

THE TRUE CONFESSIONS OF CHARLOTTE DOYLE

LIVING LITERATURE SERIES

AVI

A PERMA-BOUND PRODUCTION

TEACHER'S GUIDE

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SYNOPSIS

An Important Warning In this preface, the narrator explains that the story that follows is both true and terrifying. It takes place in 1832, when Charlotte (the narrator) was 13 years old. Her wealthy family had raised her to be a lady. Although born in America, Charlotte had lived in England since she was six. In 1832, Charlotte's father decided to return to America. When the school year was over, Charlotte would follow her family back to Providence, Rhode Island. Two families would accompany her. Charlotte is very excited about her upcoming journey. Her father has given her a blank book in which to record her daily events during the trip.

Chap. 1 On June 16, 1832, Charlotte is on the docks in Liverpool, England, with the man her father hired to see her to the ship, Mr. Grummage. When the porter overhears Grummage talking about the ship captain, Mr. Jaggery, he refuses to carry their bags to the ship. The second porter also runs off, adding to the foreboding atmosphere. Grummage tells Charlotte that the two families hired to accompany her are not coming after all. Charlotte knows it is wrong for a girl to travel unchaperoned, but Grummage is obdurate.

Chap. 2 The Second Mate Mr. Keetch tells Charlotte not to get on the ship, but Grummage insists. Her room is a dank roach-infested hole. Barlow, one of the sailors, delivers her trunk and tells her that she should not be on the ship. The cook, a black man named Zachariah, kindly offers Charlotte tea and hands her a dagger with instructions to keep it close by at all times. Charlotte is horrified but takes the knife.

Chap. 3 Charlotte decides to get off the boat, but it is too late: the *Seahawk* is already sailing. Charlotte is seasick but, except for Zachariah, the crew is no help, looking like they had been "recruited from the doormat of Hell." She is greatly relieved to meet Captain Jaggery, who is clearly a gentleman. Zachariah takes good care of Charlotte as she suffers from seasickness.

Chap. 4 Four days later, Charlotte is well enough to venture to the deck. Zachariah explains that on the previous trip, the Captain had cut off the arm of a sailor, Mr. Cranick, because he did not tie a knot to the Captain's satisfaction. The crew had tried to get justice, but Jaggery was exonerated. Zachariah explains that the crew has signed up again to get revenge on Jaggery. This explains why so many sailors and porters warned Charlotte against boarding the ship. Charlotte is at special risk because her father is part owner of the ship and so is Jaggery's boss.

Chap. 5 Charlotte refuses to believe that the captain can be as terrible as Zachariah claims. She visits the captain and is taken in by his skillful manipulation. He alerts her to the sailors' sign of mutiny, a piece of paper with a "round robin." She even shows him the knife that Zachariah gave her, but to

her surprise he insists that she keep it.

Chap. 6 Charlotte goes below deck to retrieve objects from her trunk. There, Barlow confirms that the Captain is cruel and abusive. The chapter ends in a cliffhanger as the candle blows out and the lower deck plunges into utter darkness.

Chap. 7 Charlotte is terrified when she sees what she takes to be a human skull, but it is really a carved brown nut. She believes that she did see two faces, the first being the face of a sailor warning her.

Chap. 8 Charlotte describes her boring days on ship, picking lice and writing in her diary. She runs small errands for the sailors and becomes a pet. To show their approval, Zachariah makes her a sailor suit. Horrified, Charlotte tries on the outfit but vows never to wear it again because it is inappropriate for a lady. Charlotte spies on the crew and reports to the captain.

Chap. 9 Eighteen days into the voyage, Charlotte overhears the sailors plotting mutiny. She sees a pistol and the "round robin" sign of the mutiny. Morgan the sailor warns her not to tell the captain but she does anyway.

