

TREASURE ISLAND

The background of the entire page is a detailed illustration. At the top, a pirate flag with a skull and crossbones is partially visible. Below it, a large pirate captain with a wide-brimmed hat and a menacing expression holds two pistols, one in each hand. A parrot is perched on his left shoulder. In the foreground, a young boy with a surprised expression looks up at the captain. The scene is set against a backdrop of a ship's mast and rigging.

Book:

***Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stevenson**

Grade Level:

6th - 9th Grades

Literacy Standards:

**Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening,
Non-Print Media, Critical Thinking**

Cross-Curricular Applications:

History, Geography, Geoscience, Art, Drama





Ordering Information

Treasure Island
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TREASURE ISLAND



Why graphic novel adaptations of classic books?

Students enter middle school and high school at a range of reading levels, and although many students are prepared to read classic and canonical works, a large number of students have difficulty navigating these often densely worded texts. Other students, who may have biological needs causing them to have difficulty with reading (such as dyslexia or ADHD) might also be greatly challenged. However, these texts are still necessary as they help students develop the background knowledge often needed to navigate newer literary texts, films, and even television programs. Background knowledge in canonical works helps students develop an understanding of intertextuality (the existence of links between one text and another text), helping them to critically engage and read any number of other texts (including advertisements).

Graphic novel adaptations of classical texts are not meant to supplant or replace the traditional print copies of the books. However, they help students develop an entryway into reading. As with other adaptations, including abridged versions of classical texts, they help students figure out what is occurring in a dense text by requiring them to find order and sequence in the illustrations. Vocabulary in graphic novels is usually less dense (though it can still have a significant level of complexity).

As reading instruction tells us, there are three different levels of student reading ability, and these levels are based on the level of vocabulary, the overall concept, and sophistication of the structure of the text – their independent level, their instructional level, and their frustration level. Graphic novels are typically written at any student's independent reading level, helping them to develop successful comprehension of the story.

Graphic novels and visualization:

The illustrations help students better understand setting and character, helping them to distinguish between characters. The use of different styles of "balloons" help students differentiate between external speech (dialogue or spoken soliloquy) and internal speech (thought). Visualization is sometimes a strategy for reading with which students struggle, especially students with limited exposure to a variety of locations. Even successful readers may lose track of the setting as they continue reading. Graphic novels can show students what Ancient Rome looked like in each individual panel, helping them to continually "visualize" or see the setting. When traditional printed texts feature a plethora of characters, some of whom are described so as to be nearly indistinguishable from another, students may have difficulty remembering characters, following dialogue, or tracing actions.

Graphic novels make illustrated distinctions between characters, helping students to keep track of this information. If students are capable of seeing or visualizing a text, they are also better able to move into other important strategies for reading. These strategies include previewing (with a picture walk) and anticipating, connecting (text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world), questioning, and monitoring their own comprehension.

Graphic novels and advanced readers:

Independent graphic novels, developed by authors/illustrators which are unique storylines, differ from these adaptations because they tell original stories that can be used with any level of student proficiency – including advanced and honors-level students. Because graphic novel versions of classical texts are adaptations, many teachers may feel these texts should not be used with advanced and honors-level students. On the contrary, these adaptations are also helpful to advanced students, who can engage in more critical discussions about the illustrations (including an illustrator's use of line, color, and posture) and their connection to the text. These students are also capable of having discussions about the significance of the adaptation, recognizing and discussing how the adaptation becomes an entirely new text (which is a discussion students can also have with films). They can also discuss the ways in which these adaptations mirror or alter the central ideas (the theme and motifs) of a literary text and the significance of these changes.

TREASURE ISLAND



Graphic novels and engagement:

Students who are reluctant readers can also benefit when teachers employ graphic novels. Students become reluctant readers for any number of reasons and include students who are functionally literate as well as students who are a-literate (they can read, but won't). When students repeatedly encounter texts that are too challenging or at their frustration level (even with instructional support), they begin to see themselves as failures. When reading a graphic novel, most students begin to see that they are successful while reading.

Graphic novels also validate the reading interests of many students, including (though not limited to) young men. Some students resist reading because they do not see themselves in the novels (they are not novels which appeal to them or with which they can make easy connections), because they find the novels too simplistic and not engaging, or because the novels don't connect to their personal reading habits. These students will likely find graphic novels engaging, helping them to find a renewed interest in reading.

