

**PIGGOTTS IN PERIL**  
by DUNCAN BALL

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**Teacher Notes**

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**Story:** Twelve-year-old Bert Piggott discovers a pirate treasure map hidden in a diary written by his long-dead, great great great great-grandfather Captain Poseidon Piggott. Soon he and his school friend Antigone and Bert's ratbag family---minus his parents---go searching for the buried treasure and find themselves stranded on a tropical island once known as The Isle of Death. All of this would have been bad enough but then they find themselves stalked by a gang of pirates.

This is a comedy, as was the previous book about Bert Piggott, *Piggott Place*, but one that addresses important issues.

**Ideal Class Level:** Years 5, 6, or 7.

**Themes Covered in *Piggotts in Peril*:**

Family relationships   Friendship/loyalty   Acceptance  
Self sufficiency   Honesty/dishonesty   Self-Motivation  
Affluence/poverty   Safety awareness   Conflict resolution  
Evolution of species   Origin of the universe   Adventure/security

**Characters in the story**

The principal characters in the story are listed at the beginning of the book. Do a picture gallery of the Piggott family and Antigone and Sergeant Devere. Beneath each sketch briefly describe each family member.

Make up your own list of the principal characters in your life among your family and friends and describe them in a few words. For example: Fred Bloggs: my father, 37 years old, carpenter, tall, great sense of humour.

Who is your favourite character in the story? Why?

Choose one character from *Piggotts in Peril* and write down as many words and phrases you can think of to describe him/her.

Do you have an ancestor or relative who did something very adventurous such as fighting in a war or taking a long journey? Pretend that you are them and write the sort of diary that you think they might have written.

## Relationships

Not many people in the story particularly like each other. Why do you think that is?

Choose two people in the story and describe their relationship to one another. Does this change during the course of the story? In what way?

Write a profile of Antigone. What is she like and what motivates her? What is the relationship between her and Bert? List their differing qualities.

In Chapter 28, "Loot at Last", it appears that the Piggotts, Antigone and Sergeant De Vere are going to live happily ever after on the island. Do you think this is possible? What do you imagine would have happened to them had they stayed on the island?

## Conflict

The treasure: Who do you think the treasure actually "belongs to" before it is found? Who do you think should get to keep the treasure after it's found? Do you think Judge Piggott did the right thing with the treasure?

Sergeant De Vere and the Piggotts. Why does the Sergeant hate the Piggotts so much?

## Elements of writing/reading

The story opens with a diary entry. Find some words or phrases in the diary that show it to be from an earlier age. Some of these words might be: Coffin, brigantine, musket, hoard, scourge of humanity, ragtag crew of cutthroats, crosstrees of his ship. Write down what you think these might mean, then check your answers using a dictionary.

The first paragraph of the diary is about the pirate, Dirk de Veer. What kind of person do you think he is from this diary?

When the Piggotts and Antigone arrive at the island they quickly determine that there's no one else living there. Later, what are the clues that make Bert begin to believe that they are not alone after all?

Look at the title the author has given each chapter. What language devices has he used?

Alliteration e.g. Piggotts Pow-Wow, The White Whale

Phrases e.g. Piggotts Ahoy! Boy Overboard!

Puns e.g. Bound for Trouble

What type of book do you think this? E.g. mystery, humour, detective. Is the story believable? How important is that?

Find a scene/chapter/event that typifies a particular emotion or description e.g. suspense, embarrassment, funny etc. Rewrite it using your own words. In Chapter 21 Bert starts to suspect there might be other people on the island. How does the author gradually give the idea of this? Find clues planted in the story so far.

Do you think that the Piggotts and Antigone and Sergeant Devere could have lived happily ever after on the island? (they appear to be on pp. 167 & 168) Why or why not?

List the main event from each chapter and create a story map tracing the events and journeys in sequential order.

### **Activities**

Design a treasure map. Make a legend with symbols to indicate what area is swamp or forest or a hill or a stream or the sea.

What do you think the treasure is and how did it get there? Write a paragraph describing the treasure.

Bert knew exactly what he'd do if he had the treasure. What would you do if you suddenly found a fortune?

The Piggotts have to survive on Morts Island. How would you survive if you were shipwrecked on an island? List all the things you would need - what kind of equipment? And how would you get food?

Do you have any particular skills or experience that could help e.g. starting a fire without matches, fishing, building a shelter?

Antigone has a passion for acting and asks Bert to help her make a "show reel". What is a "show reel"? (Chapter 5) Take on the role of Bert and Antigone. Plan segments that could be presented on Antigone's show reel and then produce the reel using a video camera.

Research pirates. Many people think that pirates are a thing of the past and don't exist anymore. Is this true? How can you find out?

### **Reading comprehension exercises:**

#### Chapter 1:

Reading Captain Piggott's journal, who did the captain say the treasure was stolen from?

Chapter 2:

What is the name of the galaxy that the earth is in?

Chapter 3:

Who is Bartholomew Piggott and why was he slimy when he crawled ashore?

Chapter 4:

What did Bert find in his ancestor's journal and who had signed it?

Chapter 5:

Where are Bert's parents?

Chapter 6:

At what age did Angel have her own TV show?

Chapter 7:

What sort of things does Crispina have in her room?

Chapter 8:

What is Caesar doing in his room that he doesn't want Bert to see?

Chapter 9:

How does Antigone work out that *Morts Island* is the same as the *Isle of the Dead*.

Chapter 10:

Why does Sergeant Devere hate Bert?

Chapter 11:

How did Sergeant Devere react when he saw the map?

Chapter 12:

How does Caesar get Grandfather Piggott over the gate to the pier?

Chapter 13:

What is the name of the boat that the Piggotts sail on?

Chapter 14:

What does Caesar tell Bert to use to keep the boat going in the right direction?

Chapter 15:

What does Grandfather Piggott do at the mention of food?

Chapter 16:

Bert befriends a seagull which he eventually names "Ziggy". But what did he call the gull first? What is wrong with Ziggy?

Chapter 17:

What are the scientists who "think about the beginnings of the universe"?

Chapter 18:

What was Bert trying to do when he fell overboard?

Chapter 19:

What happens when the Piggotts sail into the lagoon on Morts Island?

Chapter 20:

According to Crispina, what's more important than food when you're stranded on an island?

Chapter 21:

What was the name of the book that Grandfather Piggott's mother had read to him when he was a child? How was the subject of the book similar to the Piggotts' predicament?

Chapter 22:

Why are the Piggotts so frightened that they suddenly climb trees and leap into the trees?

Chapter 23:

What makes Bert think that they may not be alone on the island?

Chapter 24:

What two things as Antigone brought with her in order to find the treasure?

Chapter 25:

Who is Sergeant Devere's ancestor and what does Devere have of his?

Chapter 26:

What has happened to the others when Bert and Antigone were away?

Chapter 27:

What is the name of the boat that the Pepperbergers and Sergeant Devere sailed on?

Chapter 28:

Which one of the Piggotts was left behind when they others went after the Pepperberger's boat and why?

Chapter 29:

Who found the treasure and where was it?

Chapter 30:

What did Angel win playing Monopoly? Did she get to keep it?