

THE WRECKERS' REVENGE

NORMAN JORGENSEN

ISBN (PB): 9781925815450

YEAR LEVEL: Y5–9

CROSS-CURRICULUM PRIORITY: Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures; Sustainability

ABOUT THE BOOK

Red Read doesn't set out to find trouble, but trouble sure has a way of finding him. Expelled from school, he is whisked off by Captain Black Bowen, one of the most infamous smugglers ever to ply the coast of northern Australia in the early years of the twentieth century. Together they battle demon storms, crazed pirates and killer diseases while hunting down a great lost treasure. Non-stop action, adventure and excitement!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Multi-award-winning writer Norman Jorgensen was born in Broome and lived a happy, Huckleberry Finn-like childhood. He has worked in the book trade for much of his life, and in his spare time, he loves to read, travel and take photographs. He now lives in a hundred-year-old house near the city with his wife, Jan Nicholls, a children's book devotee. Norman began writing when in primary school and had a story read on the ABC Radio Argonauts Club, but it took many years before his first picture book, *In Flanders Fields*, beautifully illustrated by Brian Harrison-Lever, was published. Norman has since published three novels – *Jack's Island*, *The Smuggler's Curse* and his latest, *The Wreckers' Revenge* – and two picture books with local illustrator James Foley – *The Last Viking* and *The Last Viking Returns*.

THEMES

- Piracy
- Courage
- Violence
- Revenge
- Colonisation
- Coming of age

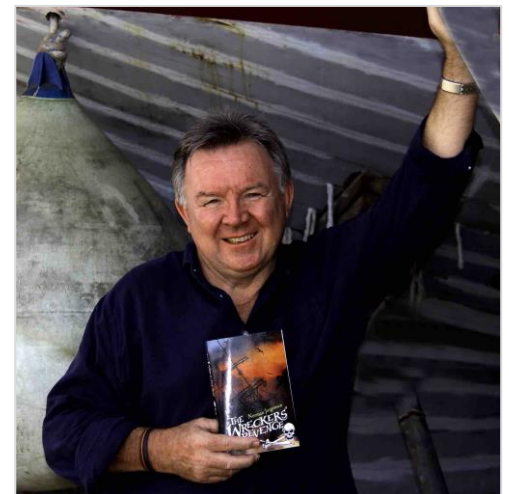
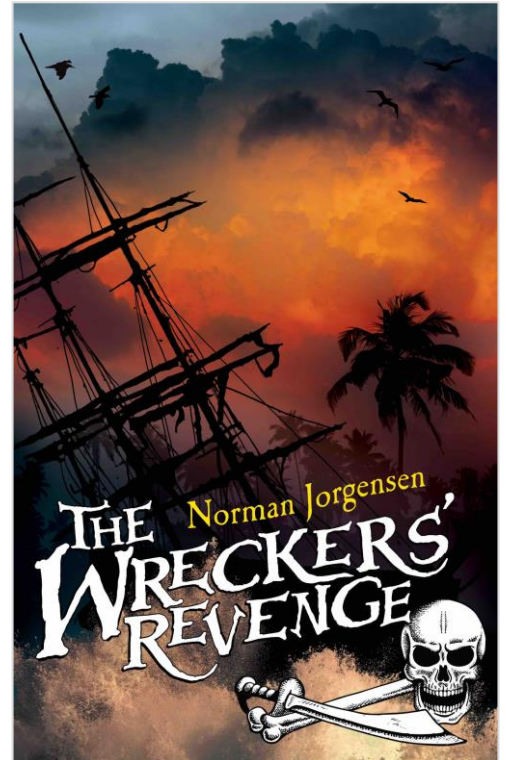
AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

Y5–9 English

Y5–9 History and Geography

USEFUL WEBSITES

- Author's website: www.normanjorgensen.com.au
- Author's Facebook page: www.facebook.com/norman.jorgensen



