

# PIRATE ISLAND Curriculum Guide

Middle Grade Adventure by Katie L. Carroll



## PIRATE ISLAND blurb:

*A thrice cursed island, a legendary pirate treasure, and one not-so-brave boy. What could possibly go wrong?*

For centuries, the whereabouts of Captain William Kidd's lost pirate treasure has remained a mystery. When Billy's best friend, Andy, proposes they look for it on nearby Pirate Island, Billy thinks it's just another one of their crazy adventures. It's usually Billy who ends up in trouble as a result, but he goes along for the ride...like always. The more he delves into the life and death of Kidd, the more he thinks the treasure is real and that it might be buried on the small island in Long Island Sound. Billy—nope, call him William—becomes obsessed with the captain of the same first name. He even believes he's possessed by Kidd's restless soul. Now he and the spirit of a long-dead pirate are leading the crazy adventure on Pirate Island. And what they find is far bigger than the treasure they imagined.

Check out the book trailer at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PvGKp6xR1nc>.

## About the Author:

Katie L. Carroll always says she began writing at a very sad time in her life after her sister Kylene unexpectedly passed away. The truth is Katie has been writing her whole life, and it was only after Kylene's death that she realized she wanted to pursue writing for kids and teens as a career. Since then writing has taken her to many wonderful places, real and imagined. She wrote her YA fantasy ELIXIR BOUND so Kylene could live on in the pages of a book.

Katie is also the author of the middle grade adventure PIRATE ISLAND and a contributor to the collaborative middle grade mystery THE GREAT CONNECTICUT CAPER. She teaches writing and publishing workshops for children and adults and works as a freelance writer and editor. She has had many jobs in her lifetime, including newspaper deliverer, hardware store cashier, physical therapy assistant, and puzzle magazine editor. She lives in Connecticut with her husbands and sons.



Visit Katie's website at <http://www.katielcarroll.com/> or follow her on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/katielcarrollauthor/> and Twitter [@katielcarroll](https://twitter.com/katielcarroll).

## PIRATE ISLAND Reader Questions

(CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.5, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.3, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.9)

1. Throughout the story, Billy talks about how Andy often pressures him into crazy adventures. Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you felt pressure to do something you didn't want to do? What were the circumstances of your situation and how does it compare to Billy's experience? How does Billy's motivation for the treasure hunt on Pirate Island change as the plot moves forward?
2. When Billy finds the letter written by Andy's mom, he decides to read it. Do you think it was right for Billy to read Andy's personal letter? Why or why not? Would there ever be a situation where it would be okay for a person to read a friend's personal property?
3. At the beginning of the story, Billy thinks that Andy is taking the voluntary summer writing class because of "Andy's less-than-awesome performance in English." What do you think is the real reason for Andy taking the class? Have you ever had your friends or relatives surprise you with information you didn't previously know about them? How did that make you feel?
4. When Billy goes to the concert with his sister, Kristina, he ends up punching a member of the high school varsity football team and then blames it on his inner pirate rage. Do you think that's true or was there more behind Billy's actions? How did Billy feel after his violent outburst at the concert? What in the text led to those conclusions?
5. Do you think Billy likes Kristina's boyfriend, Justin, the first few times he meets him? What lines from the text support whether or not Billy likes Justin? How do Billy's feelings toward Justin change toward the end of the story? Have you ever met someone and found your first impression of them changed over time?
6. At the end of the story, Billy says Andy is wrong when Andy claims they didn't find anything on Pirate Island. The last line of the story is "We found a lot more than treasure there, and I'm pretty sure every single one of us who was there knows it." What do you think Billy means by this? What did each of Billy, Andy, Kristina, and Justin find on Pirate Island?

### Writing Prompt

Billy believes he is being possessed by Captain Kidd's spirit. Throughout the story, Billy tries to channel Captain Kidd and act like him to be brave. Think of a time when you were afraid. Write a scene using specific physical details and other descriptive language to convey your fear. Set the scene by using specific details of the situation and setting.

