



# Young Man and the Sea

by Rodman Philbrick

## Teacher's Guide

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## Synopsis

### Chapter 1

Twelve-year-old Skiff (Samuel) Beaman, Jr. has lost his mother. Since her death, his father ("Big Skiff"), once a hardworking fisherman respected for his skill with a harpoon, has sunken into a deep, beer-soaked despair. On the last day of school, Skiff sees that the *Mary Rose*, the family boat, has sunk. Tyler Croft, a bullying rich kid, mocks Skiff for his poverty.

### Chapter 2

The Beamans are "swampers," the local term for white trash. His late mother was a Spinney, far more upper-class. Skiff visits Mr. Woodwell, a 94-year-old boatmaker, to ask him for help raising the *Mary Rose*.

### Chapter 3

Mr. Woodwell shows Skiff how to raise the boat relatively easily. Skiff plans to raise the boat, fix the leak and engine, and fish to raise money to support the family. The first part of the plan works when Skiff is able to get the boat out of the water.

### Chapter 4

Since his father is too drunk and depressed to help, Skiff asks Mr. Woodwell for more assistance. The elderly man says that Big Skiff was a superb boatman and fisherman before his wife died and he sunk into alcoholism.

### Chapter 5

Skiff's father is initially pleased about the boat plan, but his enthusiasm does not last. Skiff hopes that the repaired boat will inspire his father to quit drinking and turn over a new leaf.

### Chapter 6

Skiff offers all his money, \$28, to Mr. Woodwell to pay for the lumber he needs to patch the boat. The elderly man refuses to accept the money, gives the boy a glass of homemade lemonade, and teaches him how to repair the boat. Mr. Woodwell also shows Skiff a beautiful harpoon that Big Skiff made for him as a thank-you gift when he stopped working at the shop and went out on his own.

### Chapter 7

Captain Keelson comes to visit with Mr. Woodwell and teaches Skiff how to caulk his boat. Skiff wishes for more luck as he continues his repairs.

### Chapter 8

Skiff asks Mike Haley, the diesel mechanic, to fix the engine. Mike says that it can be done, but will cost a fortune: at least \$5,000. Mike offers to tell Big Skiff himself. Skiff realizes that his father won't be interested.

### Chapter 9

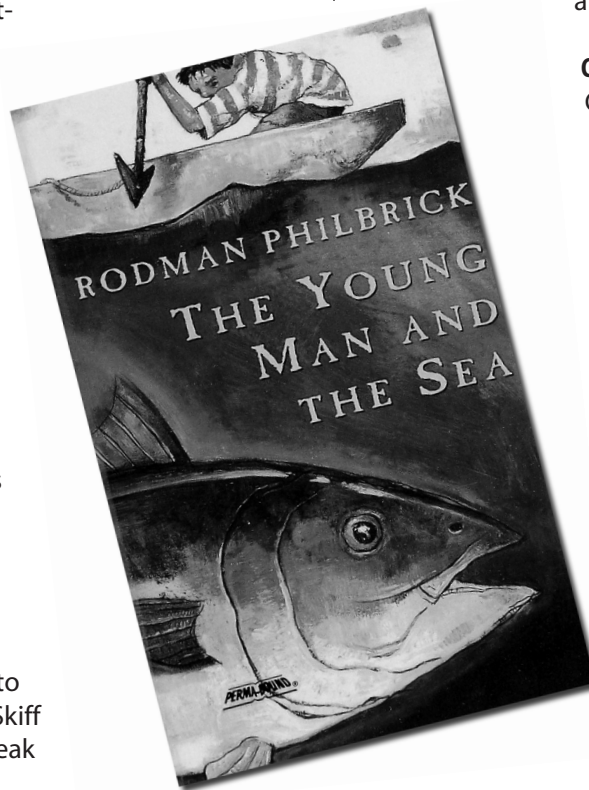
Skiff forms a new plan: he decides to set lobster traps from his little plywood skiff. He calculates how many lobsters he has to catch to pay for the engine rebuild. Skiff goes to Devlin Murphy to buy bait. Devlin kindly agrees to set up an account for Skiff so he does not have to pay any money up front. Skiff's father always had an account.

### Chapter 10

Lobster fishing goes very well for the first two weeks. Big Skiff thinks that his son has bitten off more than he can chew with 200 lobster traps. The work is brutally hard, but Skiff does not give up.

### Chapter 11

Skiff's traps have been cut; his lobsters are gone. Skiff realizes that it is up to him to save himself and what remains of his business.



## Chapter 12

Skiff catches Tyler cutting his traps, and they argue.

## Chapter 13

Skiff again asks his father for help, but again his father will not do anything. Skiff decides that he hates his father almost as much as he hates Tyler. Skiff goes to Mr. Woodwell's home, and finds the old man talking to Captain Keelson. They are shocked at what Tyler is doing, but they are helpless to intercede. They realize that if anything is to be done, Big Skiff must do it because there have long been hard feelings between Big Skiff and Mr. Croft.

## Chapter 14

Skiff wonders why Tyler hates him so much since the two boys have never had an open argument. Further, in the past, Big Skiff and Mr. Croft had been friends. Things seem entirely hopeless until Skiff sees a giant tuna hauled in from offshore and sold for a large sum as a source for premium sushi.

## Chapter 15

The fish literally and symbolically embodies all of Skiff's ambitions for a better life. He decides to try to catch a huge tuna using just a 10-foot plywood boat and his father's harpoon, the one that Big Skiff had given to Mr. Woodwell.

## Chapter 16

Skiff takes the harpoon from Mr. Woodwell's shop. He sets off on the ocean to catch the fish.

## Chapter 17

Skiff recalls his mother's three rules: think smart, speak true, and never give up. He has a dialogue with himself in which he imagines that he is arguing with his mother over his plan to catch the giant tuna. Suddenly, the motor dies. Skiff realizes that without a motor, he is in serious trouble.

