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GHOST MESSAGES

Novel Study Guide

By Roberta Coulter

Juvenile Fiction – Division II - Grades 4 - 6

Curriculum Connections: English Language Arts/ History/Science &
Technology/Art/Drama



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INTRODUCTION

Message from the Author

While speaking to students using the brilliant devices we use to chat to friends today, I realized they had no idea how it all began. The marvels of communication we enjoy in the 21st century make it difficult to fathom that it wasn't always as it is now. Text messaging, e-mails, satellites and high speed Internet are built upon much humbler beginnings, and Canada, especially Newfoundland, played an important role. I decided to investigate, and *Ghost Messages* is the result of that snooping into the dusty past.

Ghost Messages tells of the 1865 attempt to lay the first trans-Atlantic cable which would connect the two halves of the world with instant communication. It wasn't digital communication; it wasn't fibre optics or telephone; in fact, it wasn't even a human voice. It was Morse code, transmitted for 2300 nautical miles in dots and dashes along a one-inch thread composed of seven strands of fragile copper wire. (I am pleased to say I have a piece of that original wire cable, dredged up from the bottom of the ocean, and enjoy showing students when I give presentations in schools.)

At the time, a transatlantic cable was thought to be an impossibility – science fiction – but this was an age of miracles, when some of the greatest men of vision and science worked together to create miracles of their own. Their names are synonymous with world-changing advances: Cyrus Field, Samuel Canning, Isambard Grunel, Daniel Gooch, William Thomson (later known as Lord Kelvin), Samuel Morse and Michael Faraday. All of these gentlemen, and many more, contributed to this project.

The *Great Eastern* was a remarkable ship – it was five times larger than any vessel built, was seven hundred feet long and utilized three methods of propulsion: sail, propeller and paddle-wheel. The innovative double hull made it unsinkable and nearly indestructible, requiring the invention of the wrecking ball to take it apart.

On that first cable-laying attempt in 1865, one of the greatest captains to sail the blue sea was at the helm, Captain James Anderson. He really did manage, not once but numerous times, to find the one-inch cable when it was lost miles below on the ocean floor. Suspected sabotage by the Fenians is also recorded in the history books, but it was eventually discovered that the cable itself had done the damage when brittle shards of the outer casing imbedded themselves into the wire, shorting the signal.

The legend of the ghost aboard the *Great Eastern* is well documented in the ship's lore; and when the ship was finally dismantled, the skeletons of both the riveter and his bash boy were found between the hulls, where they had fallen to their deaths when the ship was being built. I have taken a little literary license by naming these forgotten souls as their true identities have disappeared into the mists.

As a writer, I could not have dreamed up a more exciting plot. History itself has provided the people, setting and dramatic events complete with a ship of legend, ghosts, broken cables, storms, and

sabotage. It is my hope that this book will instill in you a sense of wonder and respect for those intrepid scientists and explorers on whose inventions and discoveries our modern communications world is built. The next time you e-mail, text message or Twitter a friend, remember it all began long ago with a fragile thread thousands of miles long and those whispered “ghost messages.”

Heart’s Content Cable Station is an amazing piece of history and well worth investigating while in Newfoundland.

When I visited, it was as if I had stepped off the deck of the Great Eastern and into a working cable station, ready to start sending those ghost messages flying around the world. The gleaming brass and glass machinery is still there, including a working galvanometer, the cables, a host of artefacts, knowledgeable staff to guide you through a wonderful tour and even a telegrapher who will show you how to send a Morse code telegraph message to another operator. (I sent a short note to a fellow in Russia!) This is one of the best preserved and most important Historic Sites I have ever been to, and I visit a lot of them. I am currently encouraging the Newfoundland Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation, Newfoundland Provincial Historic Sites, Newspapers, Radio Stations and interested readers like you, to get on board with having the Heart’s Content Cable Station designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site so that it will be preserved for future generations to enjoy. To lend your support to this cause, you could write to the Newfoundland Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation, P.O. Box 8700 St. John's, NL A1B 4J6 and/or to Parks Canada, which is in charge of Canada's proposals to UNESCO, at Parks Canada National Office 25-7-N Eddy Street Gatineau, Quebec K1A 0M5.

