



# TeachersFirst READING TREKS

## *Currents*

### Teacher Guide

### Grade Level & Content Areas

Access Reading  
Trek Map

**Ages:** 9–12

**Grades:** 4–7

**Reading Level:** 5.5 Grade

**Lexile Measure:** 860L

**Guided Reading Level:** V

**Developmental Reading**

**Assessment (DRA):** 70

**Content Areas:** English/language arts, reading, literature, social studies (including individual development, identity, and geography), and science.

## Synopsis of Book

Author Jane Smolik tells a tale of three girls whose lives are connected, even though they never meet. Each girl struggles with adversity dealt by an authority figure that directly impacts her daily life in the 1850s. Bones, a slave nicknamed by her owner's wife, struggles against the injustices of slavery on a plantation on the Lower James River in Virginia. Lady Bess, the daughter of a British explorer, lives on the Isle of Wight and is raised by a stepmother who cares more for her own comfort than for Lady Bess and her younger sister. Mary Margaret and her family, who recently immigrated from Ireland to Boston, must deal with prejudices and scorn as they learn their way in their new country. Three stories, three lives, all connected by a bottle floating along the Atlantic's currents.

## Standards

### Common Core State Standards for K–5

#### Reading: Literature

- Key Ideas and Details
- Craft and Structure

#### Writing

- Text Types and Purposes
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge

## Common Core State Standards for 6–12

### Reading: Literature

- Key Ideas and Details
- Craft and Structure
- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

### Writing

- Text Types and Purposes
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge

## National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

- Theme 1: CULTURE
- Theme 2: TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE
- Theme 3: PEOPLE, PLACES, AND ENVIRONMENTS

## National Core Arts Standards for Visual Arts

- CREATING
- RESPONDING

## Next Generation Science Standards

- EARTH'S SYSTEMS

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## Using a TeachersFirst® Reading Trek to Explore This Book

TeachersFirst Reading Treks create a virtual field trip of resources about a piece of literature or a text using the My Maps feature of Google Maps. To motivate and enrich student reading, teachers and students can reference this visual collection of web resources and images as they relate to the contents of a book.

TeachersFirst has done the hard work for you! Use the activities in this teacher guide and the accompanying [Reading Trek map](#) as you and your students explore this book. And, if you feel inspired, you (or your students) can create your own Reading Trek about this or another book!

## Using This Reading Trek in Class

Below is a list of ideas for how to use this Reading Trek in your educational setting.

### Working with the Map:

1. Introduce the book to the whole class on an interactive whiteboard using the [Reading Trek map](#), highlighting its various layers.
2. Review the [1843](#) or [1858](#) edition of *Merry's Museum Magazine*, published from 1872 under various editors in Boston, Massachusetts, and shipped to stores and

subscribers globally, primarily for children in English-speaking countries. Discuss and compare the articles and stories with modern magazines for children of similar age groups. Note changes in how the text flows and was written. Compare and discuss the social values taught through the

stories in *Merry's Museum* versus children's magazines today. Read [Robert Merry's "My Own Life and Adventures"](#) and create an illustration from each chapter.

3. Have students research the North Atlantic Current and its role in weather systems and travel. Discuss the potential impact of global warming on the oceans' currents, salinity, and density and the implied impact of these factors on current strength and speed in the future. Using these [Ocean Circulations activities](#) will aid in comprehension and allow for better discussions. The articles "[Atlantic Ocean Currents Weakening](#)" and "[Ocean Circulation is Changing, and We Need to Know Why](#)" will provide background knowledge.
4. With knowledge gleaned from the articles listed previously, students can work independently or in small groups to predict another location that the bottle could have traveled and, after researching and creating a new character, write a chapter that explains how and where the bottle was found, what item might be added to the bottle, and the impact it has on that character's life. This can be done as a more traditional text, like a story, or in a graphic novel style using Comic Strips Templates ([TeachersFirst review](#)).
5. Discuss social equality and the civil rights of immigrants and their families and create posters to promote unity within the community. To make online, interactive posters, use Adobe Creative Cloud Express for Education ([TeachersFirst review](#)).
6. Each girl is seeking a type of freedom. Freedom can be defined in many ways, and it is often relative to the individual. Visit Newseum ED's Freedom in the Balance ([TeachersFirst review](#)) and take the [Freedom Quiz](#). Individually or in small groups, have students write a freedom statement for each girl. After exploring quotes regarding freedom, choose one and create an infographic using Canva ([TeachersFirst review](#)) and share it on the school or class website.

## Extension Activities:

1. Before reading the story, use the illustrations of the three girls on the book cover to make predictions about them without identifying their names. You can do this using an audience response tool such as Slido ([TeachersFirst review](#)). Follow up using the three images of the girls in their respective communities. Discuss the validity of the predictions as the story progresses.
2. Create a Google My Map ([TeachersFirst review](#)) that shows the path that the bottle traveled using the prevailing ocean currents. Using the line drawing tool, calculate the distance that the bottle traveled and the approximate time it took if the bottle traveled at 3 miles per hour or 5 kilometers per hour.
3. After choosing a secondary character from the story, students can complete a character analysis using the printables in "Responding to Literature: Understanding Character Analysis" ([TeachersFirst review](#)). Use Draw.Chat ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to create the character study, draw a character portrait in the appropriate setting, and share the study with classmates.
4. Complete the HSI: Historical Scene Investigation ([TeachersFirst review](#)) "[Antonio a Slave](#)." Students should complete the focus questions as part of a small group discussion or as independent responses. An alternative activity would be

- to create a Fakebook ([TeachersFirst review](#)) for that character.
- Using the artwork as an inspiring launch, have students respond to the various pieces of art from [Oh, Freedom! Teaching African American Civil Rights Through American Art](#) by first completing a [document analysis worksheet](#) from the National Archives, then recording personal thoughts through journal writing.
  - Each person has dreams, just like the three girls in the story. Create a vision board that explores individual goals and includes the belief statements of “I am...”, “I can...”, and “I will...” accompanied by photos and graphics. This activity can be done as a large poster with tangible items or by using Padlet ([TeachersFirst review](#)).

## Helpful Resources

### From TeachersFirst:

- [TeachersFirst CurriConnects Book List - Maps](#)
- [TeachersFirst Review of Google My Maps](#)
- [OK2Ask: Google My Maps Basics](#)
- [OK2Ask: Engage & Inspire with Reading Treks](#)

### Other Resources:

- [Illustrator's Notes](#)
- [Chad Gowey](#)
- [Modeling the Formation of Ocean Currents](#)
- [Weather Facts: North Atlantic Drift \(Gulf Stream\)](#)
- [How Melting Arctic Ice Affects Ocean Currents](#)