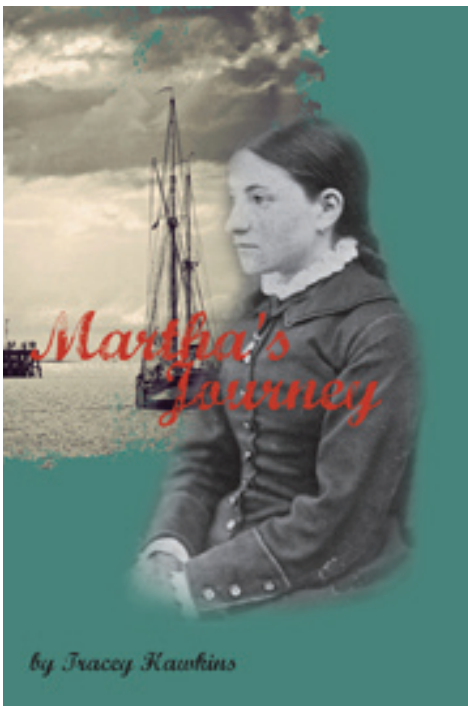


TEACHER NOTES

www.newfrontier.com.au/resources.htm



MARTHA'S JOURNEY

Author: Tracey Hawkins

Synopsis

In the year 1880, all alone and only twelve years of age; Martha Winstanley is sailing on the Samuel Plimsoll from England to Australia. Filled with foreboding and suffering a broken heart, Martha has left behind all those she loves, to obey her father's direction to go live with her childless Aunt. During the arduous four-month journey; Martha makes new friends, overcomes dreadful seasickness, and avoids the disease killing other passengers. Facing her fear of the sea, Martha recounts in her journal the extraordinary events that surround her along the way.

Author style/Medium

Martha's Journey is a narrative told in third person, interspersed with personal letters and personal journal entries in first person penned by Martha. Hawkins' writing style includes the 'old English' language that captures the period the novel is set in, also reflecting the 'working' class level of the Martha's family in society. Through the inclusion of Martha's journal entries, the reader will be able to empathize with a broken-hearted young girl who is feeling lost and alone, facing her deepest fears. Martha's thoughts reflect on the annoying matters that test her patience whilst trapped on the ship with little freedom or space to call her own. Throughout the duration of the novel, Martha's grows in maturity, with a sharper outlook and understanding of life and her capabilities grow as she manages with the adverse conditions and tragic events surrounding her.

Author Motivation

The idea for Martha's Journey began with Tracey inheriting an old sea-chest from her parents. This sea-chest had once been her toy box. Intrigued as to where the chest came from, Tracey was enthralled to learn it had been her Great-great Grandmother's sea-chest she had used on a sea voyage back in 1880. Little is known of the true story behind Martha Winstanley's journey, other than she had



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been sent to live with her childless Aunt and Uncle in New Zealand when she was a young girl. This was the base theme of the story and the resultant novel was a work of fiction based on many months of research of the Victorian Era, sailing ships and a vivid imagination of what Hawkins imagined it was like to step back in time.

Author background

Tracey grew up near the sea in the small coastal town of Kempsey, she was an avid reader, ballet dancer, loved all sports and swimming most of all. Her teenage years were spent in the cold, highland town of Armidale where she finished school and spent 3 years at A.C.A.E before she graduated as a teacher. Due to an excess of teachers and fewer teaching jobs, Hawkins joined the Australian Federal Police Force in Canberra. After 12 years, she left the force to spend her time with her three children.

During her foray into creative writing classes at night, Hawkins discovered her passion for books and the written word was a precursor for her writing that had waited to emerge since she was a child.



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Suggested topics for Activity/Research/Discussion

Article I. Life in Victorian England

How different were the social classes?
Lifestyles and living conditions of the gentry
How did the wealthy people live?
Did they have servants?
What sort of houses did they live in?

Lifestyles and living conditions of the poor

What type of housing did the working class people live in?
What types of work did the lower classes do?
What type of housing did they live in?

Health and medicine

Was illness and disease a problem?
Cholera
Typhus
Consumption
What types of medicines/hospitals/treatment were available?
Did people die from simple illnesses?
Did people live a long life?
Why was child mortality so high?

Working conditions

What was a Workhouse?
What types of work did children do?

- Factories
- Coal mines,
- Farms,
- Workhouse,
- Chimney sweeps

Were they paid well?
What were the working conditions like for children aged older than 10?



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Children at play

What games did children play?

What types of toys did they have?

What sort of nursery Rhymes were popular in this era?

Did the wealthy children have different toys/games to the poorer children?

Education

What types of school did the wealthy children attend?

What was available to children who were from poor families?

i) Elementary Education (School Attendance)

ii) Act1870 Education Act

Some interesting Links

v <http://www.workhouses.org.uk>

v <http://www.raggedschoolmuseum.org.uk>

v <http://www.hitchinbritishschool.org.uk>

v <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/victorians/standard/play/learning>

Article II. Sailing Ships

What distinction was there between accommodations available to passengers on a sailing ship?

Travel conditions in steerage quarters

- What was it like in steerage?
- Did these passengers enjoy comfortable surroundings?
- How many passengers shared the steerage section on a ship?
- Was it clean?
- What would it have been like traveling in steerage for 4 months?

Travel conditions in first class

- What was the difference between first class and steerage passengers?
- How different was the accommodation?
- Was the food different?
- Did they share the ship sections with steerage passengers?



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Food

- What sort of meals did the passengers eat?
- Was it fresh?
- Did they have problems with rats and keeping food safe?
- Did they have fresh water?
- What utensils did they have to provide?

Sanitary conditions

- What sort of toilet facilities did the passengers have?
- Did they have provision for showers?
- Did they have running water?

Bedding

- How many people/children shared a bunk?
- What sort of privacy did they have between bunks?
- What type of stuffing did the mattresses have?
- Were they clean?
- Did they have to provide their own sheets/blankets etc?

Dividing sections of steerage quarters (married/single men/single women)

- Why were there different sections within the ship?
- Were there rules within these sections?
- Why?

Death and disease

- What types of medicine/treatments were available for the sick?
- Was disease a problem on ships?
- Was sea-sickness and illness an issue?
- Cholera
- Typhus
- Consumption
- Lice
- Burial- How were the dead buried?
- Who were more likely to die at sea?
- Why was child mortality so high?



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Life at sea

- What sort of things did the passengers do to entertain themselves during the journey?
- Were storms common?
- What type of special events did the passengers and crew celebrate?
- Was the risk of fire an issue?
- Why did so many passengers write journals?

Links:

<http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/history-of-immigration/9/4>

<http://new-brunswick.net/marcopolo/historic.html>

<http://www.theshipslist.com/pictures/index.htm#vessels>

Article III. Write a poem or story

Imagine you are at sea on a sailing ship. You may choose to be a passenger or a crew member. Imagine there is a very bad storm happening and the sea is pounding across the ship's deck. How do you feel? What are you doing? What is happening on the ship? What is happening below deck? Write an account of your experience. Maybe you might like to write it as a poem, or a journal entry or as a letter to a family member.

Article IV. Fun Facts

- Children were scared of getting sick, and scared too of some of the 'cures'. For whooping cough, one cure was to swallow a spider in butter!
- Victorian children were usually dressed like miniature adults. Boy babies often wore skirts - later a boy might wear a sailor suit.
- Some poor children wore second-hand boots or shoes, nicknamed 'translators'.
- One Victorian slang word for 'children' was 'chavy'.
- For parties, lots of little Victorian girls wore red cloaks - perhaps because Little Red Riding Hood was a favourite



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