Plot Summary

Ailish O’Connor supports herself and her father with her fortunetelling skills. Their gypsy caravan travels from one place to another looking for the crowds in which to earn their living. In Ireland in 1865, the place to be is on the west coast, as people gather to launch the largest ship ever built, the Great Eastern. Its mission is to lay the first undersea telegraph cable right across the Atlantic Ocean, to Newfoundland.

Ailish’s father thinks he has their future secured with a solid-gold horse that has come into his possession, but when the figure is stolen, 13-year-old Ailish pursues the thief and winds up trapped on the Great Eastern as it sails! She pretends to be a cabin boy to avoid the harsh treatment of a stowaway. On the journey, she gets help from another young boy, Davy, who seems to live below decks. She also makes friends with an Irish sailor and tries to track down the hiding place of their precious horse.

The crew must battle the seas and the mishaps of their cable-laying mission, some of which appear to be sabotage. Through many adventures, Davy is her constant companion. But why won’t he ever come topside?

Can Ailish use her wits, her determination and her friendships to survive the trip, let alone save the day? With her trademark storytelling skills, Jacqueline Guest has fashioned a nail-biter of an historical seafaring action adventure.

GETTING STARTED

Activities

Vocabulary Builder Handout & Word Wall

Ghost Messages includes some challenging and interesting vocabulary and terms. As the students read, have them keep a track of words they don't know or find interesting on the attached hand-out. Working in interest-based groups (e.g., Technological Terms, Nautical Terms, Old-Fashioned Words, Irish/Gaelic Words, Big New Words, etc.), groups of students can select from their lists to either create several "Word Walls" in the classroom, or crossword puzzle/word search activities for other students using one of the online tools.

HANDOUT
Cool New Words

As you read, keep track of words you don't know. Try to figure out what they mean just by thinking about how they're used in the story, then check to see if you got it right by using the Internet or a dictionary.

Word	Page	What I think it means	What it really means

Now choose 5 of your favorite new words from this sheet and use them (correctly!) in a new sentence.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Translating “Ghost Messages”

A Morse Alphabet Code is included at the back of the book to help your class translate the twenty “Ghost Messages” in Morse Code in the book (on chapter opening pages, etc.).

In Morse Code, each letter and number is represented with a series of “dots” and “dashes.” Letters that are frequently used in the English language, like e and t, use the simplest combinations of dots and dashes. For example,

e is a single dot (.)
i is two dots (..)
t is a single dash (-)
a is a dot and a dash (.-)
n is a dash and a dot (-.)

Letters that are seldom used are more complicated, as are numbers:

x is dash, dot, dot, dash (-.-.)
9 is four dashes and a dot (----.)

There are even codes for punctuation: a period (called a full stop) is dot dash, dot dash, dot dash (-.-.-), but there are signs for commas and question marks as well. In the book, there are small spaces (pauses) between each letter, and larger ones between each word.

After translating the first “Ghost Message” as a class, have students (working in pairs or alone) be responsible for translating a chapter message and posting on the board at the start of each day you are studying the book. If students have trouble with translating the codes, encourage them to try working from the end of the message, or deciding in advance where the word breaks might belong. At the end of the day, answer the question as a class, and have another student or pair of students translate the answer into Morse Code.

For more practice, or to help students understand what it was like for operators to listen to Morse Code rather than to see it, visit <http://www.nsa.gov/kids/games/gameMorse.htm>.

Character Study: “Who is the mysterious Davy?”

The back of the book asks: “Who is the mysterious Davy”? As soon as the character of Davy is introduced, ask students to keep track of clues and questions that come to mind as they read the book. What does he look like? What is his job? What is strange about him? At some point, they may figure out that he is a ghost. If they do, brainstorm as a class whose ghost he might be.