CLASSROOM IDEAS

Discussion questions

1. How would you describe Captain Bowen's personality? Would you label him as a hero, villain or anti-hero? Why do you think literary references to Shakespeare are so important to him? What might they further reveal about his character?
2. *Revenge can be quick, or it can be slow, deliberate and delicious.* (p. 255). In your opinion, does lust for revenge cause Captain Bowen or his crew to take unnecessary risks? Provide examples.
3. Do you think the crew of the Black Dragon have become desensitised to violence? Why might life as a pirate cause this to happen? Does Red become desensitised too?
4. The theme of colonisation is central in the novel – what effects, both positive and negative, do the European settlers seem to be having across the various parts of Southeast Asia and Australia that Red visits? What insights into foreign cultures, beliefs and environments does he gain?
5. Mr Carstairs claims he wants to bring back slavery – when was this abolished? How are issues of racial inequality depicted in the novel? For example, consider the passages below:
 - a. *The Aborigines sure have it tough. If it is not white men's diseases killing them off, it is unscrupulous pearling captains and cattle station owners treating them like dirt. Even a lot of town people refuse to have anything to do with them, so they are forced to live on the outskirts of town in hovels in grinding poverty.* (p. 261).
 - b. *Once, it would have been unthinkable for Aboriginal men to own a business, but not so much now ... Some people in town are critical of the brothers just because of their race, but Chi boats are famous for their speed ...* (p. 306).
6. Red is surprised that Mrs Crawford dons a shirt and pants, adeptly steers the ship, and is also skilled with a pistol. What were the conventional gender expectations for women in the early 1900s? How do Mrs Crawford and her daughter Anna challenge the norm?
7. How are the themes of justice, bravery, revenge and family represented in this story? What other themes stood out to you personally? To whom would you recommend the book and why?
8. In your opinion, what is the scariest challenge Red faces on his adventure? (i.e. surviving a shipwreck, almost being eaten by a tiger shark, or facing a cyclone at sea.) Do you think he is brave? Create a list of things you are afraid of. What strategies have you used to overcome fear in the past?

History and geography

1. Create definitions for the following terms: pirates, smugglers and privateers. How do they differ?
2. Create a glossary of nautical terms as you read the novel, e.g. bosun, schooner, starboard, etc.
3. When was the 'Golden Age of Piracy' and why did it end? Create a timeline of significant dates in the history of pirates. Are pirates still active in parts of the world today?
4. How does Norman Jorgensen describe the living conditions in Perth in the early 1900s? Use the following subheadings to research everyday life in this period: food, shelter, law and government, education, travel, sanitation, technology, health and medicine, life expectancy (provide a reference list). How have living conditions changed today? Do you think you would have liked to live back then? Why? Turn to a partner and share.
5. Red discovers that the coast of Australia is littered with Dutch shipwrecks from the 1600s. Create a timeline of Dutch expeditions to 'New Holland' during this period.
6. Several members of Red's crew contract typhoid fever. What are the causes and symptoms of this disease? How was it treated in the late 1800s in comparison to today? What other illnesses did sailors often succumb to during long periods at sea?
7. Red sets out in search of William Dampier's treasure. Construct a biography of this famous mariner.
8. Red's mother claims he's a descendant of Mary Read. Construct a biography of this famous pirate.
9. Label the Southeast Asian colonies of the European powers in the nineteenth century on a world map. Chart Red's voyage across the Indian Ocean, locating the Cocos Islands and Christmas Island.
10. The crew are surprised to encounter an American whaling ship, believing most of the population in the Indian Ocean to have already been exploited. What were whaling products used for at this time? When/why was commercial whaling abolished in Australia? Do any species remain endangered today? Is whaling still legal in other parts of the world?

Creative writing

1. *Continue the story!* Do you think Red will return to school in Perth? Or will he leave as soon as the Red Dragon is finished? What obstacles will he face on his second attempt to find William Dampier's lost treasure? Draft the next three chapters in the adventure!
2. Write a ship's log (diary entry) reflecting on your favourite scene from the point of view of either Captain Bowen, Sam Chi, Red, Anna or Mrs Crawford.
3. Rewrite your favourite scene from the point of view of either Captain Bowen, Sam Chi, Anna or Mrs Crawford.
4. Plan and draft your own historical short story about a sea voyage during the early 1900s.
5. *Sometimes his own laws, the ones he lives by, are much better than the Queen's.* (p. 54). What laws do you think Captain Bowen lives by? What laws do you personally live by? Create a list.

Debate

1. In teams of four, debate for or against the following claims: *Decent people do not beat children. Only cowards, bullies and puffed-up, self-important officials do that.* (p. 37) or *The Captain really is a moral man.* (p. 54).

Swashbuckling fun!

1. The crew use Morse code to communicate with other vessels. When was this system created and who invented it? Download a copy of the Morse Code alphabet from the following link: www.education.com/activity/article/Morse_Code/. Notice that it represents letters and numbers with a combination of dots and dashes.
 - a. Practice writing out simple words in Morse code using the alphabet chart.
 - b. Once you feel confident, write out a short message to a partner in Morse code (hint: leave a single space between each letter and double space between each word).
 - c. Dim the lights and take turns using a flashlight to exchange messages. Use long and short flashes to convey dashes and dots. When you receive your partner's message, jot down the dots and dashes on paper – can you decipher them?
2. Design an authentic looking late nineteenth century 'wanted poster' for Captain Bowen!
3. Label the different parts of a schooner and design your own pirate flag!

The **CLASSROOM EXPRESS** FREMANTLE PRESS
EDUCATION NEWS

 fremantlepress.com.au/classroom-express

   @FremantlePress  Sign up for enews  fremantlepress.com.au