## Chapter 18

Skiff refills the gas tank, continues a conversation with his dead mother, and sings to relieve the loneliness and fear. Then the fog sets in.

## Chapter 19

Trapped in the fog, Skiff fishes. He soon runs out of bait and realizes that he was foolish to bring only one bucket of bait with him. Then he hears a big splash.

## Chapter 20

The fish is a giant bluefin tuna! Skiff tries over and over to harpoon it. He hears a foghorn coming his way.

## Chapter 21

The ship passes him by and the wake rocks the boat. Skiff lies on the bottom of the boat, feeling sorry for himself and eating a sandwich. Then he sees the huge tuna again. He manages to harpoon it, but the fish pulls him into the water.

## Chapter 22

Skiff nearly drowns, but at the last possible moment, he surfaces. He is holding onto a keg and not wearing his life jacket. He flashes back to the day that his mother died. With great effort, Skiff manages to get back into the boat.

## Chapter 23

He puts on his life jacket, mourning the loss of the harpoon and the fish. Suddenly, he realizes that the fish is still on the line! The fish pulls him along for a long time. Finally, the fight goes out of the fish and Skiff manages to loop his tail and secure him next to the boat. Now he has to find a way to get the tuna back to shore.

## Chapter 24

Skiff tries to start the motor, but it is out of gas. As a result, Skiff has to row 20 miles with a huge dead fish on a line attached to the boat. He starts to row, and soon his hands are bleeding. He is also very hungry, but he thinks he is out of food, until he finds one last sandwich. Skiff gulps down the sandwich and lashes his bloody hands to the oars. What keeps him rowing in agony is the promise he made to his mother to take care of his father. He rows and rows and rows. Finally, he sees his father on the *Fin Chaser*, the Crofts' boat.

## Chapter 25

The chapter opens with a news article. It explains that Skiff has caught a 900-pound tuna, a record for that year. Skiff has rowed 25 miles in unusually dense fog. This amazing feat has helped snap Big Skiff out of his depression. Big Skiff vows to attend sobriety meetings. Skiff is amazed that Jack Croft helped Big Skiff search for him. Skiff sells the tuna for a lot of money. He keeps the tail, which his father nails over the door of their old outhouse.

## Timeline of Maine History

<b>11,500 years ago</b>	Paleo Indians settled in Maine.
<b>1000 A.D.</b>	Norse sailors, led by Leif Erikson, arrive in Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. They may have come as far south as Maine.
<b>1524</b>	Giovanni da Verranzano is the first confirmed European to explore the coast of Maine.
<b>1604</b>	Pierre du Guast Sieur de Monts establishes the first recorded European colony in Maine. It is at the mouth of the St. Croix River.
<b>1607</b>	British establish the Fort Popham Colony.
<b>1622</b>	Sir Ferdinando Gorges is given land in Maine. Gorges is the first to call the territory "Maine."
<b>1652</b>	Massachusetts annexes Maine as a frontier territory.
<b>1675</b>	King Phillip's War starts.
<b>1675 - 1763</b>	Continuous conflict between the North American powers.
<b>1775</b>	First naval battle of the Revolutionary War. It occurs off the coast of Maine.  Benedict Arnold marches a band of revolutionaries through Maine in a failed attempt to capture British strongholds in Quebec City and Montreal.
<b>1794</b>	Bowdoin College becomes Maine's first post-secondary institution.
<b>1820</b>	Maine becomes a state.
<b>1839</b>	Governor Fairfield declares war on England over a boundary dispute between New Brunswick and northern Maine. The dispute is settled without bloodshed.
<b>1842</b>	The Webster-Ashburton Treaty settles the Maine/New Brunswick border dispute.
<b>1851</b>	Harriet Beecher Stowe begins writing <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> in Brunswick, Maine.
<b>1860</b>	Maine native Hannibal Hamlin is named Lincoln's vice president.
<b>1866</b>	Fire destroys much of downtown Portland in the area now known as the Old Port.

<b>1888</b>	Maine native Melville W. Fuller becomes the Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.
<b>1931</b>	Governor Percival Baxter begins buying land in Northern Maine to establish a game reserve. Over the course of 30 years, Baxter will purchase over 90,000 acres.
<b>1948</b>	Maine native Margaret Chase Smith is the first woman to be elected to the U.S. Senate.
<b>1968</b>	The University of Maine system is established.
<b>1980</b>	Maine native Senator Edmund Muskie becomes Secretary of State.
<b>1984</b>	Maine native Joan Benoit Samuelson becomes the first gold medal winner in the women's Olympic marathon event at the summer Olympics in Los Angeles, CA.
<b>1988</b>	Maine native George Mitchell is named U.S. Senate Majority Leader.
<b>1997</b>	Maine native Senator William Cohen becomes Secretary of Defense.

## Author Sketch



Rodman Philbrick was born in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1951. When he was twelve years old, Philbrick started writing fiction on his own. He focused on creating short stories in the tradition of O. Henry and Ray Bradbury. Since he hadn't yet learned to keyboard, the young writer sent his pages to a typing service. He then submitted the completed stories to magazines, including *Amazing Stories*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, and *The New Yorker*. Not a one was ever accepted.

By age sixteen, Philbrick had decided to become a professional writer, despite his stack of rejection letters. After graduating from Portsmouth High School, he enrolled in the University of New Hampshire as an English major. He left college in his sophomore year and opened a pub he called The Stone Church. Despite this full-time business venture, he kept on writing.

Eleven years later, Philbrick had produced nine novels, all unpublished. Tired of working odd jobs to support himself— including longshoreman, carpenter, boat-builder, and mold maker – he decided to try his hand at

a suspense novel rather than a literary one. He had found his niche. Philbrick became so successful that in 1993 he won the coveted Shamus Award, presented by the Private Eye Writers of America, for the best paperback detective novel. Besides critical recognition, financially he was able to support himself through his writing.