Websites for Fun and Learning

•↔ A Sailor's Life for Me!

<http://www.asailorslifeforme.org/index.php>. There are also several websites that offer handouts on nautical terms (such as <http://phrontistery.info/nautical.html>) and parts of a ship (such as <http://www.nps.gov/sama/forkids/loader.cfm?csModule=security/getfile&PageID=276231> and http://www.tamrootbeer.com/teacherstuff/ti_pdfs/hispaniola_parts_list_wrksht.pdf)

•↔ The Great Eastern Quiz:

<http://www.portcities.org.uk/london/server/show/ConPackage.17/The-Great-Eastern-Quiz.html>. This is a fun way to learn about the ship, although the first time through is a challenge unless students first visit http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/seven_wonders_gallery.shtml.

•↔ Jacqueline Guest's website: <http://www.jacquelineguest.com>

The « Ghost Messages » [blogspot : www.ghostmessagesbookclub.blogspot.com](http://www.ghostmessagesbookclub.blogspot.com)

CHAPTER SYNOPSES

Chapter 1: Mystery Man

Ailish, a 13-year-old Irish fortuneteller, has travelled with her father to Valentia on Foilhummerum Bay to take advantage of the crowds there to see off the Great Eastern, which will lay the first transatlantic telegraph cable. Their only treasure, a bejewelled golden horse, is stolen by an evil man, Rufus Dalton, who leaves her father lying in a pool of blood. At the urging of her father, Ailish sets off to recover it.

Chapter 2: Secret Message

Ailish follows the evil Rufus Dalton to the Great Eastern and manages to smuggle herself aboard. When she gets trapped in the hold, she discovers that he is also trying to blackmail an Irish sailor, Paddy Whelan. If Paddy doesn't give him his money, Dalton will show the captain a photograph of Paddy attending a meeting of the Fenians, who are suspected of planning to wreck the transatlantic cable to push their cause, an Ireland free of English rule. In the end, Ailish is saved from discovery by a mysterious stranger.

Chapter 3: Stowaway!

Ailish tells Davy Jones how – and why – she came to be in the ship's hold. He helps her disguise herself as a cabin boy, although she is reluctant to cut her long hair. He tells her more about the ship and about his job as a bash boy, helping the ship's riveter by holding the hot bolts while the riveter smashes them in.

Chapter 4: Disaster!

Ailish begins exploring the ship and runs into Rufus Dalton. He does not recognize her, although he does mistreat her. Luckily, she is saved when Paddy Whelan intervenes. He explains how the cable is laid on the ocean floor, and what happens when the signal doesn't work. When a break is found in the cable, Dalton blames the Fenians. The sailors splice the cable and it is tested to see if it still carries a signal.

Chapter 5: Slip of the Lip

The cable is once again sound, and Ailish returns to the hold to find Davy. She tells him about her gift of second sight and her ability to tell whether people are good or evil, but when Ailish can't "read" him, Davy gets offended and leaves.

Chapter 6: Safe Harbour

The signal fails again, and Rufus uses the opportunity to fan the flames of suspicion against the Fenians. Ailish wanders around the ship looking for Stateroom A, where Davy has advised her to spend the night. She takes a rest in the Family Saloon, where she is almost discovered, but eventually she finds the first-class accommodations. She has to break down the door to get in, and she almost gives up until she sees what seems to be a message encouraging her to try, but eventually she spends the night in luxury.

Chapter 7: Dirty Business

Ailish tries to steal food but is caught by the friendly cook. She watches Rufus Dalton all morning, then follows him to the boiler room, where he disappears into the coal bunkers. The coal dust makes her cough, alerting Dalton to her presence. He chases her, and she only escapes with the help of Davy Jones.

Chapter 8: Discovered!

