

## Teacher's Guide *Kaleidoscope Eyes*

by Jen Bryant, Alfred A. Knopf Books for Young Readers, May 2009  
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### Themes:

- ◆ Family Relationships
- ◆ Friendship
- ◆ Making Decisions / Ethics
- ◆ Trust
- ◆ Second Chances

### Connecting to the Curriculum:

- ◆ History
  - ▶ Vietnam War
  - ▶ Pirates and Captain Kidd
- ◆ Social Studies
  - ▶ Challenging Stereotypes
- ◆ Science
  - ▶ Reading Maps
  - ▶ Archeology
  - ▶ Rivers Over Time
- ◆ Language Arts
  - ▶ Poetry
  - ▶ Word Pictures
  - ▶ Describing Characters
  - ▶ Symbolism
  - ▶ The Kaleidoscope

### About the Book

When do you know it is okay to trust someone? Why do people you care about have to leave? When are things not what they seem? Buried treasure, the Vietnam War, friendship, and discrimination are just some of the interwoven themes in this remarkable novel by poet Jen Bryant.



It's 1968 and Lyza discovers her grandfather has left her a mystery to solve. She soon discovers, with the help of her two best friends Malcolm and Carolann, that the maps are clues to pirate Captain Kidd's treasure in the middle of town. Now it's up to three kids to find it, and along the way they discover more than just a buried trunk.

*Kaleidoscope Eyes* follows their secret search and the unexpected outcomes its discovery brings. This tale inspired by a true story, this Junior Library Guild selection is a wonderful tool for discussion in any upper elementary classroom or family.

### About the Author

Poet and author **Jen Bryant** writes biographies, nonfiction, poetry, contemporary and historical fiction. Her recent novels include *Ringside 1925: Views from the Scopes Trial* (Oprah's Recommended List; NCTE Notable) *Pieces of Georgia* (IRA Young Adult Choices; VOYA Top Shelf for Middle Grades), *The Trial* (Jr. Library Guild Selection), and *A River of Words: The Story of William Carlos Williams* (Caldecott Honor book; NY Times Top Ten Illustrated; IRA Choices Award; NCTE Notable), illustrated by Melissa Sweet.

A former teacher and a lover of research, Jen Bryant has a passion for taking subjects that have been written about for adults and finding the way to appeal to younger readers. In addition to *Kaleidoscope Eyes*, she celebrated the release of her picture book *Abe's Fish: A Boyhood Tale of Abraham Lincoln* in 2009.

### Pre-Reading Questions: Things to think about before you read the book

- ◆ Is it ever okay to keep a secret? If so, when?
- ◆ What is a pirate? Do we still have them today? Are they the same as the ones we read about in books or see in movies?
- ◆ What is a treasure? Have you or your family ever owned a treasure?
- ◆ Have you ever judged somebody (thought they were a certain way) and then later discovered you were wrong?

### Thematic Connections

#### Family Relationships

When Lyza's mom left, the family had to adjust ... "Dad started to teach at night, we almost never saw him. Denise tore up her college applications [and] got hired as a waitress." ("June 1, 1966" - pg. 5)

The Vietnam War tore up Malcolm's family when Dixon was drafted and had to go off to war. ("Dixon," pgs. 59-62)

Lyza's grandpa was a good friend to her, but her father wanted nothing to do with him, thinking he was a crazy old man ("Gramps," pgs. 24-27).

### **CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE FAMILY?**

Read "Beaches, Peaches, Cars," pgs. 17-18, then discuss the following questions:

- ◆ What does it mean to be a family? Are families always related by blood? Do families always live in the same house?
- ◆ We often use the expression "we're just like family." What does that mean?
- ◆ Discuss the various forms a family can take: friends, people working together on a project, a community as well as the traditional and non-traditional definitions of "blood" family.
- ◆ How does the balance change if one person leaves?

### **Friendship**

There are many examples of friendship in this book.

- ◆ Liza relies on her two best friends, Malcolm and Carolann ("Never Too Old for Show and Tell," pgs. 55-56), to be there for her when she needs them, and to keep her secret.
- ◆ Denise, although she drives her sister crazy, is there when needed (for example, when she smooths over the awkward situation at the diner with Malcolm and the owner—"August 25, 1968," pgs. 153-157)
- ◆ Malcolm's aunt ("Judgment Day," pgs. 231-233) stands up for the kids, making their case to the church board.