The publication of *Freak the Mighty* in 1993 catapulted Philbrick to even wider fame. *Freak the Mighty*, a story about two boys with disabilities who become friends the summer before eighth grade, was named an ALA Best Book for Young Adults and an ALA Quick Pick for Reluctant Young Adult Readers. It was also made into a movie called *The Mighty* (1998). Philbrick published a sequel to *Freak the Mighty*, *Max the Mighty*, in 1998.

Philbrick often collaborates with his wife Lynn Harnett, also a professional writer. Their best known series are *The House on Cherry Street*, *The Werewolf Chronicles*, and *The Visitors*. Philbrick and his wife spend the winters in the Florida Keys and the rest of their time in Maine.

## Critic's Corner

Reviews were generally very positive for *The Young Man and the Sea*. For instance, Jeffrey Hastings, reviewing the book for *School Library Journal*, said: "This excellent maritime bildungsroman has all of the makings of a juvenile classic: wide-open adventure, heart-pounding suspense, and just the right amount of tear-jerking pathos, all neatly wrapped up in an ending that—unlike its namesake's—is purely triumphant. A great read-aloud, a natural for classroom use, and a must-have for all collections."

John Peters, writing in *Booklist*, praised the book this way: "In the best survival-story tradition, Skiff's account will leave readers as exhausted as he becomes; battling his quarry and then bringing it in takes every ounce of courage and endurance that he can muster. For seasoning, Philbrick adds a supportive cast of older neighbors and a bully, then demonstrates that the sun also rises by finishing Skiff's ordeal with the boy wrapped in his reformed father's arms. A moveable feast for fans of Gary Paulsen, or nautical adventures in general."

## Other Works by the Author

*Shooting Star* (1982)  
*Slow Dancer* (1984)  
*Shadow Kills* (1985)  
*Ice for the Eskimo* (1986)  
*The Neon Flamingo* (1987)  
*The Crystal Blue Persuasion* (1988)  
*Paint It Black* (1989)  
*Tough Enough* (1989)  
*Pulse* (1990)  
*The Big Chip* (1990)  
*Walk on the Water* (1991)  
*The Seventh Sleeper* (1991)  
*Hunger* (1992)  
*Brothers and Sinners* (1993)  
*Freak the Mighty* (1993)  
*The Final Nightmare: Book III* (1995)  
*The Haunting: Book I* (1995)  
*The Horror: Book II* (1995)  
*Nine Levels Down* (1995)  
*The Fire Pony* (1996)  
*Children of the Wolf* (1996)  
*Night Creature* (1996)  
*The Wering* (1996)  
*Brain Stealers* (1997)  
*Strange Invaders* (1997)  
*Things* (1997)  
*Abduction*, with Lynn Harnett (1998)  
*Max the Mighty* (1998)  
*The Fire Pony* (1999)  
*Dark Matter* (2000)  
*The Journal of Douglas Allen Deeds: The Donner Party Expedition 1846* (2001)  
*Rem World* (2002)  
*My Name is America* (2003)  
*Coffins* (2004)

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[www.seacoastnh.com/artists/philbrick/index.html](http://www.seacoastnh.com/artists/philbrick/index.html)
- Routhier, Ray. "Inner Kid Carries *Freak the Mighty*." Maine Books Online.  
[www.portland.com/books/about/freak.htm](http://www.portland.com/books/about/freak.htm)
- "Tale of a Small Boy Makes It to Big Screen." Maine Books Online,  
[www.portland.com/books/about/mighty.htm](http://www.portland.com/books/about/mighty.htm)

## General Objectives

1. To analyze life on the Maine coast
2. To appreciate the exciting adventure
3. To assess each character's personality
4. To trace the sequence of events
5. To understand deep sea fishing
6. To find examples of hardship
7. To find examples of compassion
8. To evaluate the novel's ending
9. To recognize the significance of setting
10. To describe the author's theme or message

## Specific Objectives

1. To analyze the effects of Mrs. Beaman's death on her husband and son
2. To probe why Big Skiff drinks to excess and neglects his job and son
3. To understand why Skiff takes care of his father
3. To explore the relationship between Big Skiff and Skiff
4. To probe how Mr. Amos Woodwell functions as Skiff's surrogate father
5. To describe the tension between Skiff and Tyler
6. To explore the effects of social class in a small community
7. To appreciate the suspenseful chase scenes
8. To analyze what the huge tuna fish represents, both literally and symbolically
9. To understand why Big Skiff and Mr. Croft set aside their differences to find Skiff when he is lost
10. To explore why Big Skiff once again takes an interest in his son and his own life

## Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of Rodman Philbrick's style, present the following terms and applications to the novel:

**Allusion:** a reference to a well-known place, event, person, work of art, or other work of literature. Allusions enrich a story or poem by suggesting powerful and exciting comparisons. *The Young Man and the Sea* centers on a literary allusion because the entire novel is an allusion to Ernest Hemingway's classic novel, *The Old Man and the Sea*. The old man has been replaced by a twelve-year-old boy, but the elemental struggle of man vs. nature remains the same. The major difference is the ending: Philbrick has revised Hemingway's bitter ending with a happy resolution.

**Flashback:** a scene that breaks into the story to show an earlier part of the action. Flashbacks help fill in missing information, explain the characters' actions, and advance the plot. *The Young Man and the Sea* contains several significant flashbacks. For example, in Chapter 22, Skiff is close to drowning as the huge tuna drags him down. When Skiff finally surfaces on page 164, he thinks back to his mother's death. During this flashback, he relives the day that she died. This scene helps readers understand his grief.

**Dialect:** the way people speak in a certain region or area. In a dialect, certain words are spelled and pronounced differently. Writers use dialects to describe their characters and setting more fully. Philbrick uses select examples of dialect to evoke life in Maine. For instance, in Chapter 2, Skiff explains that his father's family is called "swampers." This is a dialect word for "white trash." It refers to people in the past who lived in shacks near the creek and got by from living off the land.

