

PIRATE QUESTS

Differentiated Passages



RELUCTANT READERS



490L

Name: Jim Date: _____

The Nudge

Captain Theo Dagger guided the ship *Skullcrusher* into the cove. The anchor was dropped. The ship gently circled in the calm waters – the eerily calm waters.

"Mark my words, lads," the ship's cook said. "We done cursed ourselves sailing under Captain Dagger."

"We was already cursed, Gillis," another crew member, Cooper, said. "We are pirates after all."

"You know what I mean," Gillis slapped the railing. He scanned the surface of the water.

"What's for dinner?"

Gillis and Cooper jumped at the sound of the captain's voice. They faced Captain Dagger. Each of them gave their leader a little bow.

"Stew, Captain," Gillis said with another half-bow.

Captain Dagger nodded. The captain then walked to the stairs that led to *Skullcrusher's* galley below deck. Long, red hair streamed behind the captain. The ruffled sleeves of the captain's shirt fluttered in the sea breeze. Captain Dagger's black boots made a knocking sound as the captain got farther away from Gillis and Cooper.

"I am telling you," Gillis said. "Sailing under the command of Theodora Dagger, a



Pirate Quests Name: _____ Do

Answer the following questions. Underline the text evidence in the color indicated by the question, you will need to infer the answer. You should still look for text evidence.

- Why do the men think they are cursed?
a. Because they are sailing under a female captain.
b. Because they stole cursed buried treasure.
c. Because they betrayed their captain.
d. Because they broke a sacred oath.
- Why did Rigby think Theodora lacked the nerve to be captain of the ship?
Rigby thought Theodora lacked the nerve to be captain because she was a woman.
- Nila made the following statement, "Captain Theodora is well-respected." Is Nila's statement correct or incorrect? Use evidence from the text to support your thinking.
Correct or Incorrect? ☐  Evidence from the text: _____
- What motivates Theodora's character? Support your thinking with evidence from the text. _____

CAUSE AND EFFECT

Cause-and-effect relationships keep a story flowing from one event to the next. Fill in the blank shapes below with details from the story to show cause-and-effect relationships in "The Nudge."

CAUSE

EFFECT

The crew is suspicious of a female captain.

X

The crew falls into a trance, almost under a spell, to do what Theodora wants.

X

X

X

THE NUDGE RESPONSE

What is the central message of this passage? Write a response analyzing details from the text to help you determine the central message that the author wants the reader to take away from this passage. Support your response with evidence from the text.

I think the central message of this passage is _____

Theodora, make a mermaid.

Evidence from the text: _____

2nd - 5th Grade



PIRATE QUESTS PASSAGES

2nd - 5th grade

Table of Contents

*This product includes 10 differentiated leveled passages in the 2nd-3rd and 4th-5th Grade Text Complexity Bands (the range for 2nd-3rd is 420-820 and 4th-5th grade is 740-1010). Each passage is available on three levels and comes with general comprehension questions, a skill-based activity, and a reading response activity.

This product line, Reluctant Readers, is designed to foster an interest in reading, even your most resistant readers. With interest based topics, these passages can help build excitement and investment around reading.

1. A Birthday Surprise (480L, 790L, 960L)
2. A Pirate's Advice (480L, 760L, 940L)
3. The Ruby Heart (500L, 810L, 1000L)
4. A Lucky Day (480L, 760L, 930L)
5. Treasures Below (520L, 770L, 930L)
6. The Nudge (490L, 820L, 980L)
7. Ghost of a Ship (470L, 740L, 950L)
8. The Message (490L, 800L, 940L)
9. Saving Ana (520L, 800L, 1000L)
10. Maiden Voyage (500L, 780L, 940L)

ABOUT LEXILE LEVELS



MagiCore is a certified Lexile® Partner. These texts are officially measured and approved by Lexile and MetaMetrics® to ensure appropriate rigor and differentiation for students.

The Lexile Framework® for Reading measures are scientific, quantitative text levels. When the Lexile of a text is measured, specific, measurable attributes of the text are considered, including, but not limited to, word frequency, sentence length, and text cohesion. These are difficult attributes for humans to evaluate, so a computer measures them.

Common Core State Standards uses Lexile level bands as one measure of text complexity. Text complexity ranges ensure students are college and career ready by the end of 12th grade. Lexile measures help educators scaffold and differentiate instruction as well as monitor reading growth.

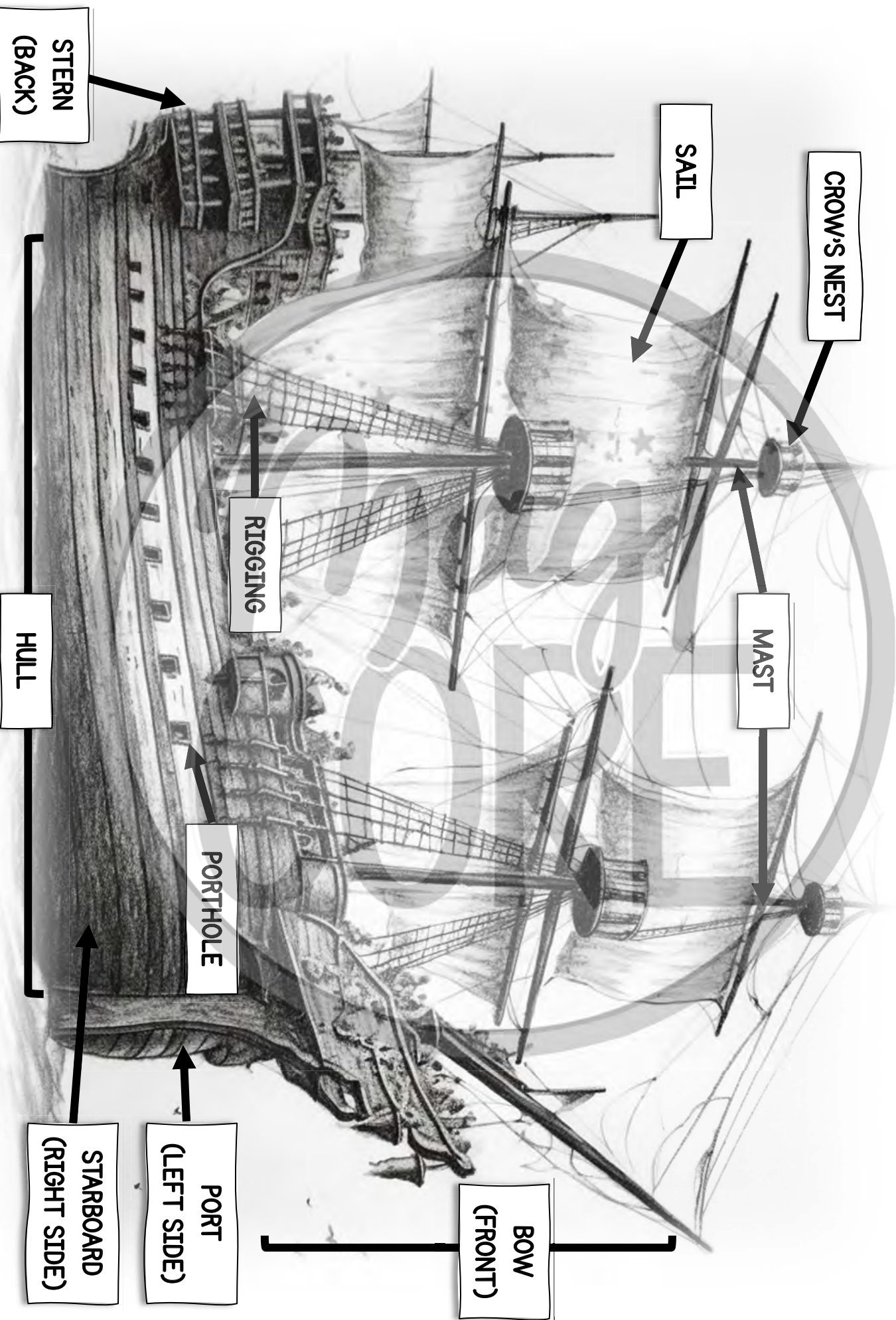
Grade Band	Lexile® Bands Aligned to Common Core Expectations
K-1	N/A
2-3	420L-820L
4-5	740L-1010L
6-8	925L-1185L

Keep in mind when using any leveled text that many students will need scaffolding and support to reach text at the high end of their grade band. According to Appendix A of the Common Core Standards, "It is important to recognize that scaffolding often is entirely appropriate. The expectation that scaffolding will occur with particularly challenging texts is built into the Standards' grade-by-grade text complexity expectations, for example. The general movement, however, should be toward decreasing scaffolding and increasing independence both within and across the text complexity bands defined in the Standards."



THE “BONES” OF A PIRATE’S SHIP

Use this diagram as you read to help you better understand some of the pirate-specific vocabulary.



A Pirate's Advice

"Excuse me?" I called up to the man applying fresh stain to a large ship. It was tied to the dock.

He glared down at me. His brush halted over the wood. "Aye, what do you want?"

I had been hoping for a friendlier greeting. I could not let his tone put me off in my mission, though. "I should like to conduct business with your captain. Is he aboard?"

"Aye." The man just stared down at me.

"Might I be given permission to come aboard? Can I speak with him?"

The man disappeared without answering. I heard his boots echoing off the wooden deck. A ramp was lowered. I took that as the invitation I needed. I climbed up. The man was there to greet me...with a dagger.

"Leave your weapons with me," he said.

I put my hands out to either side of me. I had expected this from a pirate's crew. "I have no weapons. I do not wish to harm your captain. I have a proposition instead."

The man gave me a squinty-eyed look. He turned on his boot heel. "This way."

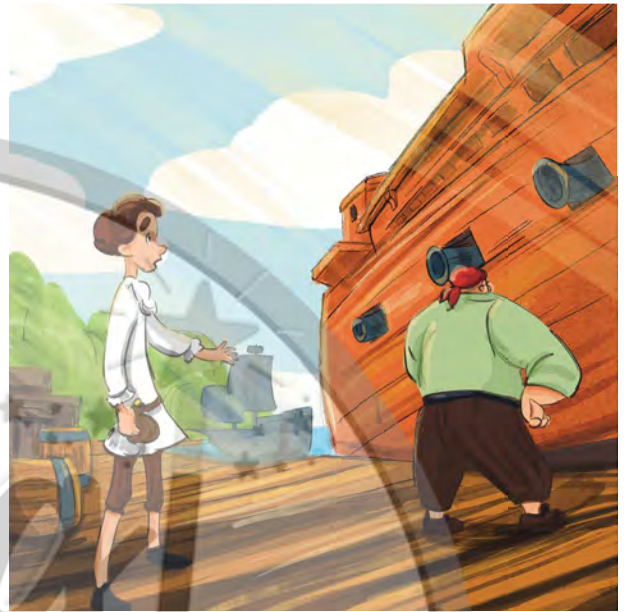
I followed him to the captain's quarters. A bearded man sat at a desk. He stared at some charts and maps. He was angled in his seat. His right side was in the shadows.

"Captain, this fellow wishes to speak to you."

The captain looked up from the charts. "That does not mean I have to listen."

"Oh, but I will make it well worth your time to hear me," I said. I took a few steps toward the desk before someone tried to make me leave. "I want to charter you, your crew, and your ship for a fishing expedition."

"Does that look like the sort of vessel we are, mate?" He gestured to his quarters around us. "We do not take the likes of you out to fish."



"What if I told you it was to fish for a great and terrible sea monster? One who killed my brother?" I dropped a sack of coins onto the captain's desk. "What if I told you that is a partial payment, and you will get the rest when that sea monster is killed and turned into bait?"

The captain eyed the bag of coins. He lifted it as if to weigh it in his left hand. Then he set it down and peered inside. His lips puckered out then in. "Where is this sea monster located?"

"In the waters off Pinnacle Island."

"Pinnacle Island!" The captain put the bag down. "I shall have nothing to do with the nasty bit of water that surrounds that place."

"But my brother—"

"Exactly right," the captain interrupted. "*Your* brother, not mine. It is no problem of mine to solve."