Chap. 10 The crew mutinies. She sees a one-armed man among the rebels and realizes that he must be Cranick, whose arm the Captain had cut off. She recognizes him as the stowaway who had terrified her below deck. When Cranick demands that the Captain be put to a trial, the Captain kills him with a single pistol shot. Zachariah begs Cranick be given a funeral but the captain refuses. The Captain then cruelly forces Charlotte to select one sailor to be punished for them all. When she refuses, he chooses Zachariah.

Chap. 11 The Captain orders 50 lashes, but Charlotte comes to her friend's defense and accidentally lands a whiplash on the captain. He tears the whip from her hand and beats the black cook savagely.

Chap. 12 Charlotte apologizes to the captain and realizes that he is every bit as inhuman as the men had claimed. The Captain withdraws his protection. A sailor is buried and Charlotte assumes that it must be Zachariah. She decides to join the crew.

Chap. 13 To test her resolve, the sailors challenge Charlotte to climb 130 feet up the main mast. To their astonishment – and her own – she accomplishes this astounding feat. Charlotte is accepted as a member of the crew.

Chap. 14 Jaggery waits for Charlotte to make a mistake. When she does, he strikes her across the face. She spits at him and calls him a "cruel despot." The crewmembers teach her how to handle a knife.

Chap. 15 On the 45th day, the ship runs into a hurricane. To battle the fierce storm less encumbered, Charlotte cuts off her hair, symbolizing yet another step deeper into the crew and away from her genteel past. As she battles the storm, Charlotte thinks that she sees Zachariah but believes it must

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be a vision because he is dead. Hollybrass is stabbed to death with the knife Zachariah had given Charlotte. Seventeen hours later, the ship is free from the storm's iron grip.

Chap. 16 The Captain tells the crew that Charlotte murdered Hollybrass to avenge Zachariah's death. Locked in the brig, Charlotte fears that the crew has turned against her. In the brig, she sees Zachariah.

Chap. 17 Zachariah explains that he did not die and has been in hiding. As he frees her from the jail, Zachariah plots his strategy. He plans to sneak off the ship and alert the authorities, but Charlotte knows that no one will believe a black man. The Captain begins her "trial."

Chap. 18 Even though Charlotte refuses to join the captain and betray the crew, none of them will come to her defense. After questioning, the captain concludes that Charlotte is unnatural for trying to act like a boy and condemns her to be hanged within twenty-four hours.

Chap. 19 Charlotte realizes that the Captain killed Hollybrass.

Chap. 20 The Captain catches Charlotte as she sneaks into his cabin to steal the key to the gun cabinet.

Chap. 21 The Captain reveals that Keetch is the traitor and that he knows Zachariah is alive. The Captain also confesses that he killed Hollybrass when Hollybrass threatened him during the storm. If she will once again dress as a lady and renounce her association with the crew, the Captain will save her. She refuses. On deck, Jaggery aims the pistol at Charlotte but the bow plunges and the shot goes wide. In a rage, the Captain throws the pistol at Charlotte who backs away. Jaggery falls overboard and drowns. The crew makes Charlotte their captain.

Chap. 22 Zachariah takes true command. On August 17, 1832, the ship docks. Her parents greet Charlotte and cannot grasp how she has changed—and why. Her father reads her journal and burns it. They assume she is lying and force her to read genteel books. Instead, she rewrites her journal in the margins. Soon after, she sneaks out of the house, rejoins Zachariah, and ships out again.

TIME LINE

- 1819** Charlotte Doyle is born in Rhode Island.
1825 Charlotte and her family move to England.
1832 **June 16** The *Seahawk* sets sail from Liverpool.
July 4 Charlotte overhears the crew plotting mutiny. She interferes in the flogging of Zachariah and joins the crew.
Aug. 1 The *Seahawk* loses her sails and mainmast in a hurricane. Hollybrass is murdered.
Aug. 2 Jaggery sentences Charlotte to hang for murder.
Aug. 3 Jaggery falls overboard and drowns. Charlotte becomes captain.
Aug. 17 The *Seahawk* arrives in Narraganset Bay.
Aug. 18 Mr. Doyle burns Charlotte's journal.
Sept. 9 Charlotte runs away from home and rejoins the crew of the *Seahawk*.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Avi ("Ah-vee") Wortis was born December 23, 1937, in New York and died in 1994. His father was a psychiatrist; his mother, a social worker. Avi was educated at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he graduated in 1959. In 1964, Avi earned a Master's of Library Science from Columbia University.