## The Importance of Setting

*The Young Man and the Sea* is set in the fictional town of Spinney Cove, Maine. Spinney Cove is a small fishing village whose families have roots that go back generations. In this community, nearly everyone has something to do with the ocean. Life revolves around the sea, including sport fishing, commercial fishing, boating, and selling boats and supplies to each other and to visitors. The town is fictional, but the emphasis on the ocean is very much a part of life on Maine's shores. This makes Skiff's obsession with catching a huge tuna very plausible.

# The Young Man and the Sea

Rodman Philbrick

The Maine coast, with its 3,000 islands and 6,000 miles of shoreline, offers excellent fishing ground. For example, situated within the Ogunquit region are several popular fishing sites. Wells Beach has some great shore fishing and is easy to reach. Across the channel, anglers can find equally good shore fishing off the Drakes Island jetty and adjoining beach. The two jetties at the mouth of the Kennebunk River are popular shore fishing sites. The Cape Porpoise Pier is also an active shore fishing site, especially when mackerel are running. Shore fishing can be had at Crescent Beach State Park, Two Lights State Park, and the Portland Head Light, too. These are just a small sampling of the many fishing areas in Maine.

Skiff's adventure with the tuna, though fictional, is also plausible in this setting. Bluefin tuna are built for speed, having an efficient torpedo shaped body coupled with a lunate shaped tail fin. As a result, they may reach speeds of over fifty miles per hour. Bluefin tuna can grow to an enormous size with the largest specimens weighing above 1,500 pounds and measuring close to 12 feet in length. They are found off-shore. Being seasonal migrators, tuna generally appear off Maine's coast by early summer, just when *The Young Man and the Sea* is set. Bluefin tuna as large as 800 pounds have been caught off Maine's coast.

## Cross-Curricular Sources

### Books

Mary Bartek, *Funerals and Fly Fishing*  
Gary Blackwood, *Moonshine*  
Ron Bunney, *Sink or Swim*  
Nancy Carlson, *Loudmouth George and the Fishing Trip*  
Betty Hager, *Marcie and the Shrimp Boat Adventure*  
Ernest Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea*  
Will Hobbs, *Leaving Protection*  
Jonathan London, *Where The Big Fish Are*  
Ann Love, *Fishing*  
Kimberly Lucas, *Fly-Fishing with Trout-Tail: A Child's Journey*  
Don C. Reed, *The Kraken*  
Gary Paulsen, *Hatchet*

### DVDs and Videos

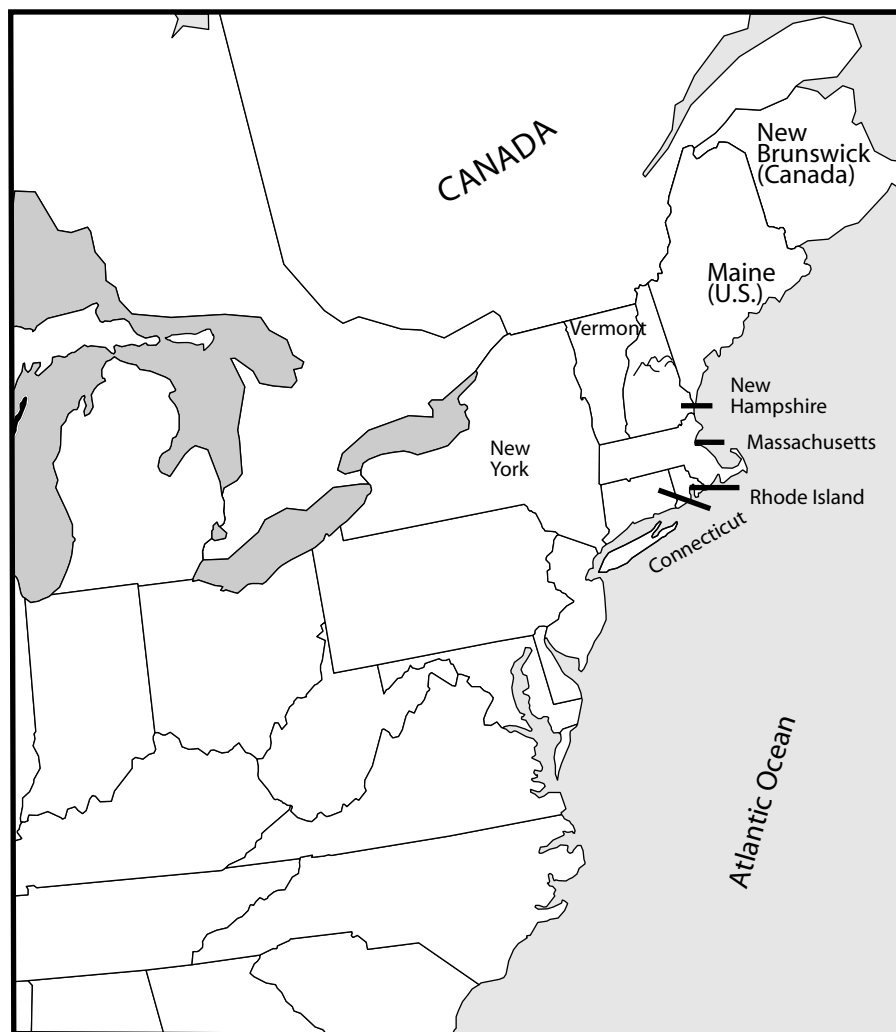
*Big Fish* (2004)  
*Fishing Trip* (1990)  
*Fly Fishing for Pan Fish* (1998)  
*Moby Dick* (1956)  
*Moby Dick* (1998)  
*Moby Dick: The True Story* (2002)  
*The Old Man and the Sea* (1958)  
*The Old Man and the Sea* (1990)  
*Trout Fishing Essentials* (2001)