"I cannot solve the problem without the aid of skilled sailors," I said.

"There are plenty of the king's sailors that have many skills," the captain said.

"The king's sailors will not sail those waters. The king has forbidden it." I, of course, had tried to avenge my brother's death by more legal means. No one would come to my aid. I knew this ship was a pirate's. It was my only hope. "Are you not Captain Redblood? The famous pirate captain who wrestled a shark at Pinnacle Island and won?"

The captain stood. It was then that I saw the right sleeve of his tunic was empty of an arm.

He looked at his right shoulder. "It did not feel like such a victory that day or any day since."

I was at a loss for words. Nowhere in all the stories I had heard about Captain Redblood did it mention this injury. I wondered how many other tales of bold pirate adventures were not entirely true.



That had better not be pity I see in your eyes, boy," Captain Redblood said. He rounded the desk to stand in front of me. He towered over me. I was not a small lad.

"No, sir." I backed up a few steps.

"Take my advice. Mourn your brother. Then let it go. Hunting and killing the beast who took him from you will not bring him back." He gestured to his missing arm. "It might just take something from you instead." He picked up the bag of coins with his left hand. He tossed it back at me.

I barely caught it before its contents spilled to the floor.

"Now get off my ship before I use you as bait to catch our dinner tonight." He grabbed me by the back of my tunic. He dragged me to the door of his quarters.

I turned to plead my case again. The door shut in my face with a loud slam.

"Fancy that," the man who had returned to his staining task said. "The captain did not find it in his heart to do business with you, did he?" He paused in his work and regarded me. "The fearsome Captain Redblood has no adventurous spirit anymore, boy. If you spread word of that to anyone, I will hunt you down myself. I will silence you, understand? Some men deserve to be legends without the world knowing all the details, aye?"

I looked back at the captain's closed door. He could have easily had me killed for interrupting his privacy.

But he had not.

He had given me advice instead. It was advice I would take. I visited my brother's grave after leaving the docks. I decided to use the coins I had collected to avenge him to buy a house in the country. The house was far from the sea, its monsters, and its legendary pirates

A Pirate's Advice

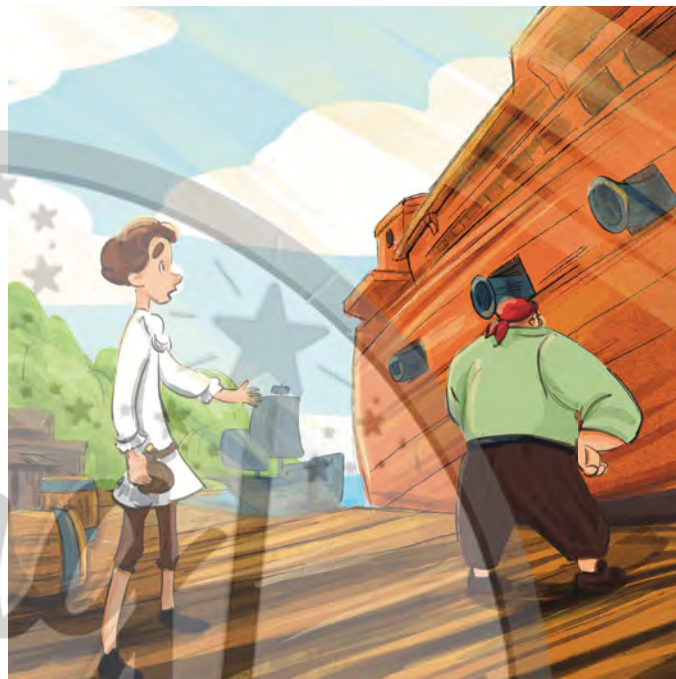
"Excuse me?" I called up to the man applying fresh stain to the gunwales of a large ship tied to the dock.

He glared down at me, his brush poised over the wood. "Aye, what do you want?"

I had been hoping for a friendlier greeting, but I could not let his tone put me off in my mission. "I should like to conduct business with your captain. Is he aboard?"

"Aye." The man just stared down at me.

"Might I be given permission to come aboard and speak with him?"



The man disappeared without answering, but I heard his boots echoing off the wooden deck. A few moments later, a ramp was lowered, and I took that as the invitation I needed. Slowly, I climbed up and the man was there to greet me...with a dagger.

"If you have any weapons on you, now is the time to leave 'em with me," he said.

I put my hands out to either side of me, expecting this from a pirate's crew. "I have no weapons because I do not wish to harm your captain. I have a proposition instead."

The man gave me a squinty-eyed look as if he was not convinced I was unarmed, but then he turned on his boot heel. "This way."

I followed him to the captain's quarters where a bearded man sat at a desk staring at some nautical charts. He was angled in his seat so his right side was in the shadows.

"Captain, this fellow wishes to speak to you."

The captain looked up from the charts. "That does not mean I have to listen."

"Oh, but I will make it well worth your time to hear me," I said, quickly taking a few steps toward the desk before someone tried to make me leave. "I want to charter you, your crew, and your ship for a fishing expedition."

"Does that look like the sort of vessel we are, mate?" He gestured to his quarters around us. "We do not take the likes of you out to fish."

"What if I told you it was to fish for a great and terrible sea monster who killed my brother?" I dropped a sack of coins onto the captain's desk. "What if I told you that is a partial payment, and you will get the rest – a hefty sum indeed – when that sea monster is killed and turned into bait?"

The captain eyed the bag of coins. He lifted it as if to weigh it in his left hand then he set it down and peered inside. His lips puckered out then in. "Where is this sea monster located?"

"In the waters off Pinnacle Island."

"Pinnacle Island!" The captain immediately put the bag down. "I shall have nothing to do with the nasty bit of water that surrounds that place."

"But my brother–"

"Exactly right," the captain interrupted. "*Your* brother, not mine, therefore it is no problem of mine to solve."

"I cannot solve the problem without the aid of skilled sailors," I said.

"There are plenty of the king's sailors that have many skills," the captain said.

"The king's sailors will not sail those waters because the king has forbidden it." I, of course, had tried to avenge my brother's death by more legal means, but no one would come to my aid. When I had seen this ship roll into port, I knew it was a pirate's and my only hope. "Are you not Captain Redblood? The famous pirate captain who wrestled a shark at Pinnacle Island and won?"

At that, the captain stood, and it was then that I saw the right sleeve of his tunic was empty of an arm.

He looked at his right shoulder. "It did not feel like such a victory that day or any day since."



I was at a loss for words. Nowhere in all the stories I had heard about Captain Redblood did it mention this injury. I wondered how many other tales of bold pirate adventures were not entirely true.

"That had better not be pity I see in your eyes, boy," Captain Redblood said as he rounded the desk to stand in front of me. He towered over me, and I was not a particularly small lad.

"No, sir." I backed up a few steps.

"Take my advice. Mourn your brother and then let it go. Hunting and killing the beast who took him from you will not bring him back." He gestured to his missing arm. "It might just take something from you instead." He picked up the bag of coins with his left hand and tossed it back at me.

I barely caught it before its contents spilled to the floor.

"Now get off my ship before I use you as bait to catch our dinner tonight." He grabbed me by the back of my tunic and dragged me to the door of his quarters.

I turned to plead my case again, but the door shut in my face with a loud slam.

"Fancy that," the man who had returned to his staining task said. "The captain did not find it in his heart to do business with you, did he?" He paused in his work and regarded me. "The fearsome Captain Redblood has no adventurous spirit anymore, boy, but if you spread word of that to anyone, I will hunt you down myself and silence you, understand? Some men deserve to be legends without the world knowing all the details, aye?"

I looked back at the captain's closed door. He could have easily had me killed for interrupting his privacy, for making a demand of him, for trying to involve him in my personal battle.

But he had not.

He had given me advice instead. It was advice I would take. I visited my brother's grave after leaving the docks and decided to use the coins I had collected to avenge him to buy a house in the country, far from the sea, its monsters, and its legendary pirates.

A Pirate's Advice

"Excuse me, sir?" I called up to the man applying fresh stain to the gunwales of a large ship tethered to the dock.

He glared down at me, his brush poised over the wood and not at all happy about my interruption of his work. "Aye, what do you want, boy?"

I had been hoping for a more cordial greeting, but I could not let his unfriendly tone make me abandon my important mission. "I should like to conduct business with your captain and wondered if he was aboard?"

"Aye." The man just stared down at me, his face weathered from his time at sea.

"Might I be given permission to come aboard and converse with him right now?"

The man disappeared without answering, but I heard his boot echoing off the wooden deck as I waited on the dock. A few moments later, a ramp was lowered, and I took that as the invitation I needed. Slowly, I climbed up and the man was there to greet me...with a dagger.

"If you have any weapons on your person, now is the time to leave 'em with me," he said, brandishing the dagger at me.

I put my hands out to either side of me, expecting this from a pirate's crew who was known not to trust anyone. "I have no weapons because I do not wish to harm your captain, but I have a proposition for him instead."

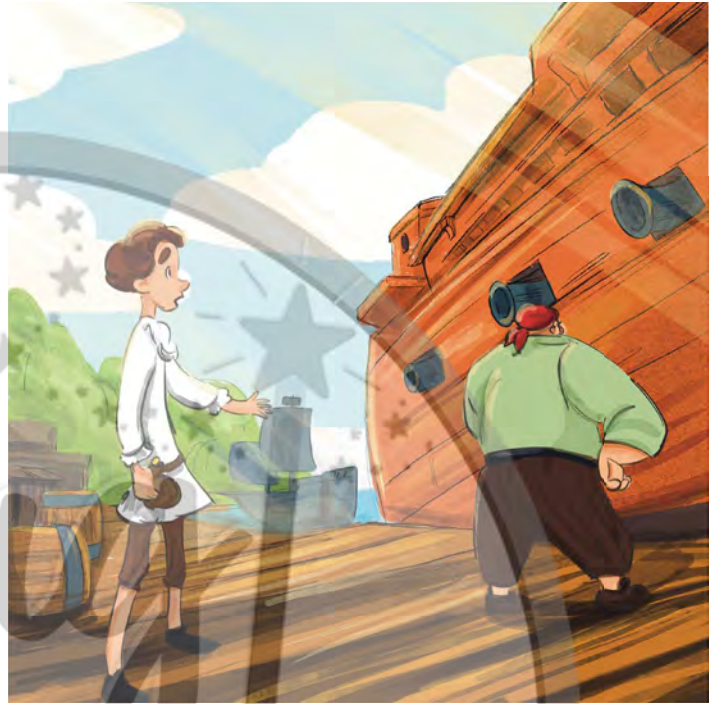
The man gave me a squinty-eyed look as if he was not convinced I was unarmed, but then he swiveled on his boot heel. "This way."

I followed him to the captain's quarters where a grisly, bearded man sat at a desk staring at some maps and nautical charts. He was angled in his seat so his right side was in the shadows behind him.

"Captain, this fellow wishes to speak to you."

The captain looked up from the charts and frowned. "That does not mean I have to listen."

"Oh, but I will make it well worth your time to hear me," I said, quickly taking a few steps toward the desk before someone tried to make me leave the captain's quarters. "I want to charter you, your crew, and your fine ship for a fishing expedition."



"Does that look like the sort of vessel we are, mate?" He gestured to his quarters around us then leveled his dark gaze on me. "We do not and will not take the likes of you out to pleasure fish."

"What if I told you it was to fish for a great and terrible sea monster who killed my only brother?" I dropped a leather sack of jingling coins onto the captain's desk. "What if I told you that is a partial payment, and you will get the rest – a hefty sum indeed – when that sea monster is killed and used as bait for sharks?"

The captain eyed the bag of coins with interest. He lifted it as if to weigh it in his left hand then he set it down and peered inside, his lips puckering out then in as he looked between the bag and me. "Where is this murderous sea monster you wish to kill located?"

"In the waters off Pinnacle Island."

"Pinnacle Island!" The captain immediately put the bag down as if it was poisonous to touch it. "I shall have nothing to do with the nasty bit of water that surrounds that dreadful place."