### **CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: THE MEANING OF FRIENDSHIP**

Read "Good Advice," pgs. 53-55, and discuss the following questions:

- ◆ What are the challenges of being a friend?
- ◆ When is it difficult?
- ◆ Does being a friend mean sometimes doing something your "friend" doesn't like?
- ◆ How do we choose our friends?
- ◆ What are examples of strong friendships in other books, movies, or TV programs? Make a master list. What makes these friendships strong? Are any of them unhealthy friendships?
- ◆ Is it important that both friends give something back to the other person?

## *Making Decisions/Ethics*

Lyza faces a number of situations where she must decide what's right and what's wrong.

- ◆ Should she look for the treasure her Grandpa thought was there?
- ◆ Should she tell someone when she finds it?
- ◆ Should she keep it or share it?

### **CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: DECISIONS (ALL AGES)**

1. In small groups, brainstorm lists of decisions that students make every day (such as what to wear, what to eat for lunch, etc.) Then have them make another list of larger, long-term decisions (what sports or activities to participate in, what courses to take, whom to be friends with, etc.)
2. Compile the lists. As a class, discuss different strategies for making these decisions: are they the same strategies or different ones? What criteria do students believe should be used to make these decisions?
3. Is it possible to learn the "art" of decision-making? How do you know that you've made a "good" decision? Does this vary from person to person? Why or why not?
4. Have you ever been torn between two important choices? How did you make that choice? Looking back, was it the best choice for you? Write about this experience.
5. Are there times when other peoples' advice and opinions are helpful in making decisions? Identify some instances when it could be helpful to ask for help in making an important decision.

For further information about ethics and making decisions:

- ◆ *103 Questions Children Ask about Right from Wrong (Questions Children Ask)*, James C. Galvin, edited by David R. Veerman, Tyndale Kids, 1995.
- ◆ *If You Had to Choose, What Would You Do?* Sandra McLeod Humphrey. Prometheus Books, 1995.

## *Trust*

Trust means "the person or thing in which confidence is placed," (*American Heritage Dictionary*). Lyza had to trust her friends. She had to put her pre-conceived notions about Harry aside and trust him. Lyza's grandfather trusted her with his maps and his secret, confident that she would continue the job that he started. Captain Kidd trusted that his treasure would be safe until he could return to collect it.

### **CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: THE TRUST GAME**

1. Set up a simple obstacle course. Include things to go around, over, and under.
2. Have your students pair up, two and two.
3. Blindfold one student in each pair and have the other student lead them through an obstacle course.
4. Trade places so the other student in each pair can be the one blindfolded.
5. Discuss the experience as a class. Did you trust your partner? Why or why not? If you didn't trust them, what could have been different so that you would have?
6. Can you draw parallels from this experience to daily life?

### ***Second Chances***

Lyza thinks Harry is a lazy, no-good guy – but when she decides to give him a second chance, she discovers that he is kind, helpful, and smart. Lyza can't understand why they can't replace all the broken stuff around the house or why her father is always working – then she discovers that when her mother left, she also left a lot of unpaid bills. (“Reunited,” pgs. 176-178)

### **CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: GIVING SOMETHING OR SOMEONE ANOTHER CHANCE**

1. Think of a time you were mistaken about someone (i. e. you misjudged their character or abilities.) Take 10-15 minutes and write about that experience.
2. Now imagine you ARE the person you misjudged. Write about that same experience from their point of view.
3. The verb “to trust” includes the idea of confidence, reliability and dependence. Write an essay in which you describe how you make decisions about whom to trust. Include at least three qualities in a person that are most important to you.

### ***Connecting to the Curriculum***

#### **History**

##### **THE VIETNAM WAR**

The Vietnam War is a highly controversial subject with many for and more against it. The following website [www.surfnetkids.com/vietnam.htm](http://www.surfnetkids.com/vietnam.htm) has many links to Vietnam War websites appropriate for kids.

Read the poem “1968” (pgs. 15-17) and discuss what it means as a class. How much do your students know about the Vietnam War? Do they know anyone who served in it? Have they ever heard family stories?

## A CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: WRITING LETTERS TO SOLDIERS

Malcolm's brother, Dixon, is drafted and his family and friends only hear about his experiences through letters. Write a letter to a soldier serving in the United States military today.

The following websites will help get you started.