Graphic novels and assessment:

Teachers are still capable of teaching literary devices, such as conflict (internal and external), plot, character development, tone, mood, diction, and setting with graphic novels. Fictional graphic novels still contain the elements of traditional fictional pieces like short stories, novellas, and novels. Teachers are also still capable of assessing student comprehension of the story. Generating questions which are literal, inferential, and critical, as well as asking students to conduct retellings of the novel help teachers ensure that students have understood the novel. Assessing student understanding of sequencing can also occur visually, with teachers copying pages from a graphic novel and asking students to arrange panels to recreate the sequence of the story. Teachers can also assess miscues and analyze student miscues using graphic novels. As such, graphic novels become another form of text that teachers are able to use for educational purposes.

Why Marvel Illustrated:

Marvel Illustrated graphic novels differ greatly in quality from a large number of other graphic adaptations of traditional novels. These graphic novel adaptations are written and illustrated by comic book authors and illustrators renowned for their incredible work. The illustrations surpass most other graphic adaptations of classic novels because of the detail, attention to lines, symmetry, borders, body structure, and color. The high gloss finish, the color illustration, the intricate care in binding, and overall design are not only appealing to students, but also to instructors. As they were developed by a company whose readers continuously return to the pages of their trade paperbacks and comic books, the hardcover and paperback binding of these graphic novels, as well as the quality of the paper, ensure that they will withstand multiple readings.

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VOCABULARY

This list is a partial list of words found in the glossary and serves as a model of a possible list of vocabulary words you can use. When exploring such vocabulary, ask students to integrate these words in their discussions and writing assignments. Also be certain to generate a word wall based on the vocabulary you select from the writing. Remember that essential vocabulary (words essential for understanding the story) might be best taught in the beginning of the lesson, prior to reading the text.

Berth

Buccaneer

Capsize

Cove

Coxswain

Cutlass

Doubloon

Fathom

Hamlet

Inlet

Keel

Knave

Miscreant

Mutiny

Obsequious

Palisade

Repugnance

Sinewy

Stockade

Subaltern

Undulating



STEP ONE:

JOURNALING

Type One: Reading Journal

Ask students to keep dialogue journal entries while they read the graphic novel, *Treasure Island*. By keeping a journal, students will be able to record plot and discuss character, generate questions about information with which they need clarification, or even discuss literary elements within the graphic novel. A dialogue journal will also help students to participate more readily in classroom discussions about what they read. The blank column may be filled by the student based on class conversation about the book; or, as traditionally done, the teacher or a peer may write in the blank column, responding to points raised by the student in his/her entry.

Type Two: Thinking Through Actions

Break students in multiple groups and assign students one of three roles (cabin boy, deckhand, or captain). Students will be expected to keep a journal, imagining that they were a character in one of these three roles. Students will follow the events of *Treasure Island*, recording their reactions to the scenarios as they unfold. Not using the names of characters from *Treasure Island* but only their positions will help students to remember that they have to think about their personal responses to scenarios in the book. In other words, students will develop responses to scenarios that occur in *Treasure Island* in relation to information they're learning about pirates, character responses in *Treasure Island*, and their own personalities.



STEP TWO:

ACTIVATING PRIOR KNOWLEDGE WITH A K-W-L

Students have background knowledge related to pirates through various films, children's books, and cartoons. Some of the perceptions students have about pirates may be erroneous (for instance, they might think that all pirates had eye patches and peg-legs). Prior to reading *Treasure Island*, ask students to identify what they already know about pirates through the K-W-L chart activity (Ogle, 1986, 1989). Using the K-W-L will help readers set a purpose for reading the text and will also set a personal context through which to read the novel.

Example of K-W-L Chart

K (What I Know)	W (What I Want to Know)	L (What I've Learned)

STEP TWO: CONTINUED

In the “K” column, record information that students think they already know about pirates focusing on “pirates.” When they give suggestions that might be based in erroneous thinking, you can ask students questions to explore their suggestions more in-depth. As students work on brain-storming, you may choose to use pairs or small groups to encourage discussion of points they raise. Of course, you do want written records of student prior knowledge, so you may ask students to fill out the “K” column independently prior to breaking them into groups or having a discussion in class. After filling out the “K” column, ask students to record “categories of information” pertaining to pirates. Students should learn to distinguish between the items listed in the “K” column and classify similarities between concepts. As an example, you may want students to differentiate between pirate attire (e.g., eye-patches and peg-legs) and pirate hobbies (e.g., burying treasure). Of course, as you help them to explore what they already know about pirates, these categories may be expanded or deleted.