"But my brother—"

"Exactly right," the captain interrupted, pounding his fist on his desk. "*Your* brother, not mine, therefore it is no problem of mine to solve."

"I cannot solve the problem without the aid of skilled sailors and a seaworthy ship," I said.

"There are plenty of the king's sailors that have many skills and ships far more seaworthy than this old beast," the captain said.

"The king's sailors will not sail those waters because the king has forbidden it." I, of course, had tried to avenge my brother's death by more legal means, but no one would come to my aid. When I had seen this ship roll into port, I knew it was a pirate's and my only hope. "Are you not Captain Redblood, the famous pirate captain who wrestled a shark at Pinnacle Island and won?"

At that, the captain stood to his full height, and it was then that I saw the right sleeve of his tunic was empty of an arm.

He looked at his right shoulder. "It did not feel like such a victory that day or any day since."

I was at a loss for words because nowhere in all the stories I had heard about Captain Redblood did it mention this horrible injury. I wondered how many other tales of bold pirate adventures were not entirely true.



"That had better not be pity I see in your eyes, boy," Captain Redblood said as he rounded the desk to stand in front of me. He towered over me, and I was not a particularly small lad.

"No, sir." I backed up a few steps so I could look up at him.

"Take my advice and mourn your brother, then release the vendetta. Hunting and killing the beast who took him from you will not bring him back." He gestured to his missing arm, the sleeve folded and pinned in place. "It might just take something from you, something you cannot get back, instead." He picked up the bag of coins with his left hand and tossed it back at me.

I barely caught it before its contents spilled to the floor at my feet.

"Now get off my ship before I use you as bait to catch our dinner tonight." He grabbed me by the back of my tunic and dragged me to the door of his quarters.

I turned to plead my case again, not willing to abandon my plans, but the door shut in my face with a loud, echoing slam, making further conversation impossible.

"Fancy that," the man who had returned to his staining task said. "The captain did not find it in his cold, black heart to do business with you, did he?" Shaking his head, he paused in his work and regarded me. "The fearsome Captain Redblood has no adventurous spirit anymore, boy, but if you spread word of that to anyone, I will hunt you down myself and permanently silence you, understand? Some men deserve to be legends without the world knowing all the details, aye?"

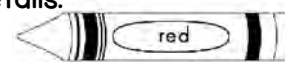
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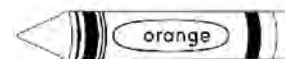
He had given me advice instead. It was advice I would take. I visited my brother's grave after leaving the docks and decided to use the coins I had collected to avenge him to buy a house in the country, far from the sea, its monsters, and its legendary pirates.

Answer the following questions. Underline the text evidence in the color indicated. If there is not a crayon next to the question, you will need to infer the answer. You should still look for text evidence to help you infer.

1. Describe the setting at the beginning of the story based on the passage's details.



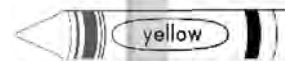
2. Read this sentence from the passage, "*I have a **proposition** instead.*" What does the word **proposition** mean in this sentence?



- a. A piece of advice
- b. A proposal
- c. A gift
- d. A threat

Clues from the text: _____

3. What word best describes our narrator's motivation for his request to Captain Redblood? How is your answer supported by details in the text?

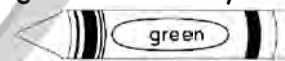


Word:



Evidence:

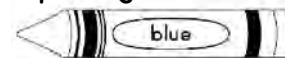
4. Analyze how the narrator's feelings and expectations of pirates evolved throughout the story. What events influenced this evolution? What details support your answer?



Feelings/Expectations at the Beginning

Feelings/Expectations at the End

5. What is one character trait you would use to describe Captain Redblood? How does he exemplify this character trait? Support your response with evidence from the passage.



AUTHOR'S PURPOSE

Authors have a purpose for writing the stories they write. Some authors want to inform readers about a specific topic through facts or instructions. Other authors attempt to persuade readers to do or believe something. Authors may also wish to entertain readers with their words. Think about the story "A Pirate's Advice." What was the author's purpose in telling this story? Put a check in the appropriate box. What text evidence do you have to support your choice?

TO INFORM	TO PERSUADE	TO ENTERTAIN
☐	☐	☐
TEXT EVIDENCE FOR YOUR CHOICE:		

A PIRATE'S ADVICE RESPONSE

At the heart of this story, there is a larger lesson to be learned. Write a response analyzing the theme of this passage and its central message. What lesson can be learned from this passage? Why is this lesson important? Support your response with details from the text.



The Ruby Heart

"We are getting close now, mates," Captain Blackmire said. He stood at the helm of his ship, *Exodus*. He stared at the land ahead. "Let us head for that cove there. We will row ashore."

"Aye, Captain!" the crew replied together.

They had been sailing for nearly a month now. They had left the Spanish ports with a ship full of food supplied by the queen. Captain Blackmire did not fancy being bought by royalty. The queen had made the deal irresistible, though. She had promised fortunes for all aboard *Exodus*. Even more important to Captain Blackmire was the *second* promise the queen had made him – *a full pardon*.



To be forgiven for the crimes that had gotten him into piracy in the first place was a gift too wonderful to ignore. He could return home. He could seek out his family. He could start over. He just had to do this one thing for the queen.

Of course, he and his men had to survive first. That was not a given in this part of the world. He had heard many a tale of entire ships being swallowed by giant holes in the ocean.

But they are just tales. Captain Blackmire tightened his grip on the wheel. Their journey had been smooth so far. Nothing more than long days at sea. The sway of the ship hypnotized them.

"How will we know where to find what the queen wants us to get?" First Mate Crawford asked.

"She claims the Ruby Heart is in a cave. It is on the southern tip of Deadbury Isle." Captain Blackmire recalled the queen pointing to a map. She had unrolled it in the palace library to show him. She had a sketch of the Ruby Heart too. The large heart-shaped ruby was an ancient relic. It had been mined from the rocks of Deadbury Isle. Legends said natives on the island discovered it when they were digging. Its color and shape made it stand out from the other rocks. They believed the gods had sent it to them. They built a temple cave around the Ruby Heart. This was to honor it. Those natives no longer existed. Many had tried to retrieve the ruby from the isle.

None had succeeded...yet.

The sail to the cove was a quiet one. All the men thought about what they were about to do.

"Drop anchor here," Captain Blackmire said. "Ready the longboat."

The crew jumped to carry out his orders. Soon they were rowing to the shores of Deadbury Isle. They all piled out of the longboat when they hit land. Captain Blackmire's boots met the sand. A dull pulse drummed a rhythm inside him.

Crawford shivered beside him. "You feel that, Captain?"

"Aye." He squinted at the trees ahead of them. "Just getting our land legs back after all that time at sea is all."

Captain Blackmire took out the map the queen had given him. He got their bearings. "All right, mates, let us head west to that hill over there. The cave is on the other side of it." Or at least it was supposed to be.

The men paired up to walk side-by-side. They watched each other's backs as they stepped into the woods of Deadbury Isle. Everything was lush and green. The ground was covered in thick moss. Their approach to the cave was nearly silent. The queen had not mentioned anything about the landscape. Captain Blackmire rather enjoyed it, though. A warm, gentle breeze rippled through the trees. Their leaves made pleasant music. It put the captain at ease. He had not felt this settled in years.

They reached the mouth of a cave that was exactly where the queen's map said it would be.

"I want half of you to stay out here," Captain Blackmire said. "The other half is with me." He lit a torch and handed it to Crawford. He then faced the cave's entrance. He drew his sword and stepped inside.

They followed a long, winding path deeper into the cave. Odd designs and symbols were on the walls. That beating sensation grew. It felt as if the captain's heart might rip apart in his chest. The other men felt it, too, if their panting was any clue.

"Captain," Crawford said. His voice was strained. "It is as if my chest wants to crush my own heart."

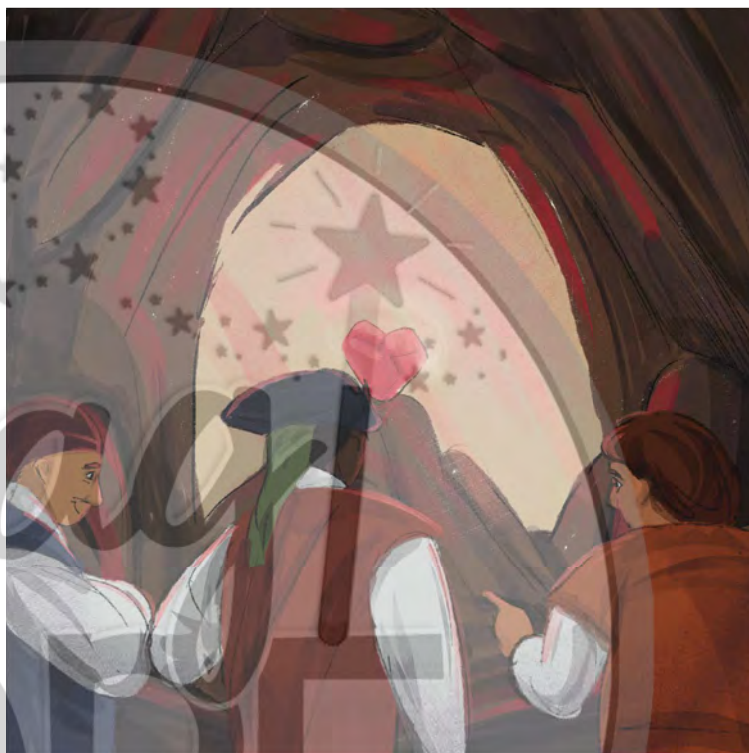
Several eyes came from the men. The captain nodded. "The Ruby Heart must be nearby."

They turned one more corner. The need for a torch was no more. They entered a cavern that was bathed in red light. A large, deep red jewel was in the center of the chamber. It captured sunlight from a small opening in the cave's ceiling.

"Do we just grab it?" Crawford asked.

"I have to be the one to grab it," Captain Blackmire said. No one had told him this. He just knew the task was meant for him.

He approached the perfect ruby. The beating had lessened to match the beating of his own heart now. He thought of the pardon the queen would give him. He thought of how he could correct his mistakes. Captain Blackmire sheathed his sword. He reached for the Ruby Heart.



As soon as his fingers touched it, he found himself back in the court of the Spanish queen. All his crew was gathered around him. He was down on one knee. He presented the Ruby Heart to the queen. He had no memory of the return trip. All he remembered was the moment of perfect peace he had felt holding that ancient jewel for the first time.

"Excellent work," the queen said. "Your payment is being loaded aboard your ship now." She motioned for a scribe to come forward with a stack of scrolls. "And here are your pardons."

Captain Blackmire was the first to receive his pardon. He knew exactly where he would sail next.

Home.

The Ruby Heart

"We are getting close now, mates," Captain Blackmire said as he stood at the helm of his ship, *Exodus*, and stared at the faint outline of land ahead. "Let us head for that cove there. We will row ashore."

"Aye, Captain!" the crew replied in unison.

They had been sailing for nearly a month now since they had left the Spanish ports with a ship full of food supplied by the queen. Captain Blackmire did not fancy being bought by royalty, but the queen had made the deal irresistible. She had promised fortunes for all aboard *Exodus*, even more important to Captain Blackmire was the *second* promise the queen had made him if he succeeded with the task she had presented – *a full pardon*.



To be forgiven for the crimes that had gotten him into piracy in the first place was a gift too wonderful to ignore. If he did this one thing for the queen, he could return home. He could seek out his family and start over.

Of course, he and his men had to survive first and that was not a given, especially in this part of the world. He had heard many a tale of entire ships being swallowed by giant, gaping holes in the ocean.

But they are just tales, Captain Blackmire reminded himself and tightened his grip on the wheel. So far, their journey had been uneventful. Nothing more than the monotony of long days at sea with the sway of the ship lulling them all into a hypnotized state.

"How will we know where to find what the queen wants us to get?" First Mate Crawford asked.