### Audio

*The Young Man and the Sea*

### Internet

Rodman Philbrick's official website  
[www.rodmanphilbrick.com/](http://www.rodmanphilbrick.com/)  
Write a book review with Rodman Philbrick  
[teacher.scholastic.com/writeit/bookrev/](http://teacher.scholastic.com/writeit/bookrev/)



Rodman Philbrick bibliography  
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## Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in Rodman Philbrick's *The Young Man and the Sea* should include these aspects:

### Themes

- fishing
- family tragedy
- coping skills
- courage
- desperation
- violence
- kindness
- economic hardship
- social classes
- determination

### Motifs

- showing courage under life-threatening conditions
- dealing with a family tragedy
- supporting your family economically and emotionally
- acting as a parental figure to a child in need
- appreciating an action-adventure story
- understanding literary homage and allusions
- coming up with a plan and following it through to the end
- learning skills necessary to survival
- recovering from alcoholism
- dealing with anger and prejudice for being poor

## Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have particular meaning in the book. Explain the meaning of each. Chapter and page numbers indicate the context from which the item is taken.

1. They say a thing that's broke can always be fixed, if you work at it. And that's what I intend to do, no matter what. (Chap. 4, p. 28)  
*(Ostensibly, Skiff is talking about repairing his boat, the Mary Rose. However, the boat repair also represents fixing what remains of his family. Skiff hopes that by repairing the boat, he will be able to get his father to stop drinking and regain his interest in life, work, and him.)*
2. Wouldn't that be great, if everything really fixed itself that easy? Like if I raised the boat my dad would quit drinking and turn over a new leaf or something. (Chap. 5, p. 40)  
*(Here we see Skiff put into words what was hinted earlier in the book. His wish does come true, but in a way that he did not suspect. When Skiff is unable to get the Mary Rose repaired because he lacks the money to fix the engine, he makes a desperate attempt to catch a tuna to raise money and thus rescue his family. This effort proves successful.)*
3. Somebody is stealing my lobsters. (Chap. 11, p. 77)  
*(Tyler is the one stealing Skiff's lobsters. For reasons that are never made clear, Tyler is determined to make Skiff's life miserable.)*
4. What it comes down to is this: It's up to me. (Chap. 11, p. 79)  
*(Skiff is correct: everything does rest on his slender twelve-year-old shoulders. Because of his grief, Big Skiff is unable to stop drinking, return to work, and support his son.)*
5. "Retire? He young man." (Chap. 14, p. 106)  
*(The Japanese fish buyer, Mr. Nagahachi, recognizes that Skiff is the son of Big Skiff, whom he calls "the best harpoon." Mr. Nagahachi praises Big Skiff's skill as a fisherman, which makes his drunken deterioration all the more tragic and poignant.)*
6. There it is, right at my fingertips. (Chap. 16, p. 116)  
*(Skiff steals the harpoon that his father made for Mr. Woodwell. In so doing, he is assuming his father's trade and his mantle of greatness. He is taking over for his incapacitated father and carrying on the family name and tradition.)*

7. Mom's Three Rules. (Chap. 17, p. 121)  
*(Skiff's mother had taught her son three rules: Think smart, speak true, and never give up. Skiff uses these rules as justification for his dangerous quest to catch the tuna. By thinking that his mother would approve, he has the strength to endure.)*
8. "FISH ON! FISH ON!" (Chap. 21, p. 155)  
*(Skiff is astonished when he really does harpoon the huge tuna. In his excitement, he shouts the news out. Of course, he is alone on the ocean. This event ratchets up the excitement, as readers wonder if he will manage to subdue the fish before the fish kills him.)*
9. I want you to take care of your father. You understand? (Chap. 24, p. 185)  
*(Before her death, Mrs. Beaman had asked her son to take care of his father. She clearly recognized that Big Skiff would fall apart at her death. This pledge that Skiff made to his mother compels him to keep rowing home, even when he is exhausted, starving, dehydrated, and bloody.)*
10. SMALL BOY HARPOONS BIGGEST FISH. (Chap. 25, p. 189)  
*(The newspaper headline announces that Skiff has succeeded in his quest: not only has he brought home a tuna, but he has also brought home the biggest tuna of the season in the state of Maine. He has certainly fulfilled his goal.)*

## Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

### Questions 1-5 (Literal Level)

1. When and where does the story take place?  
*(The novel is set in the present in the make-believe town of Spinney Cove in Maine. It is a fishing community with strict social classes and many descendants of original families.)*
2. How does Skiff's father react to his wife's death?  
*(He falls apart, becoming a depressed alcoholic.)*
3. Why does Skiff want to trap and sell lobsters?  
*(He wants to raise enough money to repair the motor on his boat, the Mary Rose.)*
4. Why does Skiff want to catch a huge tuna?  
*(He wants to make enough money to repair the boat and give his father hope again. He wants to repair his family.)*
5. What happens to Skiff at the end of the novel?  
*(He catches a huge tuna, sets a new season record, and is declared a hero.)*

### Questions 6-8 (Interpretative Level)

6. How does Mr. Woodwell function as Skiff's surrogate parent?  
*(Mr. Woodwell teaches Skiff what he needs to know to repair his boat. In addition, Mr. Woodwell listens to Skiff and offers him advice, when asked.)*
7. What does the tuna symbolize or represent?  
*(It represents a quest, a seemingly impossible goal.)*
8. Why do you think Tyler hates Skiff so much?  
*(It seems likely that the feud is a spill-over from the problems between the boys' fathers. The older men had been close friends as children but had later quarreled. Perhaps Mr. Croft is jealous that Mary Roselyn fell in love with Big Skiff, rather than with him.)*

