

Grade 4

Unit 6: *Treasure Island*: X Marks the Spot



Use the Interactive Read-Aloud lesson and text on the following page to kick off this unit with your students.

Unit-level Essential Question

What makes an adventure story excellent?

Lessons 1–5

Guiding Question: How can dialogue help move the plot forward?

Writing Prompt: Why might Robert Louis Stevenson use dialogue to give the reader (and Jim) information?

Lessons 6–10

Guiding Question: How can you determine if someone is trustworthy or untrustworthy?

Writing Prompt: Ben Gunn tells Jim that he has been marooned on the island. After you read Jim's definition of *marooned*, why do you think Ben Gunn's shipmates may have marooned him?

Lessons 11–19

Guiding Question: How can metaphors and similes strengthen writing?

Writing Prompt: With a partner, choose one event from *Treasure Island*. Brainstorm together to think of a simile that would work well in the text's description of that event.

Unit 6 Culminating Activity

At the end of the story, Jim says, "All five of us got a share of the treasure and used it wisely or foolishly, according to our personalities." He imagines what Long John Silver might have been doing at the same time. Write a short story about what Long John Silver did after he escaped with his four hundred guineas. Be prepared to share it with your class!

GRADE 4 UNIT 6

Read-Aloud

Use the following Read-Aloud to introduce **Grade 4 Unit 6**.

Tell students that throughout this unit, they will think about the following **Essential Question**: What makes an adventure story excellent?

Explain that over the next few weeks they will learn about adventure stories—how authors write them, what elements they include, and what makes them so exciting. This Read-Aloud takes place in a submarine, in which a group of men exploring deep in the ocean have been trading stories about a deep-sea monster.

Read the Read-Aloud, pausing after each section to discuss the text-based questions.

Excerpt from *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*

by Jules Verne

“But in all these stories, is there any truth?” Conseil asked.

“None at all, my friends, at least in those that go beyond the bounds of credibility and fly off into fable or legend. Yet for the imaginings of these storytellers there had to be, if not a cause, at least an excuse. It can’t be denied that some species of squid and other devilfish are quite large, though still smaller than cetaceans. Aristotle put the dimensions of one squid at five cubits, or 3.1 meters. Our fishermen frequently see specimens over 1.8 meters long. The museums in Trieste and Montpellier have preserved some devilfish carcasses measuring two meters. Besides, according to the calculations of naturalists, one of these animals only six feet long would have tentacles as long as twenty-seven. Which is enough to make a fearsome monster.”

“[. . .] . A friend of mine, Captain Paul Bos of Le Havre, has often sworn to me that he encountered one of these monsters of colossal size in the seas of the East Indies. But the most astonishing event, which proves that these gigantic animals undeniably exist, took place a few years ago in 1861.”

“[. . .] . In 1861, to the northeast of Tenerife and fairly near the latitude where we are right now, the crew of the gunboat Alecto spotted a monstrous squid swimming in their waters. Commander Bouguer approached the animal and attacked it with blows from harpoons and blasts from rifles, but without much success because bullets and harpoons crossed its soft flesh as if it were semiliquid jelly. After several fruitless attempts, the crew managed to slip a noose around the mollusk’s body. This noose slid as far as the caudal fins and came to a halt. Then they tried to haul the monster on board, but its weight was so considerable that when they tugged on the rope, the animal parted company with its tail; and deprived of this adornment, it disappeared beneath the waters.”

Literal. What are the sailors discussing in these stories?

» sea creatures

Literal. Are these creatures real or legendary?

- » There are stories of legendary creatures. However, some of the stories are true because there are specimens in museums.

Inferential. What image of sea creatures do the words like *fearsome*, *colossal*, and *monstrous* create?

- » They create a mental image of tension or fear. The creatures sound scary and frightening.

Inferential. The speaker says that the crew “managed” to trap one of the sea creatures. Based on this word, did the crew have an easy or hard time doing this?

- » hard

“[. . .] And how long was it?” the Canadian asked.

“Didn’t it measure about six meters?” said Conseil, who was stationed at the window and examining anew the crevices in the cliff.

“Precisely,” I replied.