"She claims the Ruby Heart is in a cave on the southern tip of Deadbury Isle." Captain Blackmire recalled the queen pointing to a map she had unrolled in the palace library to show him. She had a sketch of the Ruby Heart too. The large heart-shaped ruby was an ancient relic, mined from the rocks of Deadbury Isle. Legends said natives on the island discovered it when they were digging. It stood out from the other rocks they had loosened because of its color and shape. They instantly believed the gods had sent it to them. They built a temple cave around the Ruby Heart to honor it. Those natives no longer existed, and many had tried to retrieve the ruby from the isle.

None had succeeded...yet.

The sail to the cove was a quiet one, all the men thinking about what they were about to do.

"Drop anchor here," Captain Blackmire said. "Ready the longboat."

The crew jumped to carry out his orders and soon they were rowing to the shores of Deadbury Isle. They all piled out of the longboat when they hit land. As soon as Captain Blackmire's boots met the sand, a dull pulse drummed a rhythm inside him.

Crawford shivered beside him. "You feel that, Captain?"

"Aye." He squinted at the trees ahead of them. "Just getting our land legs back after all that time at sea is all."

Captain Blackmire took out the map the queen had given him and got their bearings. "All right, mates, let us head west to that hill over there. The cave is on the other side of it." Or at least it was supposed to be.

The men paired up to walk side-by-side and watch each other's backs as they stepped into the woods of Deadbury Isle. Everything was lush and green, and the ground was covered in thick moss that made their approach to the cave nearly silent. The queen had not mentioned anything about the landscape, but Captain Blackmire rather enjoyed it. A warm, gentle breeze rippled through the trees. Their leaves made pleasant music that put the captain at ease. He had not felt this settled in years.

They reached the mouth of a cave that was exactly where the queen's map said it would be.

"I want half of you to stay out here," Captain Blackmire said. "The other half is with me." He lit a torch and handed it to Crawford. He then faced the cave's entrance. He drew his sword and stepped inside.

They followed a long, winding path deeper into the cave. Odd designs and symbols were etched into the walls. That beating sensation intensified until it felt as if the captain's heart might rip apart in his chest. The other men felt it, too, if their panting was any clue.

"Captain," Crawford said, his voice strained. "It is as if my chest wants to crush my own heart."

Several *ayes* came from the men, and the captain nodded. "The Ruby Heart must be nearby."

They turned one more corner and the need for a torch was no more. They entered a cavern that was bathed in red light. In the center of the chamber, a large, deep red jewel captured sunlight from a small opening in the cave's ceiling.

"Do we just grab it?" Crawford asked.

"I have to be the one to grab it," Captain Blackmire said. No one had told him this, but he just knew the task was meant for him

Slowly, he approached the perfect ruby. The beating had lessened to match the beating of his own heart now. Thinking of the pardon the queen would give him, thinking of how he could correct his mistakes, Captain Blackmire sheathed his sword and reached for the Ruby Heart.

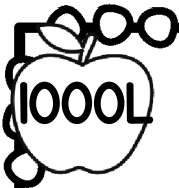
As soon as his fingers touched it, he found himself back in the court of the Spanish queen. All his crew was gathered around him. He was down on one knee, presenting the Ruby Heart to the queen. He had no memory of the return trip. All he remembered was the moment of perfect peace he had felt holding that ancient jewel for the first time.

"Excellent work," the queen said. "Your payment is being loaded aboard your ship now." She motioned for a scribe to come forward with a stack of scrolls. "And here are your pardons."

Captain Blackmire was the first to receive his pardon, and he knew exactly where he would sail next.

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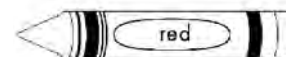
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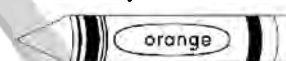
Answer the following questions. Underline the text evidence in the color indicated. If there is not a crayon next to the question, you will need to infer the answer. You should still look for text evidence to help you infer.

1. How did the queen convince Captain Blackmire to work for her? What did she offer?



2. Read this sentence from the passage, "*Even more important to Captain Blackmire was the second promise the queen had made him - a **full pardon**.*" What does the phrase "**full pardon**" mean in this sentence?

- a. A full apology
- b. Money and jewels
- c. Complete forgiveness
- d. A royal title

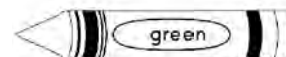


Clues from the text: _____

3. How does the author convince the reader of the value of the Ruby Heart? Why is it considered so precious and desirable?



4. Examine the cause-and-effect relationship between the quest for the Ruby Heart and the resolution of the story. What are the significant effects of the quest? What is the quest's effect on Captain Blackmire's future?



CAUSE

EFFECT

EFFECT

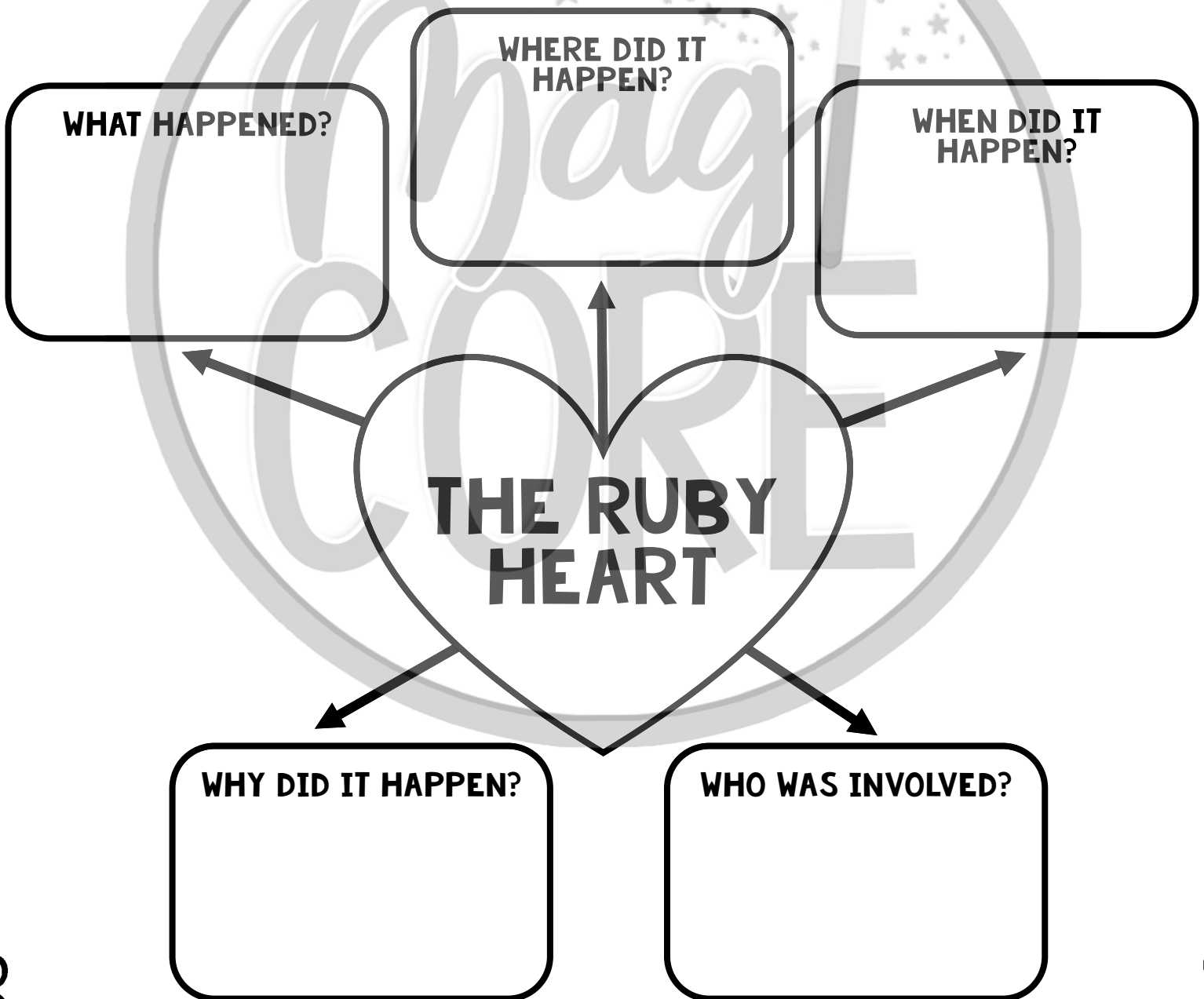


THE FIVE Ws

When readers try to understand a story, they often answer these five questions:

1. What happened?
2. Where did the event happen?
3. When did the event happen?
4. Why did the event happen?
5. Who was involved in the event?

Fill in the map below to answer the Five Ws for "The Ruby Heart."



THE RUBY HEART RESPONSE

Motivation is a key factor in determining someone's perspective. Examine Captain Blackmire's motivations. Write a response detailing what motivates and drives Captain Blackmire. How is this supported in the text? How did these motivations contribute to his success?



Treasures Below

Gray clouds muted the sun. Three ravens circled over our ship. Their caws sounded like a warning. Still, Captain Darkthorn urged us all to man our posts. We sailed closer to an outline on the near horizon. I was in the crow's nest. This was high above the ship's deck. I had a first view of everything. I did not mind carrying out my duties. The crow's nest allowed me a break from the constant teasing of the other crew members.

Being the youngest aboard the ship made me the target of every prank imaginable. My boots had been filled with fish innards. My hammock had been tied in knots. My prized books had been hidden numerous times. These jokes were meant in good fun, but I existed in a constant state of tension. I was always wondering what new bit of nonsense the crew had dreamed up for me.



This morning had been no exception. I had climbed up to the crow's nest on the captain's order. Chicken bones and apple cores lined the bottom of it. The crew had laughed from below.

"Leave him be," Captain Darkthorn had roared. "Get to your posts, all of you. We need all eyes on the water if we are to find what we are searching for."

The Veiled City.

The captain had been in a tavern at our last stop in port. He had played a game of chance with other sailors. Most of them had been pirates like us. He had heard a tale of a city hidden on the shores of Quinsetto Island. It was said to have once been the thriving empire of an ancient people. Legends hinted that there were many treasures still buried in its capital city.

Treasures that we, of course, all wanted to claim.

We could be sailing off with more riches than all the royalty in Europe if the stories were true.

I focused on the dark shape ahead of us. Fog blurred its edges. This made it hard for me to see even with a spyglass up to my eye. Then a loud scraping ripped through the otherwise quiet hush of the ship cutting through the water.

"Captain!" a crew member named Kaz called from the bow of the ship. "Something is poking up from the sea!"

I angled the spyglass to the waters closer to us. True enough, a rocky pillar pointed upward. Bits of broken wood floated around it.

Bits of the ship.

"Reggie!" the captain barked. "Are you sleeping up there?"

"No, sir!" I called down. I scanned the area around the ship. "There are—" I was about to report that more of those rocky pillars were visible. It was too late, though. We had already steered directly into them. More splitting wood sounded below. "They are everywhere, sir!"

"Turn her around, mates!" the captain hollered. More crew members rushed from below deck.

"The hull has many holes, Captain!" one of them, Trent, shouted. "The sea is gushing in!"

The ship listed to the starboard side. I hugged the mast that held the crow's nest to avoid being tossed into the sea. It leveled out for a moment. I climbed down. I made my way to the deck.

"My apologies, Captain. My eyes were trained on the land. I did not see those pillars."

The captain let out a growl. He looked at me. "It is not your fault, Reggie. You were following my orders to keep your sights on the shore. I should have assigned another to watch the local waters."

The ship pitched again. It sent us both crashing to the deck. Those pillars were like giant, stone claws. They tore us apart.

"She is sinking!" Kaz shouted. He was also thrown to the deck.

"Abandon ship, mates!" Captain Darkthorn ordered. He got to his feet. "Ready the longboats. Let us make for the shore."

Everyone hopped to carry out the orders. Soon we were rowing away from our ship as it was reduced to splinters by those rocky pillars. Something hit the bottom of the longboat. It heeled to the port side. I tumbled out into the ocean.

My first instinct was to swim and save myself. I turned my body to head for the surface. Then I saw it.

