

THE UNLUCKY PIRATE

MARK GREENWOOD
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YEAR LEVEL: Y4–7

ABOUT THE BOOK

Captain Kidd is a figure shrouded in myth and legend. Hired by the King of England as a privateer to capture pirates who were attacking treasure-laden ships, he was eventually accused of turning rogue and becoming a ruthless buccaneer himself.

His notoriety endures because of the legendary hoards of gold, silver and precious stones said to have been buried by him. But did pirates really bury their treasure? And how much of Captain Kidd's treasure is still waiting to be found?

The truth is out there.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mark Greenwood is a history hunter. He enjoys searching for lost explorers and glittering treasure, delving into baffling mysteries and investigating famous cold cases. His award-winning books examining history and multicultural themes have been honoured internationally.

THEMES

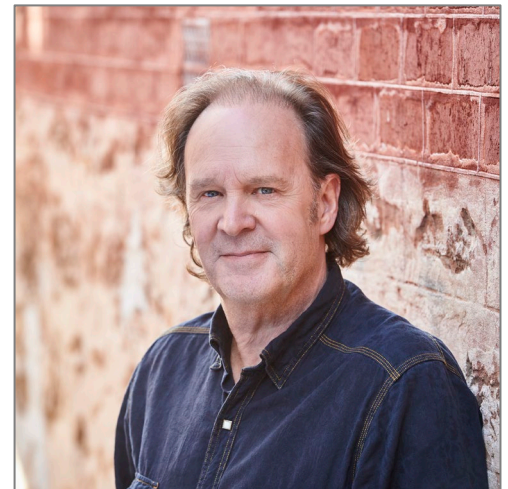
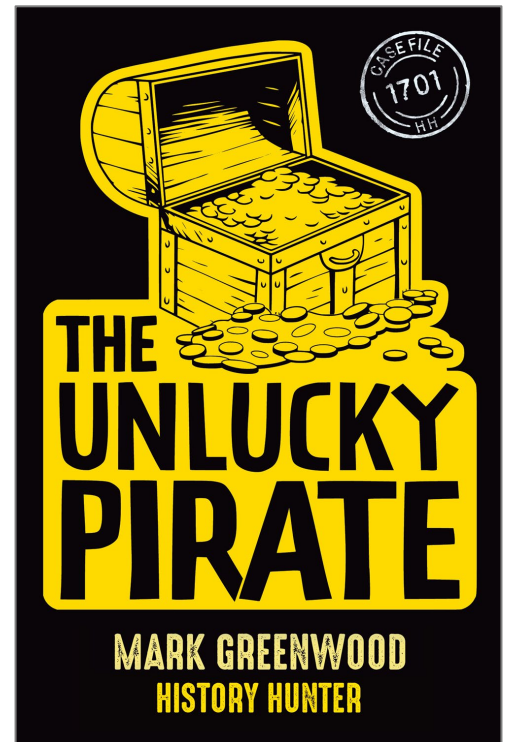
- History
- Captain William Kidd
- Piracy
- Myths and legends
- Lost treasure

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

- Y4–7 English
- Y4–7 Humanities and Social Sciences
- Y4–7 The Arts
- Y4–7 Health and Physical Education
- Y4–7 Numeracy

USEFUL WEBSITES

- Author's website: markgreenwood.com.au
- [The Story of Captain William Kidd – Pirate History for Kids](#)
- [World History Encyclopedia: Captain Kidd](#)
- [Kiddle: William Kidd Facts for Kids](#)