- ◆ [www.anysoldier.com](http://www.anysoldier.com) (*website to find soldiers to write to*)
- ◆ [www.carepackageproject.com/letters.asp](http://www.carepackageproject.com/letters.asp) (*site sponsored by the U.S. Marine Corps*)
- ◆ [www.education-world.com/a\\_tsl/archives/00-2/lesson0030.shtml](http://www.education-world.com/a_tsl/archives/00-2/lesson0030.shtml) (*lesson plan from Education World on writing to soldiers overseas*)
- ◆ [www.forgottensoldiers.org/write-soldier.shtml](http://www.forgottensoldiers.org/write-soldier.shtml) (*writing an online letter*)

## PIRATES AND CAPTAIN KIDD

We read about them in adventure stories and watch them in movies. Their stories seem so “romantic” and full of adventure. Famous pirates like Captain Kidd, Captain Hook, Long John Silver, and Blackbeard are portrayed as evil villains waiting for the underdog to overpower them. Pirates are often murderers and thieves. Today they capture ships and hold captives for ransom.

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: PIRATES—FACT OR FICTION? (ALL AGES)

1. What famous pirates can you think of? Brainstorm and make a list (i.e., Captain Hook, Robin Hood, Captain Jack Sparrow). How did you learn about these pirates?
2. Find several non-fiction books and/or reliable websites (i.e. NPR, Smithsonian, *National Geographic*, Library of Congress, etc.) and read about the real, everyday lives of pirates in the 17th and 18th centuries. List details about their food, health, social lives, skills, ethnicity, economic status, age, and behaviors.
3. Write an essay, make a webpage or bulletin board that shows the difference between “fact” and “fiction” in the lives of historical pirates.
4. Go to the following and read about modern day pirates:

[abcnews.go.com/International/story?id=1300344](http://abcnews.go.com/International/story?id=1300344)

[www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/04/10/rise-of-modern-day-pirate\\_n\\_185606.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/04/10/rise-of-modern-day-pirate_n_185606.html)

The term “romanticized,” means to have an idealistic view of history, one that highlights the adventure and the good things that happened, while ignoring some of the more violent and unpleasant aspects. Discuss the difference between modern-day pirates and those we read about or see in movies.

For more on Captain Kidd: [www.captainkidd.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk](http://www.captainkidd.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk) (*site includes maps, photos, and historical documents*)

## Social Studies

### CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES AND PREJUDICE

Malcolm and Harry are unique individuals who are nonetheless negatively labeled by others in the story because of stereotypes and prejudice. For example, because Malcolm is black and this is 1968, he isn't allowed into certain white-owned stores and restaurants. Harry has long hair, doesn't have a job, and isn't serving in the Vietnam War, so others assume he must be lazy, irresponsible and self-indulgent.

Malcolm discovers, however, that not everyone is blindsided by the color of his skin ("Research," pgs. 74-76). Lyza discovers that Harry is color-blind (so he can't be drafted), and has a kind and generous heart ("Unexpected," pgs. 139-141)

Even Lyza's annoying older sister, Denise, turns out to be a friend ("August 25, 1969," pgs. 153-157).

### CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: IDENTITY & DIVERSITY (ALL AGES)

1. Discovering one's identity is an important aspect of growing up and defining yourself as an individual. What are some of the ways in which you discover and express your identity?
2. Write a self-description, based on the following aspects of identity: gender, ethnic group/culture, religion or belief system, age, citizenship (local, state, regional, national). How important are each of these to your own sense of identity? Are some more important than others? Why?
3. Make a list of several of the sub-groups in your school (i.e. those groups who are identified by their sports teams, hobbies or interests, intellectual abilities, sexual orientation, political affiliation, etc.) How do these groups self-identify (appearance, language, behaviors) and how are they identified by others outside the group? What are some of the beliefs and assumptions about each group? How well is each group tolerated by the others?
4. Diversity is defined as a range or mixture of types. Considering the list you made above, discuss the advantages and challenges of a diverse population in your school and in your community. How can people who have different life experiences and different beliefs learn to get along? What are some of the barriers to understanding others who are not like you?

## Science

### READING MAPS

Cartography, or mapmaking, is a science that has been around for over 8,000 years. The first known map is a wall painting of the ancient Turkish city of Çatal Hüyük. The invention of the magnetic compass, the sextant, and the telescope made it possible for maps to become more accurate.

Read "Maps," pgs. 38-40

### **CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: MAPS, COMMUNITIES, HISTORY**

1. The U.S. Geological Society provides a wealth of information and hands-on activities for through which students can learn about the history and current use of maps. Go to: <http://egsc.usgs.gov/isb/pubs/teachers-packets/exploringmaps/> to read the introduction and suggested activities. Choose one activity to do as a class, one activity to be accomplished in small groups, and one activity to be done individually.
2. Have you ever wondered how your community got started? How it has changed over time? Find the nearest town, county or regional historical society. Arrange to visit there and, if possible, take a tour of any archives or exhibits which show the history of your community. Write a summary of your visit and include at least six things you learned.
3. With your class, plan an exhibit, bulletin board, or web page in which you compare and contrast various aspects of your community as they were in a certain year (1945, 1960, etc.) or during a certain decade (the 1930's for example) with the way they are now. Use maps, photos, letters, newspaper articles, etc. Be sure you have permission to use or copy any original or privately owned materials.