The remains of an ancient city stretched out below me. I swam a bit deeper. I headed towards a temple-like building. I peeked into a window. I saw the glittering floor inside. The crew would be delighted! They were all about to become rich men. I had found the Veiled City!

I swam to the surface. Strong arms yanked me out of the water. I landed in the longboat. I coughed up water and gasped. A large hand pounded me on the back. Water poured out of me. The breath came back in.

"You all right, Reggie?" Kaz asked. "You were down there a long time."

I looked at their concerned faces. They did actually care about me. Maybe their pranks were the way they showed me they cared.

"I am fine," I said. "Wonderful actually."

"Taking a dunk in the sea was a wonderful time?" Captain Darkthorn raised his eyebrows at me.

I grinned and pointed to the water. "Mates, we found the Veiled City. It is below the water."

Trent frowned from his seat next to me. "Are you getting us back for all the pranks we have played on you, Reggie?"

I shook my head. "Nay." I raised my hand as if taking an oath. "I swear to each of you, the Veiled City is real. It is below us now."



We rowed the rest of the way to the shore. A team of crew dove into the water. They confirmed my finding. The captain organized us into shifts of divers. We hauled many of the jewels, gold, and other precious relics from the city to the shore. Another party had scouted around Quinsetto Island. They discovered the other side of it actually had a bustling port town. We commissioned a new ship with our new fortunes. We returned to Europe where we lived like kings.

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Magi
CORE

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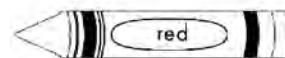
Pirate Quests

Name: _____ Date: _____

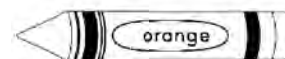
Answer the following questions. Underline the text evidence in the color indicated. If there is not a crayon next to the question, you will need to infer the answer. You should still look for text evidence to help you infer.

1. What does our narrator enjoy about the crow's nest?

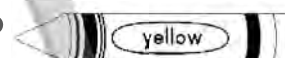
- a. It allows access to the ship's crows.
- b. It has a good view of everything and is quiet.
- c. It is dangerous, so it gives the narrator a thrill.
- d. The narrator does not enjoy the crow's nest.



2. How did our narrator end up in the service of Captain Darkthorn?

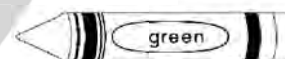


3. Compare and contrast the narrator's relationship with his crew mates at the beginning of the story and his relationship with them at the end? What influenced this evolution?



What was the influence? _____

4. Why is the "Veiled City" a fitting name for the ancient city the crew found? What evidence from the text justifies this name?



5. How does the author connect the beginning of the story to the end of the story? Support your response with details from the text.



SHOWING YOUR THINKING

Good readers have thoughts as they read a story. It is how they monitor their comprehension of a text. Use this sheet to record your thinking as you read "Treasures Below."



**Funny
part**

From the text:

I think this because ...



**Important
part**

From the text:

I think this because ...



**Favorite
part**

From the text:

I think this because ...



**Surprising
part**

From the text:

I think this because ...



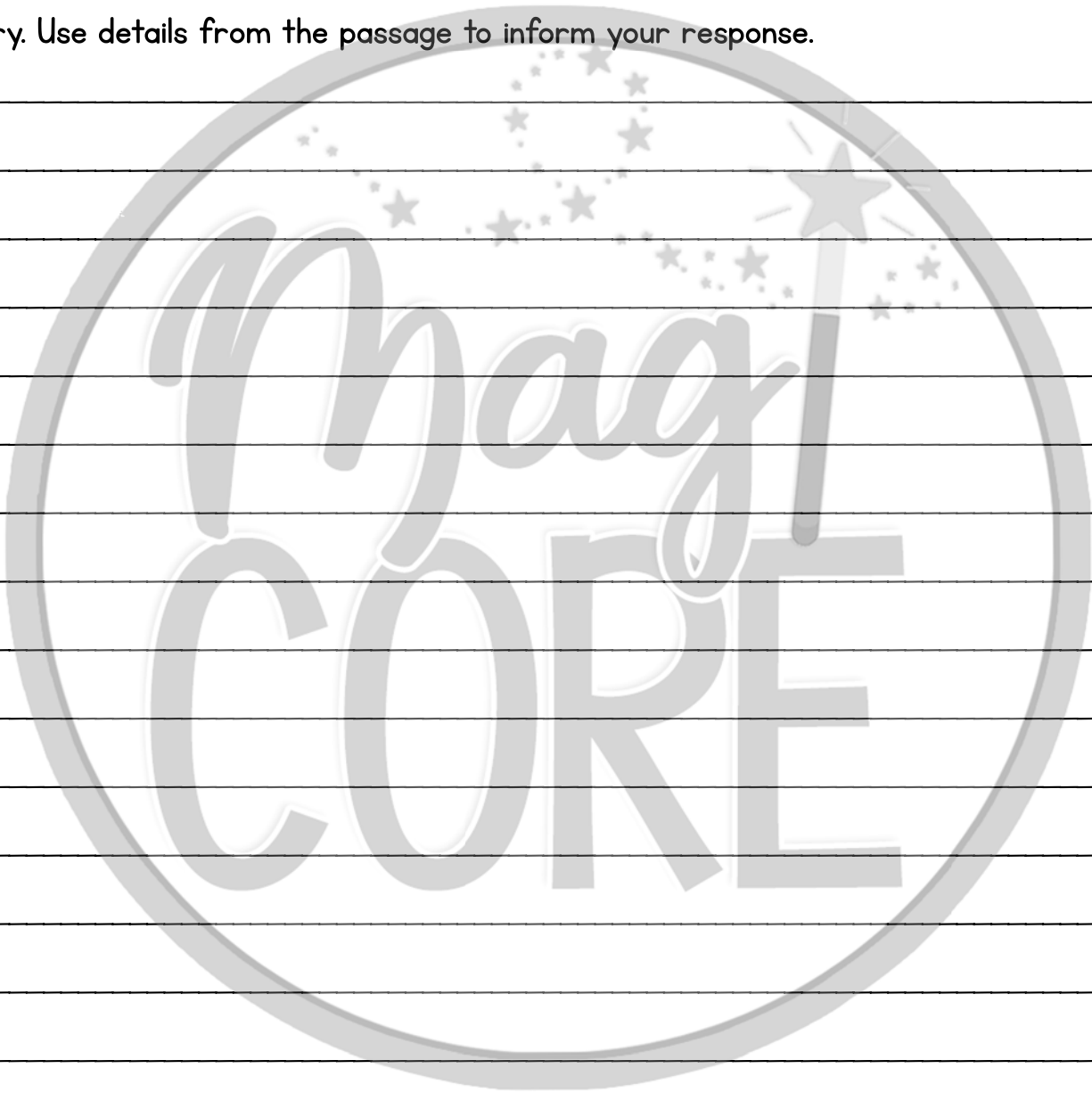
**Part that makes
me wonder**

From the text:

I think this because ...

TREASURES BELOW RESPONSE

What is the cause-and-effect relationship between our narrator's underwater discovery and the conclusion of the passage? Write a response analyzing this relationship and draft an inference about what might have happened in the story if our narrator had not made his discovery. Use details from the passage to inform your response.



Ghost of a Ship

I stepped off my ship, *Sun Chaser*. My boots knocked against the wooden planks of the dock. My crew and I had been at sea for a year. We were all thankful to be back home.

"Welcome back, Captain McAdams."

I turned to find my good friend, Turner Watts, standing behind me. He wore his usual smile. His cheeks were rosy and wind-chapped like always. I extended my hand to him. "Good to see you again, Turner."

"What tales do you have from your voyage?" he asked.

"Come for supper tomorrow. I will share my stories with you," I said with a smile.

"Very well. Too many details to pack them all in on the dock right now, aye?" Turner's eyebrows rose.

"Aye, we would be here into the wee hours."

We parted ways. I checked that the lines on my ship were secure. I then hoisted my sack of belongings onto my back. It was time to walk to my sister's home in town. I would no doubt get a grand welcome from my family.

A sudden breeze prickled my skin. I pulled the sides of my coat tighter around me. Something made me glance out to the water. A dark shape approached the docks. Its details were blurred by a strange fog.

My pack slid off my shoulder as a ship sailed closer. Its hull was covered in holes. Some of them were huge. That should have made the ship unable to sail. No water poured in, however. It remained afloat. The ship glided toward me. The majority of its sails were furled. A dingy, yellowed jib remained. It was filled with wind, though it had many tears. It should not have been able to catch any wind. Barnacles formed a pale green crust on the main mast and gunwales. Creaking sounded as if the ship was a breath away from complete ruin.

The curious sight had me standing like a sculpture. I could not tear my eyes away from this ghost of a ship. It headed right for me. It finally came up to the dock. I caught the nearly unraveled line that was tossed to me by a man who, when I looked more closely, was not a man.



He was a skeleton. No flesh was on his skull or boney hands and arms. Several other skeletons clattered around on the deck of the ghost ship as well. A ramp was lowered. Those skeletons stepped to the side to let who could only be their captain walk down it.

Eyes like red fire locked onto me. A skeleton much larger than the others disembarked. He wore a tattered blue captain's coat. The buttons were tarnished. His breeches were moth-eaten. His boots looked as if they had been polished with rotten seaweed. He smelled of decay and death. He came to stand directly in front of me. I backed up several paces.

I peeked back at the ship. No other skeletons emerged from it. Instead, a pair of them stood below one of the rotting masts. They lowered a flag.

A red flag with a flame-eyed skull on it. Every sailor knew a red flag signaled you would get no mercy from the pirates aboard the ship.

"Y-you are p-pirates," I stuttered.

"Not by choice." The skeleton captain's voice was low. "And you are Captain Peter McAdams. You are my kin." His words echoed in my head. "You are the only one who can lift this curse."

"Curse?" I squeaked.

"My crew and I sailed into waters full of dark magic. This happened ages ago," the skeleton captain said. "The life was stolen from us. It left us nothing more than a collection of bones. We are only alive because of that same dark magic. It all but destroyed my ship. She still sails as if brand new, though. Only kin can break this spell, turn us back to real men, and repair my ship." He pointed a boney index finger at me. "Only you can help us."

"What do I have to do?" I remembered my grandfather telling tales of a distant relative. He had been lost at sea with his entire crew. They were never heard from again.

Until now.



"You need only to board my ship and command it for one circle around that island. Then we shall all be free." He pointed to Beacon Isle just off the coast.

I squinted at the island. It would take a few hours to get there, circle it, and return. I was not too keen on boarding this ship for many reasons. Duty to family, however, swelled in me.

"Aye," I said. "I will do it."

I was ushered aboard the ship that looked even worse up close. I was shown to the helm. The wheel was missing spokes. It wiggled on its mount.

"She sails just fine," the skeleton captain said. "We have been roaming the seas for decades. There have been no problems."

I barked orders. The skeleton crew jumped to carry them out. In no time, we had the torn sails fully unfurled. They carried us toward Beacon Isle. I navigated around the island. My jaw dropped when we completed the circle.

The skeleton captain's flesh returned. The skin of the crew members did as well. His blue coat changed from faded to bright. The buttons shined in the sunlight. All the tears in his breeches mended themselves. His boots became spotless and gleaming.

The real surprise was how much this captain looked like me. Same wavy, brown hair, same blue eyes, and same square jaw. He even had a slightly crooked nose like mine. It was like looking at my own reflection.

The captain blinked at me. His expression let me know he saw the resemblance as well. He lifted a hand and inspected the skin on the back of it. He then pressed both palms to his cheeks to feel the skin there too.

"It is done," he said. There was a giddiness in his tone. "The curse is no more. You did it."

The ship around us changed into an impressive vessel. It was fit for the queen's army. The crew let out cheers of celebration.

"What will you do now?" I eyed the red flag being hoisted back up the mast. When a breeze caught it, however, it was no longer a flame-eyed skull. Instead, it was a golden dove with a circle of white flowers around it on a red background. It was my family's crest.

"My ship is *The Golden Dove*," the captain said. "I am her captain, Thomas McAdams. I will report to the queen. I will pledge my service to her. We are skeleton pirates aboard a ghost ship no longer." He shook my hand. "Thanks to you, Peter. My gratitude is endless."

