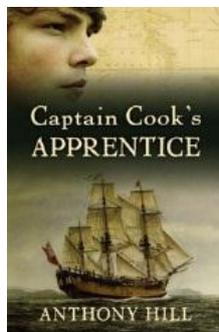


ENDEAVOUR'S READING ROOM :

Interesting books to read, enjoy, study and discuss



HILL, Anthony

Captain Cook's Apprentice

Penguin, 2008 264pp ISBN 9780143004820

This book won the 2009 NSW Premier's Young People's History prize. The judges said it offered young readers "great insights into a seminal event in Australian and world history ... a compelling adventure rich in historical detail."

What better way to learn about history than to enjoy reading a novel which brings it alive and makes it relevant to young people today? Isaac Manley is just thirteen when he heads up the River Thames to the naval dockyard at Deptford, England, where HMB Endeavour is berthed. He could never have imagined what lay ahead of him as he boarded Cook's ship to work as servant to the Master, Mr Molineux, and afterwards continue to forge a well-respected career in the Royal Navy.

As we are told from the outset, on the book's cover : "During the course of the three-year journey, Isaac's eyes are opened to all the brutal realities of life at sea – floggings, storms, press-gangs, the deaths of fellow crewmen, and violent clashes on distant shores. Yet Isaac also experiences the tropical beauty of Tahiti..., the wonders of New Zealand,...and anchoring in Botany Bay."

This story is a recreation, as it may have been seen through the eager eyes of a young, inexperienced cabin boy. The sequence of events, and the opinions of Cook, Banks and others have, however been based closely on their journals.

Detailed Teacher and Chapter Notes are available at www.anthonhillbooks.com

Recommended for ages 12 and over.

Other Reviews :

<http://www.penguin.com.au/products/9780143004820/captain-cook-s-apprentice>

<http://www.kids-bookreview.com/2010/02/review-captain-cooks-apprentice.html>

<http://reviews.media-culture.org.au/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=2976>

Author biography :

Anthony Hill was born in Melbourne on 24 May, 1942. In a varied career he has been a newspaper and television reporter, political journalist, antique dealer, speech-writer for Australia's Governor-General, and is now a full-time author. He lives in Canberra with his wife Gillian, their dog Lady, and a cat called Onto. Anthony's other books include *Soldier Boy*, *Young Digger* and *Animal Heroes*.

(<http://www.anthonhillbooks.com/aboutanthony.html>)

Rationale:

The *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: English*, proposed that F-10 curriculum in English be organised around three interrelated strands:

- *Language*: The Language strand involves the development of a coherent, dynamic and evolving body of knowledge about the English language and how it works.
- *Literature*: Students learn to interpret, appreciate, evaluate and create literary texts such as narrative, poetry, prose, plays, film and multimodal texts, in spoken, print and digital/online contexts.
- *Literacy*: Students apply their English skills and knowledge to read, view, speak, listen to, write and create a growing repertoire of texts.

(National Curriculum Board *Shape of the Australian Curriculum : English* May 2009)

This 'literature package' aims to provide teachers with activities to support an in-depth study of the novel which can be adapted across (NSW) stages 3, 4 and 5 (Years 5 – 10) to suit students of varying ability levels. There are similar links in the syllabi of other states, including English in all states, and SOSE in Queensland, S&E in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia, S&H in Tasmania.

Aims:

Students will :

- Understand the historical setting of the novel
- Enjoy the narrative from the perspective of someone around their own age
- Meet a range of characters
- Follow an itinerary based on the real ship's log and diary entries
- Gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of life on board HMB Endeavour 1768 – 1771
- Have the opportunity to develop further language, literature and literacy skills through a range of activities
- Appreciate the genre of historical fiction

Content and activities:

Depending on the desired perspective, the abilities and composition of the class, and the time available, teachers may choose to engage with one small part of the book, a separate section or perspective from the book, or the book as a whole. The following stimulus ideas are intended to serve as a guide only.

A variety of teaching and learning strategies should be used to assist students to reflect on their own learning. Activities should address a range of learning styles and preferences, and challenge students of all abilities.

- Use sentence starters or quotes for students to continue, either verbally or in writing
- Make a class 'museum exhibition' of Endeavour-related artworks, models and photographs of interesting items from the trip and ask students to write captions and text panels for the exhibits
- Students make up recipes using ingredients mentioned in the book. Model the ship's biscuit as the example
- Write a procedure for one of the chores on board an 18th century tall ship
- Write a book review or make a book web trailer – provide a scaffold (see resources)
- Write a new diary entry / ending/ account of a particular incident from a different character's perspective, or a fictional account eg from the perspective of the figurehead
- Write a news report or conduct an oral interview about one of the events in the book eg Taiata being kidnapped (p124)
- Make a class glossary of different words and nautical terms in the book
- Write letters or emails to different characters asking them questions, possibly from the perspective of 'if they were alive today ...'
- Write / speak a 'chain story' using objects as motivators (moving around a circle, one sentence each), or pick a word from a bag and make up an ongoing story (one or two sentences each)
- Write poems in different styles eg limericks, haiku, mnemonics
- Who/What am I? Ask questions to find out who they are (hat on head, sign on back)
- Make a comic strip / graphic novel version using speech bubbles
- Make a computer game, animation, board game or fact cards
- Select a history topic relevant to the time of the novel (maybe from a brainstorm list).