Was there a person—someone you know, a character from a book, or an historical figure—you could have channeled in that moment of fear? Write a paragraph about why you chose that person or character. What in their life or story made them brave?

Finally, write a narrative about how you would have acted if you could relive that experience and what you might have done differently.

## PIRATE ISLAND Science Lesson

(CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.7)

Billy believes Captain Kidd buried pirate treasure on Pirate Island. He wants to explore the island to try and find the lost loot, but one of the obstacles he faces is that the island is closed to the public because the snowy egret (*Egretta thula*) nests there.

The fictional Pirate Island is based on the real Charles Island off the Connecticut coastline in Long Island Sound. Snowy egrets are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and are considered a threatened species in the state of Connecticut.

As members of the heron family, snowy egrets migrate to Connecticut to nest during the warm months. They lay greenish/blue eggs in shallow nests in trees, shrubs, or on the ground.

Snowy egrets are a medium-sized bird. They are known for their thin black bill with a yellow base, long black legs that end in yellow feet, and bright white feathers. During breeding season, the feathers curve up in the back for a showy appearance and the yellow part of the bill turns red. They were once hunted for their beautiful plumage.



They wade in shallow water, using their feet to stir up fish and other small aquatic species. They may also fly over water and dip their feet in to catch a meal.

### Further resources on the snowy egret:

CornellLab of Ornithology: [https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Snowy\\_Egret/id](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Snowy_Egret/id)

Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection:  
<http://www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?q=326088>

Audubon Guide to North American Birds: <http://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/snowy-egret>

## Science Activity

Find a bird species that is local to your area. Draw a picture of it based on an actual photograph of the bird and label the different parts of the body. Identify its scientific classification. What are its distinguishing features? What kind of habitat does it live in? How does it care for its young? What kind of food and environment does it need to survive and thrive? Using a flowchart, show the life cycle of the species. What measures can you take to help protect the species? Be sure to include your sources in a bibliography.

## PIRATE ISLAND History Lesson

(CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.4, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.5, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.8, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.9, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.8, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.9)

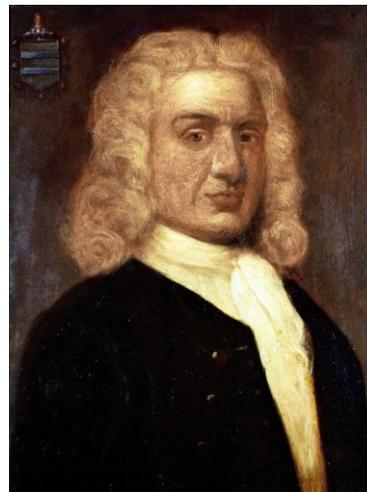
### The True History of Captain William Kidd

As told by Billy Bonny, main character of PIRATE ISLAND

#### January 1654? – A Legend is Born

Pointing out the day someone is born seems kind of boring. But in the case of someone legendary like Captain William Kidd, it's totally worth noting. The trouble is that no one is quite sure when he was actually born. Some sources claim he was born in 1645 and others in January of 1654. That's a nine-year difference; a lot can happen in nine years. That's like two-thirds of my whole life! (My birth date is June 22, 2004...just so you know for sure if I ever become famous one day.) It is known that he was born in Scotland, but no one is sure exactly where.

Even worse, there is no good evidence of what he was up to until the late 1680s. That's 30 or 40 years of lost history when it comes to Kidd. I know he lived a long time ago, but you'd think the life of an infamous pirate (or not-pirate as I would say...but I'll talk about that later) would be better documented. What about all those non-famous people that lived at the time? Is there any record of them ever being alive? It kind of makes me happy to be alive now when it's so easy to find out what everybody is up to.