"Will I see you again?" I had so many questions still.

"Aye." He gestured to my ship, *Sun Chaser*. "We have the beginnings of a fleet, do we not?"

"Aye." I watched him board *The Golden Dove* and sail off. I was excited for a future with my newly discovered kin.

Turner was never going to believe this tale at supper tomorrow.

Magi
CORE

Ghost of a Ship

I stepped off my ship, *Sun Chaser*, my boots knocking against the weathered wooden planks of the dock. My crew and I had been at sea for a year. We were all thankful to be back home.

"Welcome back, Captain McAdams."

I turned to find my good friend, Turner Watts, standing behind me with his usual smile and rosy, wind-chapped cheeks. I extended my hand to him. "Good to see you again, Turner."

"What tales do you have from your voyage?" he asked.

"Come for supper tomorrow and I will share my stories with you," I said with a smile.

"Very well. Too many details to pack them all in on the dock right now, aye?" Turner's eyebrows rose in interest.

"Aye, we would be here into the wee hours."

We parted ways, and I checked that the lines on my ship were secure. I then hoisted my sack of belongings onto my back to walk to my sister's home in town. I would no doubt get a grand welcome from my family.

A sudden breeze prickled my skin, however, and I pulled the sides of my coat tighter around me. Something made me glance out to the water. A dark shape approached the docks, its details blurred by some mysterious fog.

My pack slid off my shoulder as a ship sailed closer. Its hull was covered in holes, some of them gaping. That should have rendered the vessel unseaworthy, yet no water poured in, and it remained afloat as it glided toward me. The majority of its sails were furled, but a dingy, yellowed jib remained. Though it was filled with wind, it had many tears in the canvas. It should not have been able to capture any wind in its condition. Barnacles formed a pale green crust on the main mast and gunwales. Every time it swayed in the water, creaking sounded as if the ship was a mere breath away from complete ruin.



The curious sight had me standing like a sculpture on the end of the dock. I could not tear my eyes away from this ghost of a ship heading right for me. When it finally came up to the dock, I caught the nearly unraveled line that was tossed to me by a man who, when I looked more closely, was not a man.

He was but a skeleton. No flesh was on his skull or boney hands and arms. Several other skeletons clattered around on the deck of the ghost ship as well. When a ramp was lowered, those skeletons stepped to the side to let who could only be their captain walk down it.

Eyes like red fire locked onto me as a skeleton much larger than the others disembarked. He wore a tattered blue captain's coat with tarnished buttons. His breeches were moth-eaten, and his boots looked as if they had been polished with rotten seaweed. He smelled of decay and death. When he came to stand directly in front of me, I backed up several paces.

I peeked back at the ship, but no other skeletons emerged from it. Instead, a pair of them stood below one of the rotting masts, lowering a flag.

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"What do I have to do?" I remembered my grandfather telling tales of a distant relative who was lost at sea with his entire crew. They were never heard from again.

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"You need only to board my ship and command it for one circle around that island. Then we shall all be free." He pointed to Beacon Isle just a few miles off the coast.

I squinted at the island. It would take a few hours to get there, circle it, and return. I was not too keen on boarding this ship for many reasons. Duty to family, however, swelled in me.

"Aye," I said. "I will do it."

I was ushered aboard the ship that looked even worse up close. When I was shown to the helm, the wheel was missing spokes. It wiggled on its mount.

"She sails just fine," the skeleton captain reassured. "We have been roaming the seas for decades without any problems."



Nodding, I barked orders which the skeleton crew jumped to carry out. In no time, we had the torn sails fully unfurled and carrying us toward Beacon Isle. I navigated around the island, my jaw dropping when we completed the circle.

The skeleton captain's flesh returned as did the skin of the crew members. His blue coat changed from faded to bright, the buttons shining in the sunlight. All the tears in his breeches mended themselves. His boots became spotless and gleaming.

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"Come for supper tomorrow and I will enthrall you with my stories," I said with a smile.

"Very well. Too many adventurous details to pack them all in on the dock right now, aye?" Turner's eyebrows rose in interest.

"Aye, we would be here into the wee hours of the morning."

We parted ways, and I checked that the lines on my ship were well secured. I then hoisted my sack of belongings onto my back to walk to my sister's home in town where I would no doubt get a grand welcome from my family.

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I was ushered aboard the decrepit ship that looked even worse up close. When I was shown to the helm, the wheel was missing spokes and it wiggled on its mount.

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"Will I see you again?" I had so many questions yet to be asked and answered.

"Aye." He gestured to my ship, *Sun Chaser*. "We have the beginnings of a fleet, do we not?"

"Aye." I watched him board *The Golden Dove* and sail off, excited for future interactions with my newly discovered kin.

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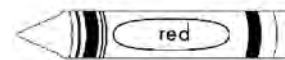
Pirate Quests

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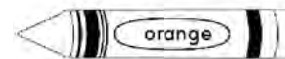
Answer the following questions. Underline the text evidence in the color indicated. If there is not a crayon next to the question, you will need to infer the answer. You should still look for text evidence to help you infer.

1. What point of view is this story written from?

- a. third person
- b. second person
- c. first person
- d. second and third person



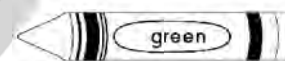
2. Why should the large holes in the ship's hull have made it unable to sail?



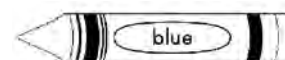
3. Examine the author's use of descriptive language when describing the crew of skeletons. How does this language affect the tone at this point in the passage? Why do you think the author chose to use this descriptive language?



4. Read this sentence from the passage, "*I was not too keen on boarding this ship for many reasons.*" Make an inference about what these reasons might be. Support your answer with details from the text.



5. How does this passage exemplify the theme of "family"? Support your response with evidence from the text.



MAKING INFERENCES

Make inferences based on the passage.

Evidence

Details from the text

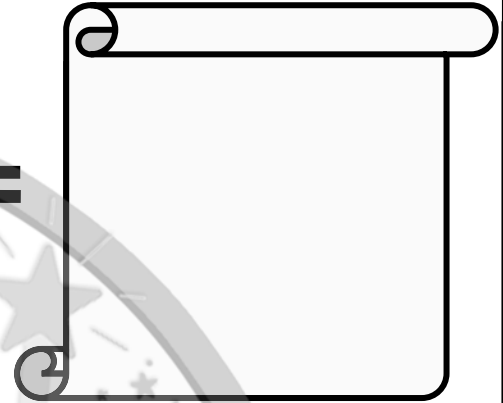


Schema

Ideas from my brain



Inference or Prediction



Evidence

Details from the text

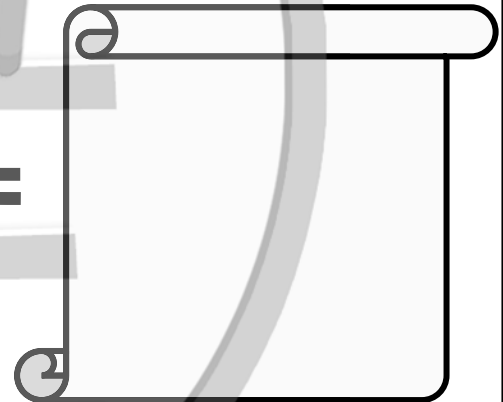


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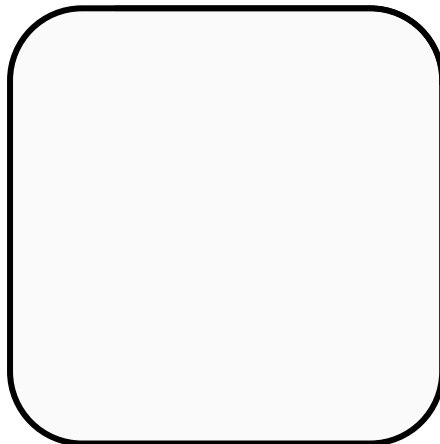


Inference or Prediction



Evidence

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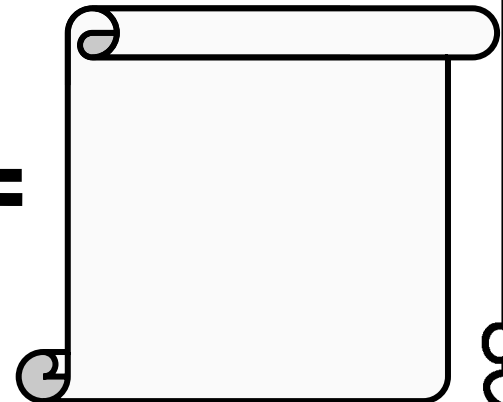


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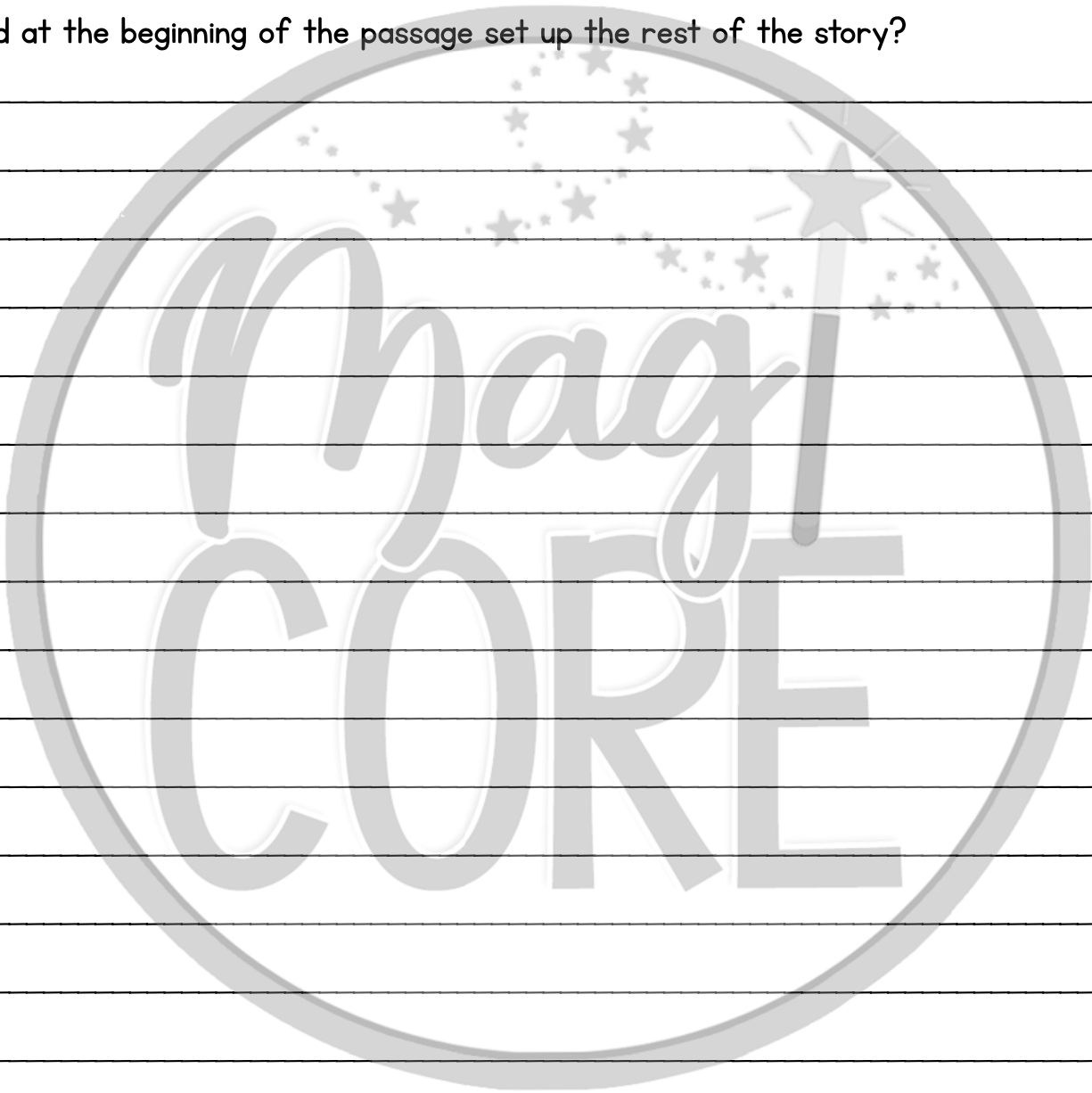


Inference or Prediction



GHOST OF A SHIP RESPONSE

Authors organize their stories with intention; the way a story is organized influences how we read and understand the content. Write a response analyzing why the author chose to organize the story in this way. Why did they include certain details? How did the information provided at the beginning of the passage set up the rest of the story?