### **RIVERS OVER TIME**

Rivers change their course because of erosion, the gradual removal of rock material from riverbanks and beds, and the deposit of sediment.

Are there rivers, oceans, or lakes in your region? Have your students find historical maps of your region in your school or public library, at a historical society, or at a museum and study how the course of a river or lake have changed over 100 or 200 years.

### **CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: STUDYING THE COURSE OF A RIVER**

The following three websites are full of ideas for studying the course of a river.

- ◆ [www.bbc.co.uk/schools/riversandcoasts](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/riversandcoasts) (BBC lesson plans and information about rivers)
- ◆ [158.64.118.6/wr/user/library/English/Gr3rivers/Rivers.htm](http://158.64.118.6/wr/user/library/English/Gr3rivers/Rivers.htm) (full of links, teaching resources and activities about rivers including reprintable maps)
- ◆ [www.iptv.org/mississippi/landmarksandlegends/about.html](http://www.iptv.org/mississippi/landmarksandlegends/about.html) (activities and information about the Mississippi River produced by Iowa Public Television)

## *Language Arts*

### **Poetry**

This book is written in free verse. Look through the poems (chapters) and try to figure out how many different ways Jen Bryant used poetry.

### CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: WRITING POETRY

1. Select one of the forms and write a poem about an ordinary event in the day. For more advanced students, write a series of poems (either in the same style or different styles) that, when put together, tell a short story.
2. Divide the class into groups and have them select one poem or chapter from the book that they will present. Give them time to prepare how they will present their poem from the book to the rest of the class (for example: they can act it out, each read a line, divide the lines up to emphasize particular meaning, write a reader's theater script).

### Word Pictures Becoming Verse

This book is full of images that paint pictures using words. Instead of writing "waking up," Bryant says Lyza is "returning from sleep." Instead of bruises, Bryant writes, "almost-seven-dollar wounds" (pg. 101).

#### MORE EXAMPLES:

- ◆ "Our family began to unravel like a tightly wound ball of string that some invisible tomcat took to pawing and flicking across the floor." (pg. 5)
- ◆ "The rain is coming down hard and fast, like a Jimi Hendrix guitar riff" (pg. 130)
- ◆ "the collection notices spread across the desk, which now seem like maps to our family's self-destruction."

### CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: DESCRIBING OBJECTS

1. Begin by choosing an ordinary object in the room. Have every student say a phrase that would describe that object.
2. Next, write down a list of ordinary objects in the classroom or the students' homes. Add something those objects do, then write an analogy or allusion that will help a reader create a picture in their mind or use their senses to understand the object more fully (glass, you drink out of a glass, "The glass is as full as the Mississippi after the snow melts.") (alarm clock, it wakes you up, "my alarm clock wakes me up like soldiers marching on my face").
3. Now create a four-line poem that could be used in a verse novel, breaking the lines in a way that focuses attention on the images in those four lines:

My alarm clock  
wakes me up  
like soldiers marching  
on my face.

**Describing Characters.** There are many ways to describe a character without creating a laundry list of adjectives (i.e., the boy was tall, with brown hair, a blue shirt and a loud voice). Here are some examples from this book:

- ◆ Janis Joplin ... “mouth open in a scream around the microphone, arms raised, hair frizzed out wildly. An anguished, contorted look on her face—” (pg. 3)
- ◆ If he were a bird, he’d be one of those great blue herons ... (pg. 12)
- ◆ Dixon Dupree ... “is the kind of brother every kid should have ...” (pg. 60)

#### **CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: DESCRIBING OTHERS**

1. Discuss the various ways Jen Bryant has introduced characters in this book.
2. Divide students into groups of two. Have them write down descriptions of each other.
3. Next have them create new descriptions that tell more of a story, the way the author of *Kaleidoscope Eyes* does.
4. Share with the class.

**Symbolism:** There is a lot of symbolism in this book. Have your students think about how one aspect of *Kaleidoscope Eyes* symbolizes (represents, foreshadows, parallels) another aspect.

- ◆ The Vietnam War and the fear of soldiers leaving and never coming back parallels the departure of Lyza and Denise’s mother (“... like the blades of choppers,” pg. 8).
- ◆ Harry’s being colorblind is also reflected in Lyza’s friendships (one best friend is black, one is white).