*Image Credit: William Kidd, privateer, pirate. 18th century portrait by Sir James Thornhill. Public domain.*



*Image Credit: Howard Pyle, via Wikimedia Commons. Public Domain.*

#### 1688 to 1689 - Mutineer and Captain

In the lost years from Kidd's birth (in 1645 or 1654, depending on what source you believe) to the late 1680s, Kidd made his way from Scotland to the Caribbean. If you know anything about pirating in this time period, the Caribbean was the place to be. There were also what were called privateers there as well. A privateer is sort of a legal pirate. Where a pirate goes around attacking and stealing from any ship they feel like it, a privateer has the backing of their government to attack ships from any country they are at war with. The loot would then have to be shared with the government.

So Kidd finds himself working on a French privateer ship when England and France go to war. Kidd and the other English members of

the crew mutiny and sail the ship to Nevis, an island in the Caribbean that was an English colony. This is when he first becomes captain of a ship, which is renamed *Blessed William*. It's pretty cool that they named the ship after him. It became Kidd's job to defend Nevis from the French and pay himself and his crew with whatever loot they took from the French. In the eyes of English law, even with the mutiny on the French ship, Kidd is a privateer and hasn't really broken the law (though I'm sure the French weren't too happy with him).

### 1690 to 1695 – The Archenemy and the Wife

If you want to know who was a real, cutthroat pirate, just look up Robert Culliford. He happened to be one of the English members of the crew who mutinied against the French captain and then became a crew member of the *Blessed William*. Later while sailing in the West Indies, Culliford mutinied against Kidd and stole the ship and all the loot Kidd and the crew had earned in the war. Throughout his life, Culliford never even bothered to pretend to be a privateer but was a pirate through and through. (More on that scallywag later!)



*Image Credit:* Captain Kidd in New York Harbor, ca. 1920 painting by Jean Leon Gerome Ferris. Public Domain.

Meanwhile, Kidd had earned a name as a successful privateer and headed to New York City. There he met Sarah Bradley Cox Oort, a woman of many names because even though she was only in her early 20s, she already had two widows. She was rich, too, thanks to her first dead husband. Her second husband suffered a mysterious death and shortly after, she married Kidd. Some historians pointed out the suspicious timing and think Kidd was involved in the death, but there's no evidence to support that. One theme of Kidd's life (and death) seems to be taking the fall for things he may or may not have done.



*Image Credit:* Willem van de Velde the Younger, via Wikimedia Commons. Public Domain.

### December 1695 to September 1696 – Privateer, Not Pirate

It was in December 1695 that Lord Bellomont, a colonial governor, hired Kidd as a privateer to try and solve the growing problem of piracy. As I mentioned earlier, a privateer is a sort of legal pirate who is hired by a government to attack ships they are at war with and actual pirate ships. This was all financially backed by important English lords. The letter of marque, which is the official document marking Kidd as a privateer, was signed by the King of England himself! (This document was mysteriously missing during Kidd's later trial and

only turned up many years later...only more reason to believe he was wrongly convicted of being a pirate.)

Kidd's brand-new ship was the *Adventure Galley* (a pretty awesome name for a ship if you ask me). A string of bad luck would start for Kidd on his way back to New York City after picking up his ship. He failed to salute a Navy vessel, a shot was fired by the Navy, and Kidd's crew offered up a rude gesture in return. The Navy captain took most of Kidd's crew immediately into service, leaving Kidd's crew seriously understaffed. Back in New York, Kidd had to pick a bunch of criminals and unsavory characters to begin his journey to Africa as a privateer.

### September 1696 to October 16, 1697 - The Bucket Incident

So Kidd sets off on the *Adventure Galley* for Africa with a criminal crew to try and seize enemies of England and actual pirate ships. An outbreak of cholera (a really nasty disease you can get from drinking bad water) further sabotages the mission. Kidd's rich lord backers wouldn't be satisfied with failure and the remaining crew was getting restless when things turn deadly.