The Message

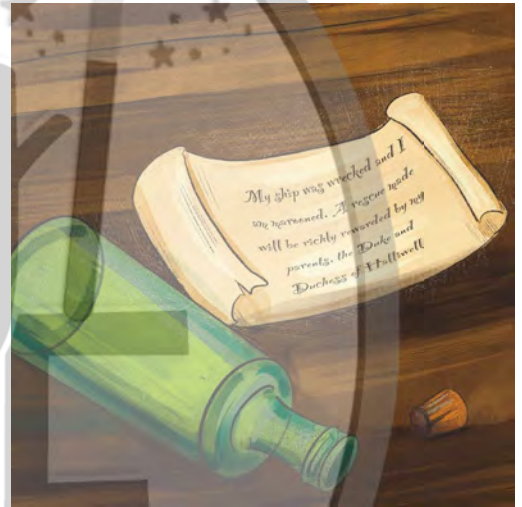
Captain Yelloweye uncorked the glass bottle. He had taken it on board his ship, *Dragon's Fire*. He tipped the bottle. The rolled scroll of parchment inside dropped out onto his desk. The captain uncurled the parchment. He scanned the loopy handwriting written on it.

My ship was wrecked. I am marooned. A rescue made will be richly rewarded by my parents, the Duke and Duchess of Halliwell.

The ink was slightly smudged. It looked fairly fresh, though. It was not yet faded by sunlight and sea air. The captain's gaze found the words *richly rewarded* again. Pirates loved to be *richly rewarded*.

"Bring *Dragon's Fire* about," he ordered. He strode to the helm of his ship. "Set a course for that island." He pointed to the outline of land. His crew did his bidding.

After a morning's sail, *Dragon's Fire* was anchored off the coast of the island. Captain Yelloweye and part of his crew rowed ashore in a longboat. A spyglass was to the captain's eye. He scanned the shores.



"Do you see him, Captain?" his first mate, Crummings, asked.

"Nay, but I do see a circle of stones on the beach," he said. "Perhaps our prey made a fire for warmth or cooking."

The longboat touched the shore. The men dragged it onto the sand. Evidence of a small camp was a few paces away from the fire site. Footprints trailed into the woods.

Captain Yelloweye followed the footprints with the crew. They led right to a cave on the west side of the island. He drew his cutlass from his belt. The captain entered the cave.

"If there is anyone in here," he said, "show yourself."

The crew around him made ready to protect the captain. No one stepped out from the shadowy corners of the cave.

"Captain," Crummings said. "I hear water over this way."

The pirates headed in the direction Crummings had indicated. They spilled into a wide cavern. It had water snaking through its floor. A small pool was at the far end of the chamber. A man sat in it with his shoulders hunched.

"You there," Captain Yelloweye said. The man whipped his head around. The captain reached into the pocket of his coat. He grabbed the parchment. "Are you the author of this?"

The man's eyes widened. He reached for dirty clothes at the edge of the pool. He hastily put them on.

"You found my message." He glanced up. "I have prayed for many nights that someone would come." He leveled his gaze on the captain. He took in his unruly black beard and hair, his stolen soldier's coat, and the golden rings in his left ear. "I did not expect my rescuers to be pirates, though." He took a few steps away from Captain Yelloweye.



"I do not think you are in a position to refuse a pirate's help, good sir, do you?" Captain.

Yelloweye gestured to the cave around them with the tip of his cutlass. "Unless you have grown fond of this shelter during your stay here."

"No, no. I most certainly have not." He angled his head at the captain. "But why would you help me?"

Captain Yelloweye handed the message to the man and tapped it. "There is mention of a rich reward for coming to your aid."

"Ah, yes, right." The man stepped around the captain. "Follow me."

He led them to the remains of a wrecked ship. The boat was half on the shore and half still in the water. The man climbed over the broken wood of the ship. He disappeared for a few moments.

"What is he doing, Captain?" Crummings asked.

"I am not sure," Captain Yelloweye said. He kept his eyes focused on the wreckage.

The man ran back to them. He hugged a small wooden box to his chest. He held out the box when he reached the captain. "Take this now. You will get the rest when I am safely delivered to my home in Halliwell."

Captain Yelloweye took the box. He opened the lid. Inside were enough gold coins to buy him a small island. Crummings started to react. The captain gave him a stern glare. "This will do for now. We expect a far greater sum, though."

The man waved his hand. "Of course, Captain. I have every faith my parents will be more than happy to pay whatever price you name."

Whatever price I name? Oh, that message in a bottle was the bit of fortune Captain Yelloweye and his crew had been searching for.

"This way then . . ." he paused, waiting for the man to supply his name.

"Lord Ethan Halliwell," the man said. "And you are?"

"Your savior." Captain Yelloweye was not daft enough to give the son of a duke his real name. That was a good way to end up dangling from a rope for crimes of piracy. The captain did not fancy that outcome. Especially when he was about to have more riches than he had ever imagined.

They led Lord Halliwell to *Dragon's Fire*. They marched him to the cells below deck. Captain Yelloweye opened the barred door to one. He motioned for the lord to enter.

"You are going to lock me up for the journey to Halliwell?"

"You are not a guest," Captain Yelloweye said. "You are merely an item to trade." He pointed to some of the other cells. They had various trinkets in them. Crummings set the box of gold coins in one of the cells. "We lock up all our valuables to keep them safe. It can be dangerous aboard a pirate ship."

The crew snarled at Lord Halliwell. They bared their teeth. Their hands went to their daggers and cutlasses.

Lord Halliwell entered the cell. He allowed the door to be locked. The man did not make a sound on the entire voyage to his home. When they reached Halliwell, Captain Yelloweye put on better clothing to look like an honorable sailor and sea captain. The duke and duchess were overjoyed to see their beloved son again.

Captain Yelloweye collected his reward. He could not believe how easy it had been to make that kind of coin by simply returning a lost loved one. He made his way back to *Dragon's Fire*. He took note of all the lords and ladies in this area.

Perhaps one of them might go missing next.

The Message

Captain Yelloweye uncorked the glass bottle he had taken on board his ship, *Dragon's Fire*. He tipped the bottle, letting the rolled scroll of parchment inside drop out onto his desk. Setting the bottle aside, the captain uncurled the parchment and scanned the loopy handwriting scrawled on it.

My ship was wrecked, and I am marooned. A rescue made will be richly rewarded by my parents, the Duke and Duchess of Halliwell.

The ink was slightly smudged, but it looked fairly fresh, not yet faded by sunlight and sea air. The captain's gaze found the words *richly rewarded* again. Pirates loved to be *richly rewarded*.

"Bring *Dragon's Fire* about," he ordered as he strode to the helm of his ship. "Set a course for that island." He pointed to the vague outline of land and his crew did his bidding.

After a morning's sail, *Dragon's Fire* was anchored off the coast of the island. Captain Yelloweye and part of his crew rowed in a longboat, a spyglass affixed to the captain's eye as he scanned the shores.

"Do you see him, Captain?" his first mate, Crummings, asked.

"Nay, but I do see a circle of stones on the beach," he said. "Perhaps our marooned prey made a fire for warmth or cooking."

Soon, the longboat touched the shore, and the men dragged it onto the sand. Evidence of a small camp was a few paces away from the fire site and footprints trailed into the woods.

Captain Yelloweye followed the footprints with the crew that had accompanied him. They led right to a cave on the west side of the island. Slowly drawing his cutlass from his belt, the captain entered the cave.

"If there is anyone in here," he said, "show yourself."

The crew around him made ready to protect the captain, if need be, but no one emerged from the shadowy corners of the cave.

"Captain," Crummings said. "I hear water over this way."

The pirates headed in the direction Crummings had indicated. They spilled into a wide cavern that had water snaking through its floor. In a small pool at the far end of the chamber, a man sat with his shoulders hunched.



"You there," Captain Yelloweye said, causing the man to whip his head around. The captain reached into the pocket of his coat and grabbed the parchment. "Are you the author of this?"

The man's eyes widened as he reached for soiled clothes at the edge of the pool and hastily put them on.

"You found my message." He glanced up. "I have prayed for many nights that someone would come." He leveled his gaze on the captain, taking in his unruly black beard and hair, his stolen soldier's coat, and the golden rings in his left ear. "I did not expect my rescuers to be pirates, though." He took a few steps away from Captain Yelloweye.

"I do not think you are in a position to refuse a pirate's help, good sir, do you?" Captain Yelloweye gestured to the cave around them with the tip of his cutlass. "Unless you have grown fond of these accommodations during your accidental stay here."

"No, no. I most certainly have not." He angled his head at the captain. "But why would you help me?"

Captain Yelloweye handed the message to the man and tapped it. "There is mention of a rich reward for coming to your aid."

"Ah, yes, right." The man stepped around the captain. "Follow me."

He led them to the remains of a wrecked ship half on the shore and half still in the water. Climbing over the broken wood carcass, the man disappeared for a few moments.

"What is he doing, Captain?" Crummings asked.

"I am not sure," Captain Yelloweye said, keeping his eyes focused on the wreckage.

The man ran back to them, a small wooden box hugged to his chest. When he reached the captain, he held out the box. "Take this now, and you will get the rest when I am safely delivered to my home in Halliwell."

Captain Yelloweye took the box and opened the lid. Inside were enough gold coins to buy him a small island. Crummings started to react, but the captain gave him a stern glare. "This will do for now, but we expect a far greater sum."

The man waved his hand. "Of course, Captain. I have every faith my parents will be more than agreeable to whatever price you name."

Whatever price I name? Oh, that message in a bottle was the bit of fortune Captain Yelloweye and his crew had been searching for.



"This way then . . ." he paused, waiting for the man to supply his name.

"Lord Ethan Halliwell," the man said. "And you are?"

"Your savior." Captain Yelloweye was not daft enough to give the son of a duke his real name. That was a good way to end up dangling from a rope for crimes of piracy. The captain did not fancy that outcome, especially when he was about to have more riches than he had ever imagined.

They led Lord Halliwell to *Dragon's Fire* and to the cells below deck. Captain Yelloweye opened the barred door to one and motioned for the lord to enter.

"You are going to lock me up for the journey to Halliwell?"

"You are not a guest," Captain Yelloweye said. "You are merely an item to trade." He pointed to some of the other cells that had various trinkets in them and to Crummings setting the box of gold coins in one of the cells. "We lock up all our valuables to keep them safe. It can be dangerous aboard a pirate ship."

The crew snarled at Lord Halliwell, baring their teeth while their hands went to their daggers and cutlasses.

Lord Halliwell entered the cell and allowed the door to be locked. The man did not make a sound on the entire voyage to his home. When they reached Halliwell, Captain Yelloweye donned more respectable clothing to look like an honorable sailor and sea captain before the duke and duchess who were overjoyed to see their beloved son again.

Captain Yelloweye collected his reward. He could not believe how easy it had been to make that kind of coin by simply returning a lost loved one. As he made his way back to *Dragon's Fire*, he took note of all the lords and ladies in this area.

Perhaps one of them might go missing next.

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The ink was slightly smudged, but it looked fairly fresh, not yet faded by sunlight and sea air. The captain's gaze found the words *richly rewarded* again. Pirates loved to be *richly rewarded*.

Bring *Dragon's Fire* about," he ordered as he strode to the helm of his ship. "Set a course for that island." He pointed to the vague outline of land in the distance and his crew did his bidding. As it was the only land visible in their current location, Captain Yelloweye assumed the composer of the message had to be there.