Ailish tells Davy of her plans to search Rufus Dalton's cabin, and he helps her find it by giving her a map. Ailish warns Paddy about Dalton, and they agree to watch each other's backs. On her way to Dalton's cabin, she runs into Mr. Field and is forced to accompany him to the telegraph testing caboose. Trying to get away, she runs smack into Captain Armstrong and Rufus Dalton.

Chapter 9: Trapped!

When she is caught, Ailish pretends to be a stowaway from England, and she is allowed to continue working as a cabin boy. She is placed under the supervision of Rufus Dalton, but she does enjoy working with the animals. She arranges to meet Paddy to tell him the whole story of why she's on board the *Great Eastern*. A few days later, she picks the lock in order to search Dalton's cabin, where she is almost discovered and has to hide in a closet.

Chapter 10: Cabin Boy Overboard

On deck in a storm, Ailish finds Dimples the sheep and a newborn lamb, but also a large wrench that is close to falling into the automatic release mechanism, which controls the release of the cable into the sea. There is no one around but Dalton, but instead of helping her, he strikes her down, knocking her overboard. Luckily, she lands on the wooden housing of the paddlewheel and is able to hang on until Paddy, directed there by Davy, shows up. Together, they are able to free the wrench that has fallen into the machine, but Dalton and his men show up and accuse Paddy of sabotage. Thanks to Ailish's spirited defence, Cyrus Field does not believe that Paddy is responsible.

Chapter 11: Fenians Aboard!

Ailish and Paddy manage to convince the cook to spare Dimples and her lamb. The gong sounds again, warning of another lost connection. Once again, Dalton sees to it that Paddy comes under suspicion of sabotage, but the case against him cannot be proven. The captain confirms that the cable was deliberately pierced by a two-inch spike, and that he believes the Fenians are most likely responsible. Dalton privately restates his threat of revealing the picture showing Paddy at a Fenian meeting.

Chapter 12: A Call to Battle!

Ailish tells Davy that she suspects Rufus Dalton of causing the faults in the cable in order to raise suspicions about Fenians and put pressure on Paddy, an Irishman, to give Dalton his money. Ailish and Davy try to figure out a plan to discover where Dalton is hiding her horse.

Chapter 13: Setting a Trap for a Rat

Now only 700 miles from Newfoundland, on the Grand Banks, Ailish desperately tries to think up a plan to trap Dalton, but her best plan comes in a dream. Ailish tells Paddy the whole story of why she is on the ship, and reveals that she is really a girl, and asks for his help in carrying out her plan.

Chapter 14: Foiled Again!

Ailish's plan is set in motion as Paddy meets with Dalton and tells him that the statue is now in the hands of another. Dalton rushes to check its hiding place, trailed by Ailish. Unfortunately, she is waylaid by Captain Anderson and Cyrus Field, and Dalton disappears.

Chapter 15: Treasure Chest

Dalton grabs Ailish and accuses her of following him, but in doing so, his dirty handprints give her a clue as to where the horse is hidden: the coal bunkers. There, Dalton's footprints in the dust lead her right to his stash. Ailish's lock-picking skills come in handy once again, and when she opens the locked treasure chest, she finds her golden horse.

Chapter 16: Deal with a Devil

Ailish and Paddy confront Dalton, and she offers to give him the golden horse if he will give them the photograph of Paddy at the Fenians' meeting and vouch for him to the captain. Ailish leads them up to the deck, where she has hidden the horse in the telegraph testing caboose. When she hands it over to Dalton, he gives a fake photograph to Paddy, who tears it up and tosses it into the sea. When they find out, Ailish blows a whistle, and when Captain Anderson, Cyrus Field and Samuel Canning come running, she tells them the whole story. Her ownership of the golden horse is proven by a telegram from Ireland. Dalton gets even by showing them the photograph of Paddy at the meeting, but his men, who have heard everything that went on that night, finally step forward and tell the truth. Captain Anderson confesses that he too attended the meeting and that he is in the photograph, and that it therefore does not prove that Paddy is a Fenian. Ailish's plan is a success, but at that moment, the gong sounds again.