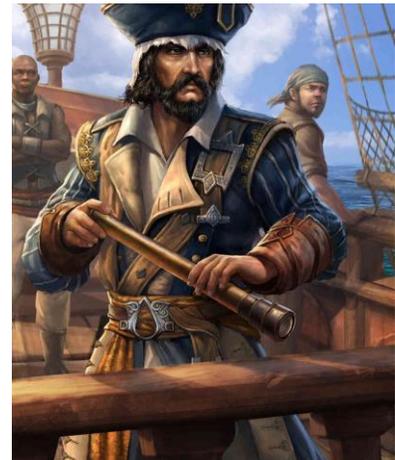
On October 16, 1697, a Dutch ship approached the *Adventure Galley*. The crew urged Kidd to give the go-ahead to attack. In particular a gunner named William Moore (good first name!)

challenged Kidd to let them attack. In a heated argument, Kidd ended up throwing a bucket at Moore and hitting him in the head. Moore's skull was fractured and he died the next day.

I'm not justifying killing a man, but I'm betting Kidd was afraid of outright mutiny, so he wasn't out of line to try and keep his crew from attacking a ship they had no right to attack. Maybe he shouldn't have thrown a bucket, but I don't think Kidd intended to kill anyone. In addition to charges of piracy, Kidd would later be charged and convicted of murder, even though he would never know of the murder charge until his actual trial started.



**Image Credit:** Howard Pyle, via Wikimedia Commons. Public Domain.



**Image Credit:** Assassin's Creed: Memories. Creative commons license.

And as if the proof against Kidd being a pirate isn't already mounting up enough, think about the fact that he kept his crew from looting the Dutch ship...not something a pirate—who would attack any ship—would do, but something a privateer would certainly do.

### 1698 to April 1699 – A Privateer Prize and the Return of the Archenemy

Whole books could be written about Captain Kidd's life (I know—I've read a bunch of them!). This was a particularly busy time for him, so I'm going to be brief and hit the highlights. In January 1698, Kidd finally catches a break when his crew spots a ship called the *Quedagh Merchant* off the tip of India. It was an Indian ship that was flying French colors and with French papers. England was at war with France at the time, so French ships were allowed to be taken by English privateers.

Turns out the captain was an Englishman, and Kidd tried to give the ship back to him. His restless crew wasn't interested in that, so Kidd kept the ship and its goods for him and his crew. Kidd's ship the *Adventure Galley* had seen better days, so he set sail on the *Quedagh Merchant* and renamed it the *Adventure Prize* (another cool name for a ship!).

In April, Kidd arrived at Madagascar and ran into his old archenemy (the real pirate!) Robert Culliford. What actually happened between these two at this point is a bit of mystery with several different accounts being told of the events. The end result was that much of Kidd's crew left him to join Culliford, and Kidd decided to go home. Meanwhile, rumors of Kidd having turned pirate had reach England, and he was in for a heap of trouble when he got back.

Kidd stopped in the Caribbean and learned he was a wanted pirate. He ditched the *Adventure Prize*, sold off some of his goods, and returned to New York. But not before making a stop on Gardiners Island and burying some real treasure!

### **June 1699 – Proof of Treasure**

If you think I'm crazy for believing that Captain Kidd could have buried treasure (not pirate treasure because Kidd wasn't a pirate) on a tiny island in Long Island Sound, I wouldn't blame you...knowing you probably haven't done the research. The proof of me not being crazy was found on Gardiners Island, a small island off the coast of East Hampton, NY, where Kidd really did bury some of his loot.

The stash included gold dust, silver bars, Spanish coins, rubies, diamonds, candlesticks, and porringers (shallow bowls with small, decorative handles). He also gave Mrs. Gardiner a gold cloth and a sack of sugar. Apparently, sugar was really valuable at the time, which is crazy when you think about how much sugar is in one can of mine and Andy's favorite energy drink. And we buy those pretty cheap at the grocery store.

When Mr. Gardiner was ordered by the government to turn over the treasure as evidence against Kidd, one diamond somehow remained in Gardiner's possession, which he ended up giving to his daughter. Sketchy stuff if you ask me, but nobody ever charged Mr. Gardiner with a crime.