After a morning's sail, *Dragon's Fire* was anchored off the coast of the island. Captain Yelloweye and part of his crew rowed ashore in a longboat, a spyglass affixed to the captain's eye as he scanned the shores to look for signs of human activity.



"Do you see him, Captain?" his first mate, Crummings, asked as he sidled up next to the captain at the bow of the ship.

"Nay, but I do see a circle of stones on the beach," he said. "Perhaps our marooned prey made a fire for warmth or cooking."

Soon, the longboat touched the shore, and the men dragged it onto the sand. They investigated evidence of a small camp located a few paces from the fire site and footprints made a meandering trail into the dense woods.

Captain Yelloweye followed the footprints with the crew that had accompanied him, cutting through thick brush and vines as they traveled deeper. The footprints led right to a rocky cave on the west side of the island. Slowly drawing his cutlass from his belt, the captain entered the cave with his men.

"If there is anyone in here, show yourself," he said, squinting down dark passageways and feeling his way around multiple turns. The cave was a confusing maze of paths and much larger than the captain had anticipated.

The crew around him made ready to protect the captain, if need be, but no one emerged from the shadowy corners of the cave's many compartments.

"Captain," Crummings said. "I hear water trickling over this way."

The pirates headed in the direction Crummings had indicated, and they spilled into a wide cavern that had water snaking through its floor. In a small pool at the far end of the chamber, a man sat with his shoulders hunched.

"You there," Captain Yelloweye said, causing the man to whip his head around. The captain reached into the pocket of his coat and grabbed the parchment. "Are you the author of this message?"

The man's eyes widened as he reached for soiled clothes at the edge of the pool and hastily put them on. He was mere skin and bones, looking as if he had not eaten a decent meal in ages. His bare feet were cut and bruised, and his blond hair was a wild mess.



"You found my message." The man glanced up to the cave's ceiling before looking back at Captain Yelloweye and his crew. "I have prayed for many nights that someone would come." He leveled his gaze on the captain specifically, taking in his unruly black beard and hair, his stolen soldier's coat, and the golden rings in his left ear. "I did not expect my rescuers to be pirates, though." He took a few steps away from Captain Yelloweye, but the cave chamber did not appear to have a second exit.

"I do not think you are in a position to refuse a pirate's help, good sir, do you?" Captain Yelloweye gestured to the cave around them with the tip of his cutlass. "Unless you have grown fond of these rustic accommodations during your accidental stay here on this lonely island."

"No, no. I most certainly have not." He angled his head at the captain then narrowed his blue eyes. "But why would you help me?"

Captain Yelloweye handed the message to the man and tapped it. "There is mention of a rich reward for coming to your aid, and we wish to collect it."

"Ah, yes, right." The man stepped around the captain, a wary eye on all the men's weapons. "Follow me this way."

He led them to the remains of a wrecked ship half on the shore and half still in the water. Climbing over the broken wood carcass, the man disappeared for a few moments, some rustling sounding from within the ruins.

"What is he doing, Captain?" Crummings asked, edging closer to the ship.

"I am not sure," Captain Yelloweye said, keeping his gaze focused on the wreckage.

The man ran back to them, a small wooden box hugged to his chest. When he reached the captain, he held out the ornately carved box. "Take this now, and you will get the rest when I am safely delivered to my home in Halliwell."

Captain Yelloweye took the box and opened the lid, surprised to find enough gold coins inside to buy him a small island. Crummings started to react, but the captain gave him a stern glare to stop him. "This will do for now, but we expect a far greater sum when we deliver you to your home."

The man waved his hand. "Of course, Captain. I have every faith my parents will be more than agreeable to whatever price you name for your services."

Whatever price I name? Oh, that message in a bottle was the bit of fortune Captain Yelloweye and his crew had been searching for.

"This way then . . ." he paused, waiting for the man to supply his name.

"Lord Ethan Halliwell," the man said. His bow looked silly while he wore tattered clothes and had dirt smudged on his face, but the captain still sensed an aristocratic air about the man fitting for a lord. "And you are?"

"Your savior." Captain Yelloweye was not daft enough to give the son of a duke his real name. That was a good way to end up dangling from a rope for crimes of piracy. The captain did not fancy that outcome, especially when he was about to have more riches than he had ever imagined.

They led Lord Halliwell to *Dragon's Fire* and to the cells below deck. Captain Yelloweye opened the barred door to one and motioned for the lord to enter.

"You are going to lock me up for the journey to Halliwell?" he asked, hesitating outside the cell.

"You are not a guest," Captain Yelloweye said. "You are merely an item to trade." He pointed to some of the other cells that had various trinkets in them and to Crummings setting the box of gold coins in one of the cells. "We lock up all our valuables to keep them safe because it can be dangerous aboard a pirate ship."

The crew snarled at Lord Halliwell, baring their teeth while their hands went to their daggers and cutlasses.

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Captain Yelloweye collected his reward. He could not believe how easy it had been to make that kind of coin by simply returning a lost loved one. As he made his way back to *Dragon's Fire*, he took note of all the lords and ladies milling about in this area.

Perhaps one of them might go missing next.

Pirate Quests

Name: _____ Date: _____

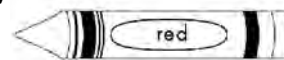
Answer the following questions. Underline the text evidence in the color indicated. If there is not a crayon next to the question, you will need to infer the answer. You should still look for text evidence to help you infer.

1. What clues told Captain Yelloweye that the message on the scroll wasn't very old?

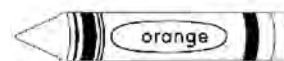
Clue #1

Clue #2

Clue #3



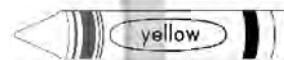
2. Read this sentence from the passage, "*My ship was wrecked. I am **marooned**.*" What does the word "**marooned**" mean in this sentence?



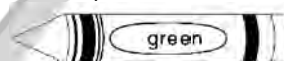
- a. entertained
- b. dying
- c. confused
- d. stuck

Clues from the text: _____

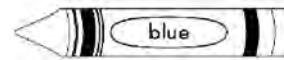
3. How does Ethan Halliwell's behavior and attitude shift once he finds out his rescuers are pirates? Why might finding out they are pirates influence his feelings?



4. Why does Captain Yelloweye refer to Ethan as "an item to trade"? What does this phrase mean? Support your answer with evidence from the text.



5. The story ends with the line, "*Perhaps one of them might go missing next.*" What is the author implying by writing this line at the end of the passage?



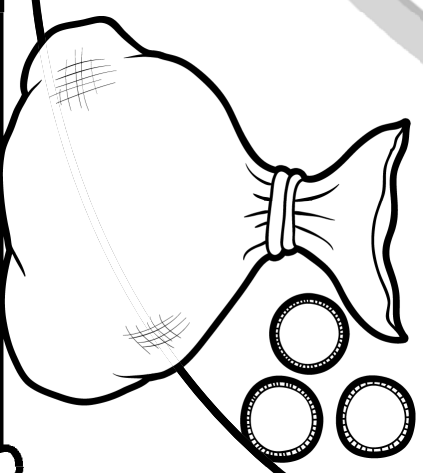
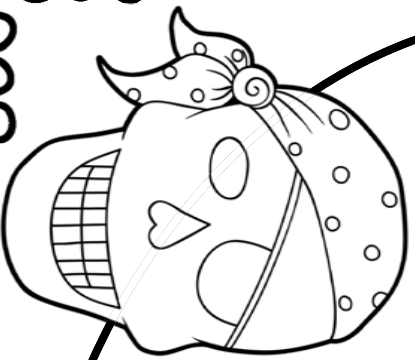
COMPARE AND CONTRAST CHARACTERS

In stories, we are often presented with two very different characters. They might look different, have different likes and dislikes, different personalities, and different roles to play within the storyline. Compare and contrast Captain Yelloweye with Lord Ethan Halliwell from "The Message." Identify key differences while also identifying

what the characters might have in common.

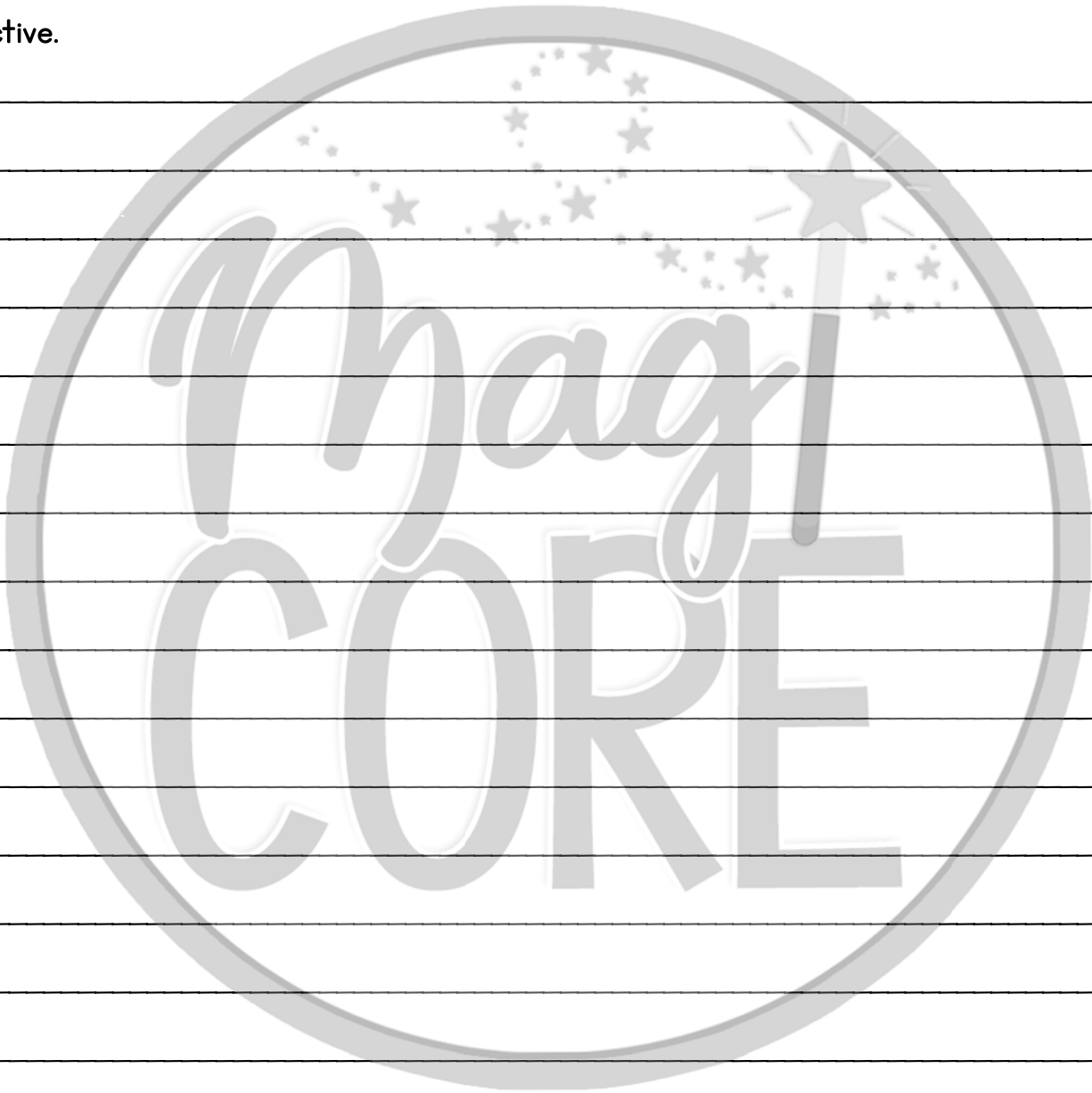
CAPTAIN YELLOWEYE

LORD ETHAN HALLIWELL



THE MESSAGE RESPONSE

This story is told from the point of view of Captain Yelloweye. Try to imagine how the story might be different if told from the perspective of Lord Ethan Halliwell. Write a response detailing some of the key differences that might emerge if the story was told from Ethan's perspective.



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