Chapter 17: Sabotage Uncovered

The mystery of the cable faults is solved when Cyrus Field discovers that fragments of the iron sheathing have broken off and pierced the wire. Ailish tells Davy about her adventures. As the chapter ends, however, the cable breaks and sinks to the bottom of the ocean.

Chapter 18: Fishing Off the Grand Banks

Ailish gets the idea of trawling for the cable using wire rope and a large hook. The wire is in segments, but the captain has them shackled together. They succeed in hooking the cable, but when they try to bring it up, one of the shackles breaks. They try again, and again a shackle breaks. Next, they are delayed by fog. After more failed attempts, a hurricane starts to blow. When it clears, they make one final attempt, but in the end, they are defeated.

Chapter 19: The Future Is Waiting

Ailish predicts that the transatlantic cable project will eventually succeed, then says goodbye to Davy as the ship turns back toward Ireland.

Epilogue: September 8, 1866

A year later, the Great Eastern is successful in her second attempt to lay the transatlantic telegraph cable. Ailish and her father are on board as it arrives in Heart's Content, Newfoundland. They are wealthy now, thanks to the golden horse and Ailish's bravery.

Chapter Questions

Anticipation

1. Judging from title and the illustration on the front cover, what do you think the book is going to be about?
2. Read the back cover. When and where is the story set?
3. What do you think a telegraph is?
4. Write down one or two questions you have about the book:

Chapter 1: Mystery Man

1. What is “second sight”?
2. Ailish uses several props to convince people to pay her for telling their future. What are they?
3. How does her father “advertise” her services? What does his slogan mean?
4. What is the treasure that is stolen?
5. How does Ailish know Rufus Dalton is evil? Have you ever judged someone you just met based on a feeling or intuition? Were you right or wrong in the end?

Chapter 2: Secret Message

1. Why does Ailish think it is her fault that her father got hurt?
2. What does Rufus Dalton want from Paddy Whelan? How does he plan to make Paddy give it to him?
3. How is Ailish saved from discovery?

Chapter 3: Stowaway!

1. Who is Ailish’s saviour, and what is his job (title and description)?
2. Who are the Fenians, and what do they want?
3. Why can’t Ailish feel the ship moving? What makes the Great Eastern unsinkable?
4. What are “ghost messages”?

Chapter 4: Disaster!

1. What does Paddy call the port promenade deck of the ship?

2. What do the sailors do when the cable signal stops?
3. What does the cable look like?
4. What does the automatic release mechanism do?
5. What is the evidence of sabotage found by Mr. Field, the American who is financing the project?
6. Who is blamed for the break?

Chapter 5: Slip of the Lip

1. Why does Ailish now want the cable to succeed?
2. How does Ailish know Paddy didn't sabotage the cable?
3. Why is Davy offended?

Chapter 6: Safe Harbour

1. What is the room with all the toys called?
2. Why is Ailish almost discovered?
3. What is the "safe harbour" referred to in the title of this chapter?

Chapter 7: Dirty Business

1. Why does the ship carry livestock like sheep and pigs?
2. Where does Ailish follow Rufus Dalton?
3. How does Ailish create a distraction?
4. What is the "dirty business" referred to in the chapter title?
5. How does Ailish hide where she has been when she gets to the deck?
6. What is inside the couch?

Chapter 8: Discovered!

1. Why don't Davy and his boss like to go on deck?
2. How do the telegraph operators know if there is a fault in the cable?
3. What do you think will happen to Ailish now that she has been discovered?

Chapter 9: Trapped!

1. Would it be better if Ailish told Captain Anderson the truth about why she is on board?
2. How does Ailish know how to pick the lock to get into Rufus Dalton's cabin?
3. Where do you think the golden horse is hidden?

Chapter 10: Cabin Boy Overboard

1. Was Ailish foolish to believe Dalton would help her move the wrench? What would you have done if you were Ailish?
2. How is Ailish saved from falling into the sea?
3. Why does Davy write a note telling Paddy to go to the starboard paddlewheel? What would you have done if you were Davy?