Research the topic, looking for factual details to include in their stories (names, places, and events). Create a Story Map to develop the details of their story. Work individually, in pairs or as a team to write the story in whatever format they want (eg. diary, verse, narrative). When the stories are finished display them in your classroom by placing them in order along an historical timeline.

- *Storytelling* to recount of the story to different audiences eg small children, adults around a campfire, delegates to a university conference
- *Performance of vignettes* eg different role plays and interaction segments between the range of characters, which may include costuming and fashion of the era
- *Group and individual research activities* to hone in on particular aspects of the historical content eg European exploration, the impact on indigenous peoples, the benefits to science of activities such as recording new species of flora and fauna, observing the transit of Venus

Some interesting quotes for discussion from *Captain Cook's Apprentice* :

“Isaac stood at the masthead and felt the power of the ship flowing beneath him. Wind glanced off the streaming sea, stinging his face and stretching the canvas like a bow. Nowhere, in that silver expanse arching to the horizon where sky and water met, could Isaac see another thing ...” (p51)

How effective is this passage in evoking the feeling of sailing on the open sea? Do you think the author's own voyage on the HMB *Endeavour* replica equipped him to better share the adventures portrayed in the novel?

“As the days went by, they were all grateful for the Tahitians' presence. Tupaia especially, through his status and knowledge, pacified many a threatening situation...” (p.126)

“He wondered how they'd respond to strangers? But the men neither paddled out to welcome them as at Tahiti, nor to attack as the Maori had done. They just looked on with curiosity.....Isaac Manley, watching from the stern sheets, could only admire the cool bravery of these men in confronting three boatloads of strangers who must have appeared totally alien....”(pp 158 - 160)

How important were relations with the local native populations in the voyages of discovery undertaken around this time? How could Cook have better related to the Indigenous Peoples at Botany Bay?

“Tensions turned into anger. Not only had these *Wangarr* taken turtles from Guugu Yimithirr waters without permission, they were defying the laws of hospitality and the sharing code. Very well! *Bama* could do the same. They seized any loose deck gear ... and only with difficulty were stopped from throwing them overboard...” (p.193)

‘In such conflicts between cultures, meanings are often lost and only actions signify.’ (p.192) What are some examples of this continuing to happen in the world today? Are there any solutions?

“Whenever Isaac told the story in after years, he always said, ‘We did try. I *know* we did.’ Whether the blame for what was to happen lay at Princes Island, or with foul water taken aboard from the sewers of Batavia, no one ever knew. Yet Isaac's heart broke anew with the thought of it.” (p 222)

Cook enjoyed considerable success in his battle against scurvy, but there were still over 30 deaths on the voyage, many from malaria and dysentery. What medical advances have been made since then? Why is malaria still so prevalent?

“When Endeavour returned, it was Mr Banks who got most of the popular attention.....In the public mind Cook was at first rather ignored – though not by his mentors at the Admiralty, who knew where responsibility for success really lay...” (p.249)

Can you think of some other examples in history, and modern times, where this has also been the case? How should ‘success’ be measured, and how and why does it change with time? How are Cook and Banks thought of today?

Technology :

Include one or more of the following components to satisfy requirements for the integration of technology into the unit :

Make a book trailer – see example in Resources below

Make a vodcast or podcast of an interview with other students about their opinions of the book

Create a simple computer game or animation related to the story

Word process various styles of writing

Format text in a variety of styles

Experiment with design and layout options

Create PowerPoint presentations

Evaluate a range of multimedia texts eg websites or CD Roms

Conduct an online interactive session or email conversations with the author

Resources:

<http://www.anthonhillbooks.com/captaincooksapprenticemain.html>

Includes very comprehensive chapter notes and teacher notes

http://www.macquariepenanthology.com.au/files/unit_3.pdf

Macquariepen anthology of Australian Literature. Teaching Guide. Unit 3 : Aboriginal Perspectives for lower to middle secondary English

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ligoJcwF9BY> an example of a book trailer, 1.16 minutes

<http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks05/0501141h.html> The Endeavour Journal of Sir Joseph Banks



Evaluation :

Assessment could be through a series of informal activities and observations, plus a formal assessment task which outlines the outcomes, task requirements, assessment criteria and marking guidelines. This may be a piece of creative writing, the presentation of some research, a response to a given question or a group activity.

We want to hear from you!

Let us know how the book and activities worked with your students.

Encourage your students to write and send in their own book reviews to us.

Maybe you have formed your own book club or literary discussion group. We want to hear about it!

We welcome any discussion or constructive feedback. Email education@anmm.gov.au