In this time period, Kidd spent 20 days roaming the waters of Long Island Sound. If he had treasure in addition to what he buried on Gardiners Island, this would have been a great time to unload it. Just saying!



*Image Credit: Doc Seals via flickr*

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/docsearls/285538232/>  
**Image of Gardiners Island**

## July 6, 1699 to May 23, 1701 – Trial and Execution

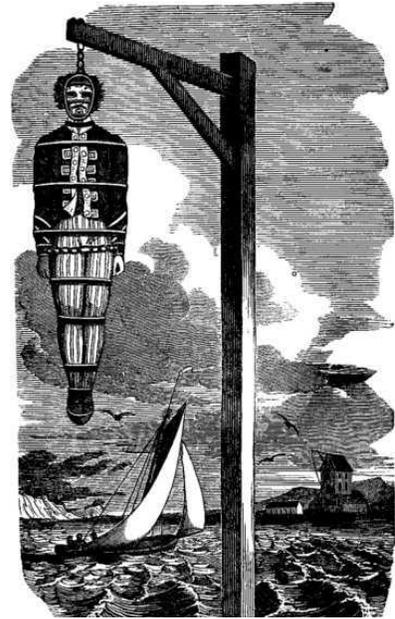
On July 6, 1699, knowing that he was wanted for piracy, Captain Kidd went to Boston thinking that Lord Bellomont (the one guy who got him into the whole privateering mess) was going to grant him clemency—meaning Kidd would likely be shown mercy for the charges against him. Instead, he was thrown in jail, along with his wife, though she was released because she was completely innocent. After keeping Kidd in terrible prison conditions in Boston for over a year, the coward Bellomont turned on Kidd, sending him to England and saving his own butt in the process.

Kidd was then imprisoned in Newgate Prison until his trial. It was only at his trial that he learned he was being tried for murdering William Moore (the guy who was hit with the bucket) in addition to piracy. Key evidence to support Kidd, including the French papers that showed the *Quedagh Merchant* was legal for him to seize. As I see it—as do other historians—

Kidd's trial was a sham from the start, and he was to be the fallout guy for all pirates so the English government could say they were doing something against piracy.

May 23, 1701 is the sad, sad date when Captain Kidd was executed in England. The rope broke after the first attempt at hanging him, which was usually taken as a sign from God that the guilty party was meant to live. Kidd's former business partners, the ones who hired and backed him as a privateer, obviously had something to hide. They wanted Kidd dead so badly that he was strung back up and successfully executed on the second try.

His body was gibbeted on the Thames River for three years as a way to discourage others from becoming pirates. Many years later, missing evidence turned up that put into question Kidd's guilt of piracy. I, Billy Bonny, am among those who maintain he wasn't a true pirate.



**Image Credit: Artist Unknown.  
Public Domain.**

## **PIRATE ISLAND History Questions**

1. In your own words and using Billy's history lesson, define the following vocabulary words from Captain William Kidd's history: Archenemy, Infamous, Letter of Marque, Mutiny, Porringer, Privateer, Sham.
2. Billy uses a mix of fact and his own opinion to tell the history of Captain William Kidd. Notes two examples of each from Billy's history lesson. Are Billy's opinions of Captain William Kidd's life sound conclusions based on the facts her presents? Why or why not?
3. Is Billy's account of Captain William Kidd's history considered a primary and secondary source? How can you tell the difference between a primary and secondary source? What would be a good primary source for the topic of Captain William Kidd's life?
4. There are many different ways to present factual or historical information. How does Billy present the history of Captain William Kidd? What other ways could the life of an historical figure be presented?

## **History Activity**

Locate an historical site in your area or an historical figure that lived near you. In the case of the historical site, what happened there that contributed to the history of your area? In the case the historical figure, how did they contribute to your community or the world?

Cite your sources, being sure to note whether they are primary or secondary sources. Use visuals to enhance your descriptions of the site or person and be sure to note the source of the visual as Billy did in his history lesson.

How does the history continue to impact your community or the world today?