Chapter 11: Fenians Aboard!

1. What does the gong mean?
2. How does Captain Anderson know that Paddy could not have sabotaged the cable this time?

Chapter 12: A Call to Battle!

1. Ailish thinks Rufus Dalton is causing the faults in the cable. Why would he do this?
2. Why would Ailish have a hard time convincing people that she owns a valuable statue?
3. What is the battle (or challenge) in the chapter title?
4. Can you think of a plan for finding the statue?

Chapter 13: Setting a Trap for a Rat

1. What is Ailish's plan to find the horse?
2. How does Ailish plan to help Paddy?
3. How might Ailish think she can get the horse back after using it to help Paddy get the newspaper photograph?

Chapter 14: Foiled Again!

1. If Ailish had told Captain Anderson and Mr. Field to come with her, do you think her plan would have worked?

Chapter 15: Treasure Chest

1. What is the clue that helps Ailish discover where the horse is hidden?

2. How does Ailish find the treasure chest?

Chapter 16: Deal with a Devil

1. Where on deck has Ailish hidden the golden horse?

2. If Captain Anderson had not been at the Fenian meeting, do you think Ailish's plan to save Paddy would still have worked?

Chapter 17: Sabotage Uncovered

1. What has been causing the faults in the cable?

2. What happens at the end of the chapter to wreck the happy mood?

Chapter 18: Fishing Off the Grand Banks

1. What caused the cable to break?

2. What is the problem with the wire rope, and how did the captain attempt to solve it?

Chapter 19: The Future Is Waiting

1. Do you think Ailish's prediction about the transatlantic cable will come true? Why?

Epilogue: September 8, 1866

1. Who is Davy Jones?

GOING DEEPER

Extension Projects

Art/English

Design a Book Cover

As the class is near the end of the book, have each student design a new cover for the book, including a different title, a new cover image, as well as text for the back cover that will intrigue readers of their age. Post these in the class.

Create a Picture Book/Present a Scene

Have each student draw a scene from each chapter of the book (or two scenes if you have over 20 students in the class and the chapter is a long one) and write a short descriptive caption for their drawing. Students should ensure that the ship, the characters' clothing, and the characters' physical features as described in the book are portrayed accurately. Put all the pictures together to create a class picture book, or post around the room.

Another option is to have students choose a scene from the book they find exciting and make a diorama, drawing, or cartoon of the scene and present it to the class.

History

Canada in 1865

Students may find it strange that while Newfoundland is now a province of Canada, Canada is not mentioned in the book. At the time this book is set in 1865, however, Canada was not even a country, though the idea was being discussed. Much of what is now Canada belonged to the Hudson's Bay Company. British Columbia did not join Canada until 1871, and Newfoundland did not join Canada until 1949.

For this project, divide students into groups to represent the British North American colonies of 1865: Canada East, Canada West, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, and British Columbia. Students should research to find out if their colony wanted to join the new Confederation in 1867, and why or why not. Who were the leaders of their colony at the time? How did they convince others to join? Finally, did their colony end up joining the new country in 1867? Then have a brief simulation, with the teacher taking on the role Queen Victoria, the ruler of the British Empire, and her colonial leaders making presentations to her about their position on joining this new country. (At the end of the period, declare the Dominion of Canada established, and British Columbia and Newfoundland to continue as British colonies.)

Mini-Lesson: Fenians

Students may be curious about the Fenians, who were blamed for sabotaging the transatlantic cable and who figure prominently in *Ghost Messages*. Although they were not responsible for the sabotage of the cable, the Fenians became active in Canada shortly thereafter. American Fenians

raided Canada from 1866 to 1871, and were blamed for the first assassination of a Canadian politician (Thomas D'Arcy McGee in 1868). For more information on the Fenians in Canada, see <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0002758>.