“Wasn’t its head,” Conseil went on, “crowned by eight tentacles that quivered in the water like a nest of snakes?”

“Precisely.”

“Weren’t its eyes prominently placed and considerably enlarged?”

“Yes, Conseil.”

“And wasn’t its mouth a real parrot’s beak but of fearsome size?”

“Correct, Conseil.”

“Well, with all due respect to Master,” Conseil replied serenely, “if this isn’t Bouguer’s Squid, it’s at least one of his close relatives!”

Literal. Where is Conseil standing during this conversation?

- » at the window

Inferential. With each question, Conseil adds more detail about the creature. How does he know all these details?

- » He is looking at it out the submarine window.

I stared at Conseil. Ned Land rushed to the window.

“What an awful animal!” he exclaimed.

I stared in my turn and couldn't keep back a movement of revulsion. Before my eyes there quivered a horrible monster worthy of a place among the most far-fetched teratological legends.

It was a squid of colossal dimensions, fully eight meters long. It was traveling backward with tremendous speed in the same direction as the Nautilus. It gazed with enormous, staring eyes that were tinted sea green. Its eight arms (or more accurately, feet) were rooted in its head, which has earned these animals the name cephalopod; its arms stretched a distance twice the length of its body and were writhing like the serpentine hair of the Furies. You could plainly see its 250 suckers, arranged over the inner sides of its tentacles and shaped like semispheric capsules. Sometimes these suckers fastened onto the lounge window by creating vacuums against it. The monster's mouth—a beak made of horn and shaped like that of a parrot—opened and closed vertically. Its tongue, also of horn substance and armed with several rows of sharp teeth, would flicker out from between these genuine shears. What a freak of nature! A bird's beak on a mollusk! Its body was spindle-shaped and swollen in the middle, a fleshy mass that must have weighed 20,000 to 25,000 kilograms. Its unstable color would change with tremendous speed as the animal grew irritated, passing successively from bluish gray to reddish brown.

Literal. What kind of animal is being described?

» It is a squid, which is a kind of cephalopod.

Inferential. The author writes that Ned Land “rushed” to the window. Based on this word, was Ned excited or bored by news of the creature?

» excited

Inferential. The passage says that the animal's feet were “writhing.” Think about whether you have ever heard that word before, and if so, in what context. What does this word reveal about how the speaker views the animal?

» This word is often used to describe snakes. It is a word people usually use when they dislike something, so the author probably dislikes what he saw.

What was irritating this mollusk? No doubt the presence of the Nautilus, even more fearsome than itself, and which it couldn't grip with its mandibles or the suckers on its arms. And yet what monsters these devilfish are, what vitality our Creator has given them, what vigor in their movements, thanks to their owning a triple heart!

Sheer chance had placed us in the presence of this squid, and I didn't want to lose this opportunity to meticulously study such a cephalopod specimen. I overcame the horror that its appearance inspired in me, picked up a pencil, and began to sketch it.

“Perhaps this is the same as the Alecto's,” Conseil said.

“Can't be,” the Canadian replied, “because this one's complete while the other one lost its tail!”

“That doesn’t necessarily follow,” I said. “The arms and tails of these animals grow back through regeneration, and in seven years the tail on Bouguer’s Squid has surely had time to sprout again.”

“Anyhow,” Ned shot back, “if it isn’t this fellow, maybe it’s one of those!”

Indeed, other devilfish had appeared at the starboard window. I counted seven of them. They provided the Nautilus with an escort, and I could hear their beaks gnashing on the sheet-iron hull. We couldn’t have asked for a more devoted following.

Literal. How does the speaker react to the squid?

» He starts drawing it.

Inferential. Why might the speaker call this an “opportunity”?

» He has not seen this kind of creature before so it is an opportunity, or chance, to sketch a rare animal.

Inferential. Why does the speaker say they had “a [. . .] devoted following”?

» The animals were attacking the submarine.

Use the following prompts to extend student understanding of the Read-Aloud.

Guiding Question: How do words like *gnashing*, *writhing*, *attacked*, *monster*, and *horror* affect the mood of this passage?

Writing Prompt: Think about the moments in this passage that seemed most exciting or interesting. What events, details, or words in this Read-Aloud help show that it is from an adventure story?