) **A MESSAGE TO THE AUTHOR** (5-10 sentences). Remember, you will be sharing this message with the author during the videoconference.
- 8) **Most of the work will be done on your own time; however, three days of class time will be given for the poster.**
- 9) **Due date:** _____

Your poster board should be creative, clear, informative and colorful. You must be able to explain your pictures and quotes.

**PLEASE ASK THE TEACHER ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE BEFORE PASTING
WORK ONTO THE POSTER BOARD. PLEASE EDIT YOUR WRITING BEFORE PASTING IT
ON THE BOARD OR CONSTRUCTION PAPER.**

Journal Project

(Created by Mrs. Sally Miglio-Doulton)

THE GREAT WIDE SEA JOURNAL ENTRIES

Some suggestions for your logs:

- 1) Introduce your character: name, age, interests
- 2) Describe what you are doing on the boat – your job
- 3) Feelings (emotional and physical) – happy, sad, angry, frustrated, hungry, hot, cold, sticky, dirty, tired, etc.
- 4) Time of day: evening, morning, afternoon
- 5) Weather and sea conditions
- 6) Describe what you see: islands, water, fish, animals, other people, boats, shells, sand, etc.
- 7) Are you missing your mom/wife? Give examples.
- 8) Do you miss home? School? Friends? Good food? Sports?
- 9) Describe relationships between the brothers and dad
- 10) Use some quotes from the book
- 11) Describe what is currently happening to you in the book
- 12) Include a sketch or picture that illustrates your entry

Dialectical Journal Project

(Created by Mrs. Sally Miglio-Doulton)

Part I: Assignment

While reading the book *The Great Wide Sea*, you will keep a dialectical journal. You will interact with two quotes from each section of the book. You will choose two quotes from “The Boat”, “The Island”, and “Home.” Follow the steps to writing a dialectical journal using the directions below and the attached planning sheet.

Steps to Writing a Dialectical Journal

- 1) Choose an interesting quote that grabs your attention. Write it out exactly as it appears in the book. Cite the page number in parenthesis.
- 2) Establish context in two to three sentences.
- 3) Analyze the quote.
- 4) Apply the quote to your own life.

Dialectical Journal #1 for “The Boat”—*The Great Wide Sea*

“Finally I put Mom’s picture inside the cover of the book. I knew no one else would ever open that book, and I liked having her there. I liked her hidden smile. She felt like my special secret, throbbing just inside the cover, like an engine in idle waiting to shift into gear.” (p. 26)

In chapter six, Ben describes the living accommodations on *Chrysalis*. Ben begins by describing the limited amount of storage space in his room for the few items he was allowed to bring. What struck me most was the attention he gave to his mother’s picture.....

Part II: Dialectical Journal Planning Sheet

Quote (with page #)

Context: (What happened before and after this was said)

Analysis: (What does this mean?)

Application: (Apply this to your own life, another piece of literature, a movie, or something in the real world)