Invite students to return to the “K” column and categories of information for the next step of the K-W-L procedure. Students may notice that some of their information is erroneous or that they have gaps in knowledge. For instance, they may realize that they know little about regions in which pirates cavorted and traveled. They might realize that they don’t know about cabin boys. Students indicate, in the “W” column information they would like to learn from the reading assignment and through the research activity.

After reading, students reflect on the “K” column, the categories of information, and the “W” column. Ask students to explore what they learned while reading *Treasure Island* by filling in the “L” column. Students may realize that they learned information contrary to what they already knew. Of course, you should remind them that the book is fiction and exaggerates some of the realities of pirating. Remember to return to the categories of information, exploring how their new information fit it with prior categories. Students may also realize that they need to expand their categories of information. Finally, students, when reflecting on the “W” column, may realize that they didn’t answer questions raised while completing this step of the procedure. This will lead students into the research phase of the lesson. You will return to the K-W-L procedure after completing the research activity.





STEP THREE:

CONDUCTING RESEARCH WITH THE C-W-S

After engaging in the K-W-L procedure and reading *Treasure Island*, students will inevitably realize that they are missing information about pirates and pirating. Break students into groups and assign them to conduct research on one of the following topics: history of pirating; pirating and fiction; pirating and film; geography, terrain and sea-travel for pirates; pirate decorum and attire; and pirating and pirates today.

Prior to engaging in the research, ask students to again reflect on their K-W-L charts. Develop the C-W-S prop as demonstrated in the article by Bass & Woo (2008). While engaging in research, remind students that they need to break their topic into at least three subheadings. Also remind students that they must cite the references from which their research came.

Ask students to discuss in groups the research they found. Ask them to then return to their K-W-L charts and expand their “L” column further. Students should then be asked to present their information to their peers. As the other students are listening, ask them to also expand upon their “L” column. By the end of this step of the lesson, students should have a more complete or thorough K-W-L chart completed.



STEP FOUR:

CRITICAL VIEWING

After reading *Treasure Island*, select a key scene from the book. This scene will be developed into a Readers' Theatre script for students to perform. Prior to developing the script for the Readers' Theatre step of the lesson, show students the scene as it occurs in a film version of *Treasure Island*. There are many film adaptations, so choose a film and clip that you think will most help the students to develop a context in which to perform their Readers' Theatre enactment.

After watching the clip, ask students to compare the film clip with the graphic novel scene. Students may see, depending on the film, similarities or differences between costumes or characterizations. If the film clip is different from the graphic novel scene, ask students to think about and explore which might look more realistic. If the scene and clip are similar, ask students to think about and explore how these similarities contrasted with prior notions of pirates. You may even choose to bring in clips of pirates from television or cartoon shows or even children's picture books to help students further explore depictions of pirates.



STEP FIVE: READER'S THEATRE

Choose a scene from the graphic novel adaptation of *Treasure Island*. Ask students to design a script for Readers' Theatre based on the scene. The script should mirror the book; however, the script can extend beyond the book to include monologues and extend dialogue. Students may want to enact the scene as if they were bringing a graphic novel to life. As an example, students may want to use thought-balloons to demonstrate what their characters are thinking. To do this, students would make inferences about what they believe their character would think about a specific scenario. This would require another student to hold up the thought-balloons while the students performed the scene.



STEP SIX:

WRITTEN RESPONSE

After reading *Treasure Island* and engaging in these activities, ask students to complete the following speculative prompt:

Long John Silver has just invited you to accompany him on a trip to “Treasure Island.” This would require you to leave your mother alone, even though it also means that you could find treasures to make life easier for you both. There is no guarantee that you would return home; however, you also detect something menacing in Silver’s mannerisms, causing you to worry about declining his offer. Develop a narrative to explore your response to Silver’s offer. While responding, be certain to consider time-period and to explore the above mentioned conflicts. You may want to reflect on the research you conducted.

References:

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- Ogle, D. M. (1986). K-W-L: A teaching model that develops active reading of expository text. *The Reading Teacher*, 39(8), 564-570.
- Ogle, D. M. (1989). The know, want to know, learn strategy. In K. Muth (Ed.), *Children’s comprehension of text: Research into practice* (pp. 205-223). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.