Science

Exploring Victorian Technology and Innovation

The technology developed during Victoria's reign caused a social and economic revolution. Students can discover some of this new technology on the website of the British Broadcasting Corporation, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/>. After having all the students look at the photos and captions in "The 'Great Eastern,'" let them explore the various animations of other Victorian inventions.

- Brunel: 'The Practical Prophet' - Brunel won some, he lost some, but he surely had nerve. http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/brunel_isambard_01.shtml
- The 'Great Eastern' - Brunel's blueprint for decades of ship design http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/seven_wonders_gallery.shtml
- Stephenson's Rocket Animation - Inside the trailblazing steam engine http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/launch_ani_rocket.shtml
- The Blast Furnace Animation - Inside the device that shaped the industrial revolution http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/launch_ani_blast_furnace.shtml
- The Spinning Mill Animation - Inside the machinery that revolutionized textiles http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/launch_ani_spinning_mill.shtml
- Winding Gear Animation - Inside this mechanism of the industrial age http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/launch_ani_winding_gear.shtml
- The Beam Engine Animation - Inside the Victorian engine http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/launch_ani_beam_engine.shtml
- Paddle Steamship Animation http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/launch_ani_paddle_steamship.shtml
- Iron Bridge Virtual Tour http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/launch_vt_iron_bridge.shtml
- The Iron Bridge - How was it Built? by David de Haan http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/iron_bridge_01.shtml

- Seven Wonders of the Industrial World by Deborah Cadbury
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/seven_wonders_01.shtml
- Panama Canal Gallery by Panama Canal Authority
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/panama_gallery.shtml
- The Airy Transit Circle by Emily Winterburn
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/airy_george_01.shtml

History/Science/Drama

Have students extend their knowledge by writing a short report on some aspect of engineering discussed on the BBC website, or by researching one of the historical figures mentioned in the book and, in character, introducing themselves to their classmates, including how they figure in the voyage.

- Isambard Kingdom Brunel
- Cyrus Field
- Samuel Morse
- William Thomson
- Michael Faraday
- Samuel Canning
- Daniel Gooch

Students could also choose to write a short report on modern communications technology, considering the following questions:

- Undersea cables are still used today. What are they made of?
- Give some recent examples of when these cables have been cut and describe the effects.
- What other forms of intercontinental communication are used?
- What percentage of present-day communication is done via submarine fibre optic cable?
- Why not satellite?

Oceanography

Do a one-page report on the Grand Banks of Newfoundland. What is the situation of the fish stocks today?

Creative Writing

Using the handout attached as a prompt, have the students begin to write historical fiction of their own.

HANDOUT

Creative Writing

Story Prompt

When the Great Eastern arrived in port in Newfoundland in 1865, the people were very excited. Imagine the scene...

“While the Great Eastern was lying in the harbor of Heart’s Content, she was overrun with visitors. The news of her arrival had spread over the island, and from far and near the people flocked to see her. Over the hills they came on foot and on horseback, and in wagons and carts of every description; and from along the shore in boats and fishing-smacks, and sloops and schooners. Thus they came from the most remote parts of the island—a distance of 300 miles—and even from the province of New-Brunswick. Several parties made the excursion in steamers from St. John’s. Thus for two weeks the little harbor was alive with the many and strange craft that brought the people to see that great sight. They climbed up the sides of the ship, and wandered for hours through its spacious rooms and long passages. All were welcomed with true and hearty sailor courtesy.”

<http://www.atlantic-cable.com/Article/1866Recovery/index.htm>

Now It’s Your Turn

Create a character that goes to visit the ship while it is in harbor in Newfoundland, and describe his or her day of adventure. You can use some of what you have learned about ships, the Great Eastern, and the time period in the book *Ghost Messages*.

Step 1: Create Your Character

Here are some questions to help you create your character:

Girl or Boy:

Age:

Hometown:

(Look on a map of Newfoundland, or even New Brunswick, PEI, or Nova Scotia to find a town that appeals to you.)

