

Oyster War By Ben Towle

Grade Levels: 6-9, applicable through grade 12

Synopsis:

Seafaring legends meet nautical history in this fanciful adventure inspired by the Chesapeake Bay oyster wars, a series of conflicts between oyster pirates (yes, that was a real thing) and authorities during the decades following the Civil War. The livelihood of the town of Blood's Hollow is threatened by the notorious Traacher Fink and his crew, who ruin oyster beds belonging to other watermen by dredging - scraping the bottom of the bay until no oysters remain. Commander Davidson Bulloch leads a team of misfit sailors to take down this seafood-stealing rascal, but Fink has a supernatural helper and a devilish plan - and he plays dirty, too. Surprises abound in this exciting, beautifully printed oversize graphic novel with a local angle. Colorful, action-packed art that recalls European classics like Tintin and Asterix make this a book that rewards repeat reading.

Author Website:

- <http://www.benzilla.com/>

Curricular Connections:

- Social Studies
 - Maryland history, Oyster Wars 1600s-1800s,
 - Primary vs. secondary source.
- English
 - Compare & Contrast, elements of historical fiction,
 - Representation of historical/real characters
- Environmental science
 - Conservation vs. exploitation
 - Comparison to current oyster population/threats

Lesson Ideas:

- Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum Curriculum (see below)
- What tells the story better? Primary or Secondary sources? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each?
- Points of view: Construct an argument for both side in the Oyster War. Explain why they thought they were right in their actions.
- Focusing on 1 or 2 characters, compare them to similar historical characters. Did Towle accurately represent that type of person? Why or why not?
- Write a journal entry from 1 character's point of view, discussing the war, and several other characters, filling in an information missing from the fictional account.

Common Core Standards:

- CCSS.ELA LITERACY.RH.68.1
 - Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- CCSS.ELA LITERACY.RH.68.2

- o Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
- CCSS.ELA LITERACY.RH.68.6
 - o Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).
- CCSS.ELA LITERACY.RH.68.8
 - o Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.
- CCSS.ELA LITERACY.RH.68.9
 - o Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic

Additional Materials:

- http://www.dnr.state.md.us/naturalresource/winter2008/oyster_wars.pdf
- <http://www.neh.gov/humanities/2011/mayjune/statement/oysterwars>
- <http://www.cbmm.org/pdf/Oystering%20Curriculum610.pdf>
- <http://www.marinalife.com/magazine/241oysterwars>

Suggested Companion Titles:

- *Amelia Earhart: This Broad Ocean*
- Nathan Hale's Hazardous Tales Series
- *Dogs of War*
- *The Oyster Wars of the Chesapeake Bay*
- *Chesapeake 1880*

Professional Reviews:

- *Booklist*, 9/15/2015
- *Publishers Weekly*, 7/13/2015
- *School Library Journal*, 10/1/2015