CLASSROOM IDEAS

Discussion Questions

1. What is a privateer? How does it differ from a pirate?
2. In the introduction, it says, '**Atrocity was a career choice**' (p. 1). What do you think this means?
3. What fictional pirates have you come across in books read or films watched?
4. What does the author mean when he says, '**the pirate hunter had turned rogue**' (p. 3)? Do you believe this was true?
5. What was the common pirate manoeuvre that tricked the *Quedagh Merchant* vessel into letting Kidd sail close enough to be within cannon firing range? (p. 26)
6. What was the French Pass and how did it work?
7. Can you explain the chain of events that led to Captain Kidd no longer being considered a pirate hunter but a hunted pirate? Do you think this was fair? Why?
8. What does it mean to call something a '**red herring**' (p. 79)? Why was Oak Island considered a 'red herring'?
9. Vocabulary focus. Check the meaning of the following words and use them in a sentence of your own:
 - a. notoriety (p. 7)
 - b. raucous (p. 7)
 - c. inglorious (p. 10)
 - d. shrewd (p. 14)
 - e. languished (p. 49)
 - f. disregarded (p. 53)
 - g. perjured (p.53)
 - h. eccentric (p. 63)
 - i. authentic (p. 67)
 - j. sceptics (p. 68)
 - k. exquisite (p. 68)
 - l. improbable (p. 73)
10. What do the following phrases mean?
 - a. 'A sea of pox-pitted faces closes in ...' (p. 8)
 - b. '... cultivated political influence.' (p. 16)
 - c. 'Spooked by endless bad luck ...' (p. 24)
 - d. 'To quash a festering rebellion ...' (p. 25)
 - e. '... orchestrated a sham trial.' (p. 51)
 - f. '... 'twas bestowed upon me by Kidd.' (p. 60)
 - g. 'Lured by rumours ...' (p. 77)
 - h. 'Another enduring belief ...' (p. 79)

Creative Writing

1. Prepare a newspaper article inspired by this story. See pages 82 and 83 for title inspirations. It could be about exploring the possibility that there is still buried treasure hidden in the world, convincing your audience to buy a treasure map, or about the lifestyle of pirates. Make your title exciting, captivating your audience so they read on.
2. Mark Greenwood states, '**It is safe to say William Kidd was an unlucky Pirate**' (p. 91). Why does he say this? What proof does he present? Create a persuasive piece to convince a judge to reopen the case of William Kidd using these arguments.
3. Write a captain's log entry from Kidd's ship on the day everything starts to go wrong. Include sea conditions, crew mood and one decision Kidd regrets. What detail will you include to make the entry sound like it was written in the 1600s?
4. Create a WANTED poster for Captain Kidd (or a crew member) and add a short monologue where the person speaks back to the accusations. Is the character guilty, unlucky or misunderstood?
5. Write two diary entries about the same event – one by Kidd and one by someone who believes he is a pirate (e.g. an investor, sailor or courtroom witness). Which facts will stay the same, and which will change depending on the narrator?
6. Create a myth-buster feature article. Write a magazine-style piece titled 'Did pirates really bury treasure?' Blend facts from the book with a creative 'expert interview' (you invent the expert). What is the most convincing reason you can give that supports your conclusion?

7. Create a script for a courtroom scene documenting Kidd's trial with a judge, a witness and Kidd. Include at least one objection and one piece of 'evidence' mentioned in the book. Which line of dialogue will be your turning point?
8. Write a mystery short story where someone plants a red herring to distract treasure hunters from the real clue. Your narrator discovers the trick too late. What is the red herring, and how will you reveal it to the reader?
9. Write and perform a poem called 'Unlucky' that traces the moments Kidd's luck changes. Use repetition for emphasis and at least three vivid sound/sea images. Which repeated line will build the strongest mood?

The Arts

1. Research the galleons sailed during this period and draw your own design based on the research. Annotate it to explain the purpose of the different parts of the ship.
2. Using the chapter Homeward Bound, plot Kidd's movements from Madagascar to Boston with the help of an atlas. Label the islands and harbours he might have stopped at and mark with an 'X' where you think he may have hidden treasure.