What does your character look like (hair/eyes/height/build)?

Describe your character's personality: (quiet/shy/bold/smart/jokester/fearful/friendly/mature/etc.)

Why does your character decide to go to see the ship?

How does your character get to Heart's Content?

Does your character face any special challenges in getting to the ship?

Step 2: Focus on Plot—What Happens?

Plan some interesting things that could happen to your character on the ship:

Who does your character meet on the ship? Are they friendly or dangerous? Powerful or not? A ghost? A criminal?

What is the most exciting moment of your story going to be? Is your character in danger?

Step 3: Write Your Story

Now write your story, using some of the interesting details and the plot ideas you have already thought of. When you are ready, share your story with a classmate for feedback.

Jacqueline Guest



About the author:

Jacqueline Guest's historical novels for young readers present Canada's vibrant past as an exciting read that appeals to families, young readers, and educators. Her award-winning books are unique in that many of the main characters come from different ethnic backgrounds including First Nations, Inuit and Métis. Her well-drawn characters are strong models for today's youth.

Nine of Jacqueline's books have been honoured with Canadian Children's Book Centre Our Choice Awards. *Belle of Batoche* was an Ontario Library Association Best Bet Selection and won the Edmonton Schools Best of the Best Award, and was nominated for the Red Cedar Young Readers' Choice and R. Ross Annett Awards. She has also received nominations for the Arthur Ellis Mystery Award and the Golden Eagle Award.

Jacqueline is a Métis writer who lives in a log cabin nestled in the pinewoods of the Rocky Mountain foothills of Alberta.

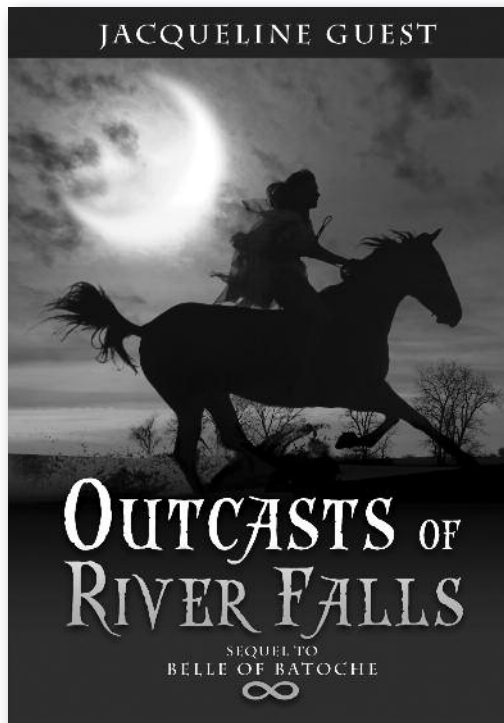
A strong advocate of reading, Jacqueline believes the key to the future is through better literacy today. Her Wild Ride Writing Workshops are popular in schools, where she provides keys to facing a language arts exam and passing! She also teaches writing how-tos and encourages children to follow their own literary dreams.

Jacqueline has participated in Mamawenig, the Saskatchewan Aboriginal Literacy Gathering, where she helped shape the direction of Native literacy in the province. She has performed pro-bono workshops at the Edmonton Young Offenders Centre and presented for the Cultural Diversity Institute and the Universities of Calgary and Victoria. Her work with literary, historical, teachers' and librarians' associations nationwide has taken her as far afield as Nunavut to spread the good word on literacy!

Jacqueline was the Writer in Residence for the Marigold Library System and is a member of Calgary Arts Partners in Education Society.

Also by Jacqueline Guest:

Outcasts of River Falls (available April 2012)



Belle of Batoche
Secret Signs
War Games
Dream Racer
Wild Ride
At Risk
Racing Fear
Lightning Rider
Soccer Star
A Goal in Sight
Rink Rivals
Rookie Season
Triple Threat
Free Throw
Hat Trick