### Questions 9 and 10 (Critical Level)

9. What does the title mean?  
*(The title is an allusion to Ernest Hemingway's classic novel The Old Man and the Sea. In both novels, someone on the fringes of society – a poor old man, a poor teenager—sets out on a remarkable quest to redeem their lives. In both books, the quest involves staggering physical endurance, hardship, and bravery. In both novels, the fishermen succeed in snaring a huge fish. However, Philbrick's story has a happy ending—Skiff gets the fish home safely and helps his father – while Hemingway's novel does not.)*
10. Do you think the scenario described in this book is realistic? Why or why not?  
*(Students would likely say it is not realistic, since even a very strong and knowledgeable twelve-year-old would be unable to harpoon a 900 pound fish from a small skiff. In addition, it seems unlikely that a child would then be able to row the fish 25 miles to shore.)*

### Questions 11-12 (Creative Level)

11. Explain what quest you would undertake to help your family.
12. Role-play a scene showing what Skiff's life is like a decade in the future, when he is twenty-two years old.



## Across the Curriculum

### Speech/Drama

1. Working with a classmate, perform a scene in which Skiff tells his father how his behavior is affecting him.
2. Role-play a dialogue between Skiff and Tyler in which the two boys explain their feelings for each other. Be sure to have Tyler explain why he hates Skiff so much.
3. Debate whether or not Big Skiff should have gotten involved when Tyler stole Skiff's lobsters.
4. In a roundtable discussion, explore ways to deal with loss and grief.
5. When she knew that she was dying, Mrs. Beaman asked her son to take care of his father. She clearly realized that Big Skiff would fall apart at her death. She had said to Skiff, "I want you to take care of your father. You understand?" Debate whether or not a child should be required to take care of a young and healthy parent. Was Mrs. Beaman justified in making this request of her son?

### Art

1. Divide a piece of paper in half vertically. On the left, draw the Beaman family before Mrs. Beaman dies. On the right, draw the family after her death. Use color and shading to show the change in their mood.
2. Skiff loves his family's boat, the *Mary Rose*. Draw a picture of a boat or other vehicle that you would like to own.
3. Draw or paint a new cover for the novel.
4. Using scenes from the novel, create a mural that shows its main events.
5. Make a travel brochure to entice people to visit Maine.

### Language Arts

1. Skiff's mother teaches her son three rules: think smart, speak true, and never give up. Write the

three rules that you think are important to guide a child's life.

2. Philbrick based *The Young Man and the Sea* on Hemingway's novel *The Old Man and the Sea*. Read Hemingway's book and compare and contrast it to Philbrick's novel. Show how they are the same and different.
3. Stephen King is one of Maine's most famous contemporary authors. Read one of his books. In a review, explain what parts you liked and which parts you did not like.
4. In an essay, argue that the novel is or is not realistic. Could a twelve-year-old boy successfully harpoon a 900-pound tuna all alone? Support your opinion with specific details from the novel and your own experiences.
5. Writing as Big Skiff, create a journal entry in which you explain how you feel about your wife, your drinking, and your depression.

### History/Social Studies

1. Fishing has long been a traditional part of Maine life. Make a map showing the top sport fishing spots in this state. Include at least five areas.
2. Research the rules for boating in Maine. See how closely Philbrick adhered to the truth. For example, find out if Skiff would even have been allowed out on the water at age twelve without an adult.
3. Learn more about sushi. What is it? How is it prepared?
4. List the major commercial fish caught in the U.S. Show how much money is generated each year in the fishing industry by the five most popular commercial fish.
5. *The Young Man and the Sea* is based on Hemingway's novel *The Old Man and the Sea*. Report on Ernest Hemingway's life. Include at least five important contemporary events from the time in which he lived.

## Science/Math

1. Find out how much lobsters sell for in your community. Based on that figure, calculate how many lobsters Skiff has to sell at retail price to raise \$5,000 to repair the engine on the *Mary Rose*.
2. Explain what force creates the tides. Make a chart showing high and low tides at a beach near your home or a famous beach that interests you.
3. Skiff gets caught in the fog. Find out how fog forms.
4. In a report, explain how ocean currents are created. Report on an important current, such as the Gulf Stream.
5. Research lobsters. Find out what species they belong to, where they grow, how they grow, and when people first realized they were edible.
6. Demonstrate different ways to show 900 pounds. For example, how many computers would it take to make 900 pounds? How many bicycles? Skateboards?
7. Find and show the length of a 900 pound tuna. Pace off this length in the school corridor or playground.

## Alternate Assessment

1. Go fishing. Decide whether or not you like the sport and why.
2. Working with a small group, create a scene in which Skiff is honored for his amazing achievement.
3. In your own words, state the novel's theme or message.
4. Write a critical review of the novel for the school newspaper.

## Teacher's Notes

## Vocabulary

Complete the crossword puzzle with the following words from *The Young Man and the Sea*.

### WORD BANK

bilge      rouse      physics      twitch      varnish  
memento    sulky      buoy      skiff      barb

