



TeachersFirst READING TREKS

Carry On, Mr. Bowditch

Teacher Guide

Access Reading
Trek Map

Grade Level & Content Areas

Ages: 11–14

Grades: 7–9

Reading Level: 7th grade

Lexile Measure: 70L

Guided Reading Level: T

Developmental Reading

Assessment (DRA): 50

Content Areas: English/language arts, history, mathematics, geography, and STEM connections.

Synopsis of Book

Carry On, Mr. Bowditch by Jean Lee Latham is a compelling historical novel that traces the life of Nathaniel Bowditch (Nat), a self-taught mathematician and navigator in 18th-century America. Orphaned young and forced into indentured servitude, Nathaniel overcomes immense obstacles through perseverance, a passion for learning, and a deep love of numbers and science. As he rises from clerk to ship's captain, he transforms maritime navigation by writing *The American Practical Navigator*, making complex knowledge accessible to sailors. Rich in historical detail and inspiration, the novel highlights themes like resilience, education, and the power of self-determination, making it a powerful interdisciplinary text for literature, history, STEM, and social-emotional learning.

Standards

Common Core State Standards for 6–12

Reading: Literature

- Key Ideas and Details
- Craft and Structure
- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Writing

- Text Types and Purposes
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge

National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

- Theme 2: TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE
- Theme 3: PEOPLE, PLACES, AND ENVIRONMENTS
- Theme 7: PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION, AND CONSUMPTION
- Theme 8: SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND SOCIETY

National Core Arts Standards for Visual Arts

- CREATING
- RESPONDING

National Core Music Standards

- RESPONDING
- CREATING

Next Generation Science Standards

- Engineering Design
- Motion and Stability: Forces and Interactions
- Earth's Systems

Social Justice Standards

- Identity
- Justice
- Action

Using a TeachersFirst® Reading Trek to Explore This Book

TeachersFirst Reading Treks create a virtual field trip of resources about a piece of literature or a text using the My Maps feature of Google Maps. To motivate and enrich student reading, teachers and students can reference this visual collection of web resources and images as they relate to the contents of a book.

TeachersFirst has done the hard work for you! Use the activities in this teacher guide and the accompanying [Reading Trek map](#) as you and your students explore this book. And, if you feel inspired, you (or your students) can create your own Reading Trek about this or another book!

Using This Reading Trek in Class

Below is a list of ideas for how to use this Reading Trek in your educational setting.

Working with the Map:

1. Introduce the book to the whole class by displaying the [Reading Trek map](#) on an interactive whiteboard and highlighting its various layers.
2. Have students use Google Earth ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to create their own custom digital journey tracing Nat Bowditch's voyages. At each stop, they can add images,

- fun facts, journal entries from Nat's point of view, or historical context about the port.
3. Drawing inspiration from Bowditch's commitment to educating sailors, have students use Slido ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to create a class-wide survey that asks, "What's something you wish you knew before starting something new?" (e.g., a job, a new grade level, a move). Discuss connections to Nat's experiences and the challenges of learning at sea.
 4. Ask students to research health issues that sailors faced during the 18th century—such as scurvy, isolation, or injuries from storms—and compare them to the hardships Bowditch endured. They can use Canva Infographic Maker ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to create infographics that show the causes, symptoms, and solutions to these issues, along with Nathaniel's personal responses to these challenges.
 5. As they read, challenge students to collaboratively build a digital bulletin board on Stormboard ([TeachersFirst review](#)) where they post challenging maritime or historical vocabulary from the book. They can define, illustrate, and explain terms and outline their connections to the Reading Trek locations.
 6. Nat's love of mathematics and navigation was critical to his success. Students can complete a navigation challenge where they plot a fictional course from Salem to another location on the map using basic coordinates or distance estimation, then write about how understanding math changed Nat's life and those of his shipmates.
 7. Have students choose a significant chapter tied to a map location and create a visual interpretation using hand-drawn or digital art. These chapter illustrations can be displayed in class or uploaded to a shared Webnode ([TeachersFirst review](#)) site to form a visual journey of Nat Bowditch's life.

Extension Activities:

1. Create a digital timeline of Nathaniel Bowditch's life using Sutori ([TeachersFirst review](#)). Include personal milestones, major voyages, and historical events mentioned in the novel.
2. Script and record a podcast episode as Nathaniel Bowditch or a sailor from his crew using Buzzsprout ([TeachersFirst review](#)). Reflect on life aboard ship and the importance of knowledge and perseverance.
3. Use Piktochart ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to design an infographic that compares 18th-century navigation techniques to modern GPS systems. Include information about the tools used, accuracy, and risks of each method.
4. Have cooperative learning groups map Bowditch's travels using Google My Maps ([TeachersFirst review](#)). Add points at key locations from the novel and include images, descriptions, and quotes to bring Nat's journeys to life.
5. Curate a virtual museum exhibit of five artifacts from Bowditch's life (e.g., sextant, logbook, math tools) using Image Annotator ([TeachersFirst review](#)). Include five "hot spots" on the images and explain their significance to the story.

Helpful Resources

From TeachersFirst:

- [TeachersFirst CurriConnects Book List - Maps](#)
- [TeachersFirst Review of Google My Maps](#)
- [OK2Ask: Building Background Knowledge with Reading Treks](#)
- [OK2Ask: No Passport Required: Cross-Curricular Learning Journeys with Google My Maps](#)

Other Resources:

- [LitCharts Study Guide](#)
- [Reed Novel Studies](#)
- [CenterforLit Schools Study Guide](#)