#### **CLASSROOM ACTIVITY – SYMBOLS IN EVERYDAY LIFE**

1. Make a list of visual symbols (a thing that represents something else) that you see almost every day. These might include symbols or parallels for peace, friendship, family, danger, happiness, religion, culture, etc. Discuss how color, shape, size, texture can be combined to create a certain mood or message.
2. Design a symbol that represents your family, class, school or community. Write a short essay explaining why you feel it is an appropriate symbol.

#### **The Kaleidoscope**

The Kaleidoscope is a symbol of hope and the belief that things can change into something beautiful. It symbolizes several aspects of the story, including having friends from different cultures.

Read the poem “Kaleidoscope Eyes” on pg. 9. How does the kaleidoscope represent events in the book? How does looking through it help Lyza make decisions or see things more clearly?

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: MAKING A KALEIDOSCOPE

The kaleidoscope was invented and patented by David Brewster in 1816. The first one to appear in the United States was reported in 1870. The kaleidoscope signifies the fragments that come together to form a whole, perhaps indicating a diversity of something, such as experience, or piecing together the parts of a symbolic puzzle.

Making a kaleidoscope can be as difficult or as easy as you wish. Included here are instructions to web links for both.

- ◆ Easy: [www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/Files/film.htm](http://www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/Files/film.htm) (step-by-step instructions from Princeton Online using a film canister and mirrored Mylar as well as links to other lesson plans using kaleidoscopes)
- ◆ More Advanced: [www.kaleidoscopesusa.com/makeAscope.htm](http://www.kaleidoscopesusa.com/makeAscope.htm) or [www.optics.arizona.edu/academics/kaleidoscopehowtomakeakaleidoscope.htm](http://www.optics.arizona.edu/academics/kaleidoscopehowtomakeakaleidoscope.htm) (step-by-step guidelines using mirrors and PVC pipe, prepared by the University of Arizona)

## Beyond The Book

### INTERNET RESOURCES

[www.kaleidoscopesusa.com](http://www.kaleidoscopesusa.com) includes a wide variety of kaleidoscopes available for purchase, a brief explanation of how they work and directions to make one

[www.nationalgeographic.com/pirates](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/pirates) National Geographic site on pirates

[www.videojug.com/film/how-to-make-a-kaleidoscope](http://www.videojug.com/film/how-to-make-a-kaleidoscope) a very silly video but it gives step-by-step instructions on making a kaleidoscope

### OTHER TITLES OF INTEREST: MAGAZINES

*Archaeology's Dig*, a magazine for kids! (Archaeological Institute of America, [www.digonsite.com](http://www.digonsite.com))

*Dig (the archeology magazine for kids)*, Cobblestone Publishing, [www.cobblestonepub.com](http://www.cobblestonepub.com)

### OTHER TITLES OF INTEREST: BOOKS

*10,000 Days of Thunder: A History of the Vietnam War*, Philip Caputo, S&S/Atheneum, 2005.

*Archaeology for Kids: Uncovering the Mysteries of Our Past, 25 Activities* (For Kids series), Richard Panchyk, Chicago Review Press, 2001.

*Buried Blueprints: Maps and Sketches of Lost Worlds and Mysterious Places*, Albert Lorenz and Joy Schleh, Abrams, 1999.

*Captain Kidd (Pirates!)*, Sue Hamilton, Abdo & Daughters, 2007.

*Lost Treasures of the Pirates of the Caribbean*, James Owen, Jeremy Owen, Simon & Schuster, 2007. (nonfiction)

*Mapmaking with Children: Sense of Place Education for the Elementary Years*, David Sobel, Heinemann, 1998.

- Patrol: an American Soldier in Vietnam*, Walter Dean Myers, illus. by Ann Grifalconi, HarperCollins, 2002.
- People Writing Down the Days: 365 Creative Journaling Ideas for Young People* by Lorraine M. Dahlstrom, Free Spirit Publishing, 2000.
- Peter and the Starcatchers*, Dave Barry and Ridley Pearson, Hyperion Books for Children, 2004.
- Pirates*, David L. Harrison, illus. by Dan Burr, Wordsong, 2008.
- River Wild: an Activity Guide to North American Rivers*, Nancy Castaldo, Chicago Review Press, 2006.
- Stop This War: American Protest of the Conflict in Vietnam*, Margo Fortunato Galt, Lerner Books, 2000.
- Treasure Island*, Robert Louis Stevenson, retold by Wim Coleman and Pat Perrin, illustrated by Greg Rebis, Stone Arch Books, 2007.
- Triskellion*, Will Peterson, Candlewick, 2009.