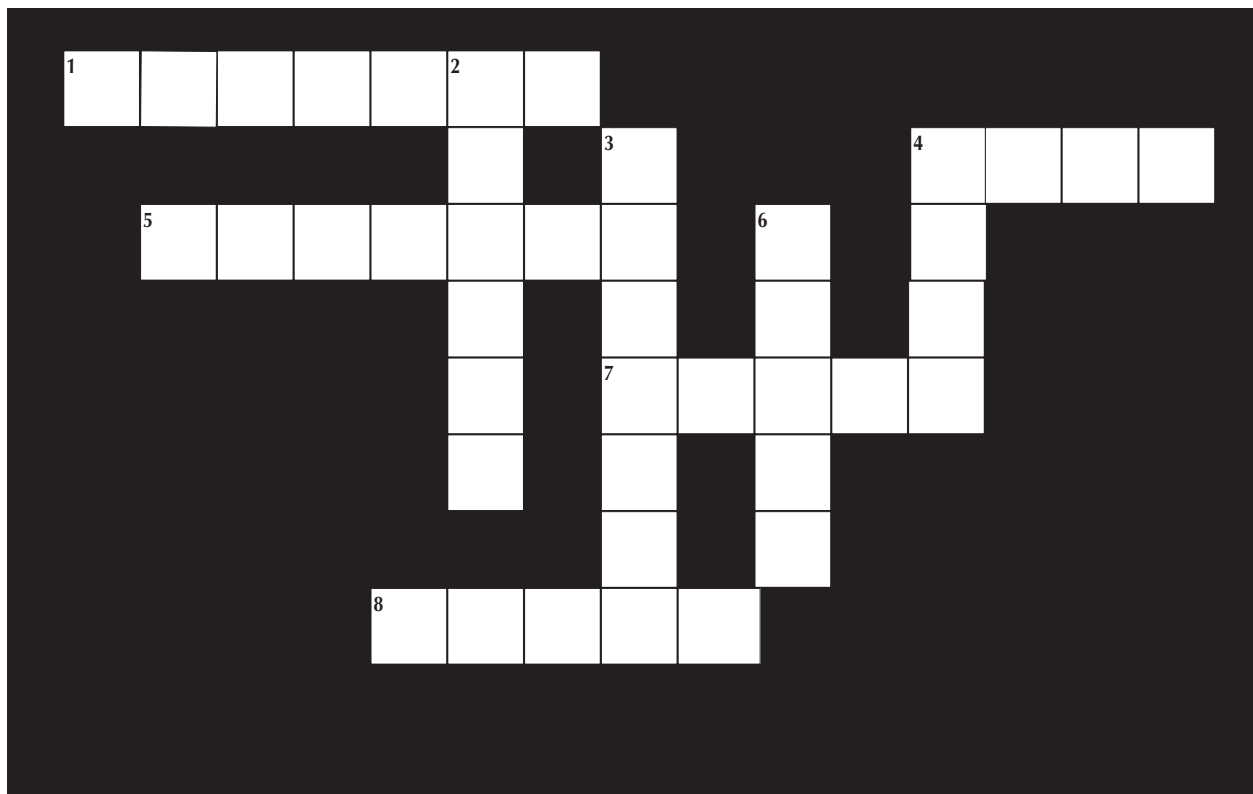
### CLUES

#### Across

1. souvenir
4. sharp points
5. paint
7. pouty
8. awaken

#### Down

2. jerk, quiver
3. branch of science that deals with matter
4. floating marker in a body of water
6. part of the hull of a boat



## Comprehension Test A

### Part I: Matching (20 points)

Match each description with a name from the list. Place the letter of your answer in the blank provided at left.

- |                                |                       |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| A. Mary Roselyn Spinney Beaman | F. Tyler Croft        |
| B. <i>Mary Rose</i>            | G. Samuel Beaman, Jr. |
| C. Mike Haley                  | H. Mr. Amos Woodwell  |
| D. Devlin Murphy               | I. Captain Keelson    |
| E. Big Skiff                   | J. Mr. Nagahachi      |

- \_\_\_ 1. A superb fisherman who has become an alcoholic since his wife's death
- \_\_\_ 2. The man who owns the bait and fuel store; a gossip
- \_\_\_ 3. The fish buyer
- \_\_\_ 4. The nasty rich boy
- \_\_\_ 5. The man who helps Skiff caulk his boat
- \_\_\_ 6. Skiff's mother
- \_\_\_ 7. The 94-year-old boatmaker
- \_\_\_ 8. The twelve-year-old who catches a huge tuna
- \_\_\_ 9. The diesel mechanic
- \_\_\_ 10. Skiff's boat that sinks

### Part II: Sentence Completion (20 points)

Circle the term that best completes each of the following statements.

1. Big Skiff was famous for his skill as a **(fisherman, teacher)**.
2. The people on Skiff's father's side are called **("trashers," "swampers.")**
3. Skiff offers all his money, **(\$228, \$28)**, to Mr. Woodwell to pay for supplies.
4. Skiff needs to buy **(an anchor, lumber)**, but Mr. Woodwell offers it instead.
5. Mr. Woodwell gives Skiff delicious homemade **(root beer, lemonade)** to drink.
6. Mr. Woodwell shows Skiff a beautiful **(oar, harpoon)** that Big Skiff made for him.
7. Skiff needs **(\$500, \$5,000)** to fix the motor on his boat.
8. Tyler steals Skiff's valuable **(lobsters, boat)**, leaving Skiff furious.
9. Skiff's mother taught him **(three, ten)** simple rules for life.
10. While Skiff is fishing, the water gets very dangerous when a **(fog, hurricane)** strikes.

## Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

### Part III: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements either T for true or F if a part is false.

- \_\_\_ 1. On the last day of school, Skiff sees that the family boat has sunk.
- \_\_\_ 2. Skiff's father was far more upper-class than his mother, a fact that he never let her forget.
- \_\_\_ 3. One reason that Skiff is mocked is that his family still has an outhouse on their property, even though they do not use it.
- \_\_\_ 4. Mr. Woodwell used to work for Big Skiff, and they are still close friends.
- \_\_\_ 5. There are hard feelings between Big Skiff and Mr. Croft, but readers never find out the cause of their problem.
- \_\_\_ 6. While Skiff is out fishing, the motor on his boat runs out of gas.
- \_\_\_ 7. Mr. Croft refuses to help Big Skiff search for his son.
- \_\_\_ 8. The book is set in a town called Spinney Cove, in Maine.
- \_\_\_ 9. At the end of the book, readers feel that everything will be a lot better for the Beaman family.
- \_\_\_ 10. The "young man" referred to in the book's title is Tyler Croft.

### Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

- 1. Explain the conflicts that Skiff faced.
- 2. Summarize the events in *The Young Man and the Sea*.
- 3. Explain what the tuna represents to Skiff. Why is the giant fish so important?
- 4. Tell what you would have done to help your father if you had been in Skiff's place.