Health and Physical Education

1. Set up a pirate fitness circuit: set up stations (deck swabs = bear crawl, hoist the sails = resistance-band rows, cannonball carry = farmer's carry with light weights, plank the deck = plank hold). How might these tasks help sailors on a ship build strength and endurance?
2. 'Treasure map' navigation game: in teams, students follow simple bearings/pace counts (or landmark clues) to locate 'treasure' around the oval; include rules about staying together and checking in at boundaries. What safety rules should a crew follow to make sure everyone returns to the ship?
3. 'Shipwreck rescue relay' team challenge: students transport 'supplies' (beanbags/balls) across a marked 'sea' using limited equipment (hoops, mats) without stepping in. What strategies helped your group communicate and solve problems under pressure?
4. Discuss how to stay healthy on long voyages: students design a 'ship's wellbeing plan' (hydration, balanced food, sleep/rest roster, hygiene, managing seasickness, basic first aid). Choose one challenge sailors faced and explain one practical way you would reduce the risk of illness or injury. Discuss the difference between a privateer and a pirate, then role-play a crew meeting about a risky choice (e.g. attacking a ship, sharing loot fairly, following laws). What would 'fair' rules look like for a crew, and why do rules matter for safety?
'Cannonball target practice' skill game: throw soft balls at targets of different sizes/distances for different points; students track improvements and identify one cue for accurate throwing (e.g. step with opposite foot, follow-through). What change to your technique made the biggest difference?

Mathematics

1. Agreement for sharing the captured loot the buccaneers attained was as follows:
 - 65% for the investors
 - 10% for the king
 - 25% for Captain Kidd to be 'divvied' up with his crew (p. 17)
 - a. Do you think this was fair? How would you have divided it up?
 - b. If the *Quedagh Merchant* was carrying valuables worth \$500, how would this have been divvied up according to the above agreement?
2. Scale and distance: using a map (or a simple grid map you create), plot Kidd's route from Madagascar to Boston and estimate total distance travelled using the map scale. How might a small error in scale reading affect a long voyage?
3. Time, speed and sailing days: if Kidd's ship averages 6 knots for 8 hours a day, how far will it travel in one day (use 1 knot \approx 1.852 km/h)? If the route is 1200 km, about how many sailing days would that take?
4. Crew shares: if Kidd's 25% share is divided equally among 80 crew, what fraction and amount does each sailor receive from a \$500 capture? How would the share change if 8 officers received double shares?

5. Treasure hunt data: create a table of 'finds' (e.g. coins, gems, maps, tools) found by groups over 10 rounds, then graph the results (column graph) and calculate the mean number of items per round. Which item was most common, and what does your data show?
The 'finds' could be items in a bag, and each group takes a turn to pick one out, or token cards hidden around the room. Older students could use a dice roll with numbers representing coins, tools, gems, etc.
6. Coordinates and 'X marks the spot': place 'islands' on a coordinate grid (e.g. (2,5), (7,3), (9,8)) and write treasure clues using moves (go 3 east, 2 north) or simple bearings. Can another group follow your clues to reach the exact point?

Science

1. Treasure boat engineering: design a small foil boat that can carry the most 'treasure' (coins/washers) before it sinks. What design features helped your boat float longer?
2. Wind power investigation: make sails from paper/plastic and test which sail shape moves a small boat (in a tray) or a wheeled 'ship' the fastest using a fan. Which sail design worked best, and why?
3. Navigation science: use a 'shadow stick' (skewer/straw in clay) and record shadow length/direction at different times. How could this help sailors estimate direction or time on a voyage?
4. Waves and stability: create 'waves' in a tub/tray and test which boat shape stays most stable in rough water. What changes improved stability without losing carrying capacity?
5. Ship hygiene and microbes: run a 'germ spread' simulation (glitter/oil/UV lotion) and test handwashing methods. Which method removed the most 'germs', and what rule would you add to a ship's routine based on this?
6. Food on a long voyage: research what sailors might have eaten on Kidd's ship (e.g. ship's biscuit/hardtack, salted meat, dried peas, oats, cheese, vinegar, pickled foods) and how each food was preserved. Which preservation method do you think was most effective, and what health problem could still occur if the diet lacked fresh food?



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