## Comprehension Test B

### Part I: Citation Analysis (20 points)

Explain the significance of each of the following citations from the novel.

1. They say a thing that's broke can always be fixed, if you work at it. And that's what I intend to do, no matter what.
2. What it comes down to is this: It's up to me.
3. "Retire? He young man."
4. Mom's Three Rules.
5. The largest bluefin tuna taken by a harpoon in Maine waters this season was caught by twelve-year-old Samuel "Skiff" Beaman, Jr. of Spinney Cove.

### Part II: Identification (20 points)

Briefly describe each person, place, or thing and explain why it is important in the story.

1. the *Mary Rose*
2. lobsters
3. the harpoon
4. tuna
5. the outhouse

## Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

Part III: Matching (20 points)

Complete each of the following descriptions with a name from the list that follows. Place the letter of your answer in the blank provided at left. Use each name only once.

- |                                                    |                       |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| ___ 1. The man who buys the tuna                   | A. <i>Fin Chaser</i>  |
| ___ 2. The twelve-year-old who catches the tuna    | B. Devlin Murphy      |
| ___ 3. The Beamans' boat                           | C. <i>Mary Rose</i>   |
| ___ 4. The man who teaches Skiff to caulk his boat | D. Captain Keelson    |
| ___ 5. The alcoholic who mourns his wife           | E. Mike Haley         |
| ___ 6. The Crofts' boat                            | F. Samuel Beaman, Jr. |
| ___ 7. The elderly boat maker                      | G. Tyler Croft        |
| ___ 8. Skiff's arch-enemy                          | H. Mr. Nagahachi      |
| ___ 9. The owner of the bait and fuel shop         | I. Mr. Amos Woodwell  |
| ___ 10. the diesel mechanic                        | J. Big Skiff          |

### Part IV: Essay (40 points)

1. Describe Skiff's life. Tell how it is the same and different from yours.
2. Explain how this book proves the African adage: "It takes a village to raise a child."
3. Analyze how Mr. Woodwell functions as Skiff's substitute father.
4. Argue that the book is or is not realistic.

# Answer Key

## VOCABULARY

### Across

1. memento
4. barb
5. varnish
7. sulky
8. rouse

### Down

2. twitch
3. physics
4. buoy
6. bilge

## COMPREHENSION TEST A

### Part I: Matching (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. E | 6. A  |
| 2. D | 7. H  |
| 3. J | 8. G  |
| 4. F | 9. C  |
| 5. I | 10. B |

### Part II: Sentence Completion (20 points)

- |               |             |
|---------------|-------------|
| 1. fisherman  | 6. harpoon  |
| 2. "swampers" | 7. \$5,000  |
| 3. \$28       | 8. lobsters |
| 4. lumber     | 9. three    |
| 5. lemonade   | 10. fog     |

### Part III: True/False (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. T  |
| 2. F | 7. F  |
| 3. T | 8. T  |
| 4. F | 9. T  |
| 5. T | 10. F |

### Part IV. Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.

## COMPREHENSION TEST B

### Part I: Citation Analysis (20 points)

1. Ostensibly, Skiff is talking about repairing his father's boat, the *Mary Rose*. However, the boat repair also represents fixing what remains of his family. Skiff hopes that by repairing the boat, he will be able to get his father to stop drinking and regain his interest in life, work, and him.
2. Skiff is correct: everything does rest on his slender twelve-year-old shoulders. Because of his grief, Big Skiff is unable to stop drinking, return to work, and support his son.

3. The Japanese fish buyer, Mr. Nagahachi, recognizes that Skiff is the son of Big Skiff, whom he calls "the best harpoon." Mr. Nagahachi praises Big Skiff's skill as a fisherman, which makes his drunken deterioration all the more tragic and poignant.
4. Skiff's mother had taught her son three rules: Think smart, speak true, and never give up. Skiff uses these rules as justification for his dangerous quest to catch the fish. By thinking that his mother would approve, he has the strength to endure.
5. The newspaper article announces that Skiff has succeeded in his quest: not only has he brought home a tuna, but he got the biggest tuna of the season.

### Part II: Identification (20 points)

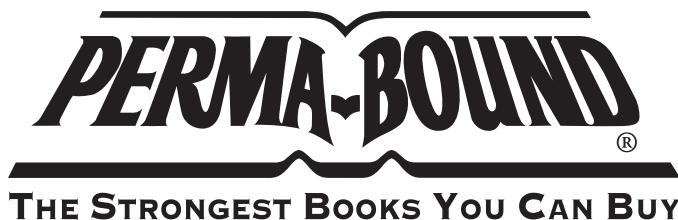
1. The *Mary Rose* is the Beamans' boat that sinks. Since Skiff's mother was Mary Roselyn, it is clear that the boat is named after her. Its sinking, then, represents the family reaching their lowest point.
2. Skiff traps lobsters to raise the money he needs to repair the motor on his boat. Tyler Croft steals the lobsters and cuts the traps, setting the stage for Skiff's plan to harpoon a giant tuna.
3. Big Skiff made the harpoon as a memento for Mr. Woodwell, thanking him for all the older man had taught him in his shop. Skiff steals the harpoon to use to catch the tuna. This symbolically represents passing the torch from one generation to the other.
4. The tuna is the giant fish that Skiff seeks and ultimately harpoons. It represents a seemingly impossible goal that can nonetheless be achieved.
5. The outhouse still remains on the Beaman property, although it is no longer used. On one hand, it represents the lingering prejudice against the family for being lower-class. On the other hand, it represents their pride in their roots.

### Part III: Matching (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. H | 6. A  |
| 2. F | 7. I  |
| 3. C | 8. G  |
| 4. D | 9. B  |
| 5. J | 10. E |

### Part IV. Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.



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