Avi is known for novels marked by colorful characters and intricate plots. Encompassing a wide variety of genres, Avi's books typically offer complex, thought-provoking, and sometimes disturbingly realistic reflections on American history and culture. A long-time champion of literary issues involving young readers, the author summed up his writing goals this way: "I try to write about complex issues—young people in an adult world—full of irony and contradiction, in a narrative style that relies heavily on suspense with a texture rich in emotion and imagery. I take a great deal of satisfaction in using popular forms—the adventure, the mystery, the thriller—so as to hold my reader with the sheer pleasure of a good story. At the same time I try to resolve my books with an ambiguity that compels engagement. In short, I want my readers to feel, to think, sometimes to laugh. But most of all I want them to enjoy a good read."

Despite the skepticism of many of his teachers, Avi was determined to be a professional writer. After earning two master's degrees and working at a variety of jobs, Avi began a 25-year career as a librarian in the theater collection of the New York Public library. Despite his work, Avi's determination to be a writer never flagged; in fact, the author had written nearly 800 pages of his "great American novel" before turning his attention to children's literature. This change in focus came about largely because Avi found that he had such fun telling stories to his two sons. "My oldest would tell me what the story should be about—he would invent stuff, a story about a glass of water and so forth. It became a game, and here I had a writing background so I was telling some fairly sophisticated stories," Avi remarked.

Avi's first children's book, *Things That Sometimes Happen*, appeared in 1970. Since this first publication, Avi is perhaps best known for his experimentation with the format of the historical novel, especially *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*. Although an enthusiastic reader of history, the author is by no means tied to the historical novel—in fact, his contemporary tales about young people, such as *S.O.R. Losers*, have proven as popular with readers as his historically-based stories.

"More than anything else," he asserted in an interview for *Horn Book*, "children's literature is about the place and role of the child in society.... If we—in the world of children's literature—can help the young stand straight for a moment longer than they have done in the past, help them maintain their ideals and values, those with which you and I identify ourselves, help them demand—and win—justice, we've added something good to the world."

CRITIC'S CORNER

The True Adventures of Charlotte Doyle has received virtually every prestigious award for children's literature, including Best Book of the Year citation, Society of Children's Book Authors; Virginia Young Readers' Award; Newbery honor award; American Library Association; Horn Book-Boston Globe Award; and Golden Kite Award, Society of Children's Book Authors.

The *Booklist* reviewer said that *The True Adventures of Charlotte Doyle* was "riveting...Nonstop action on the high seas...A story hard to forget." *School Library Journal* called the novel a "breathtaking seafaring adventure."

WRITINGS BY THE AUTHOR

- The Barn* (1994)
Beyond the Western Sea (1996)

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The Bird, the Frog, and the Light: A Fable (1994)
Blue Heron (1992)
Bright Shadow (1985)
Captain Grey (1977)
City of Light, City of Dark: A Comic Book Novel (1993)
Devil's Race (1984)
Emily Upham's Revenge; or, How Deadwood Dick Saved the Banker's Niece: A Massachusetts Adventure (1978)
Encounter at Easton (1980)
The Fighting Ground (1984)
Finding Providence: The Story of Roger Williams (1997)
History of Helpless Harry: To Which Is Added a Variety of Amusing and Entertaining Adventures (1980)
Judy with Punch (1993)
Night Journeys (1979)
The Man from the Sky (1980)
The Man Who Was Poe (1989)
No More Magic (1975)
Nothing but the Truth (1991)
A Place Called Ugly (1981)
Poppy (1995)
Romeo & Juliet—Together (& Alive) at Last (1988)
Shadrach's Crossing (1983)
Smuggler's Island (1994)
Snail Tale: The Adventures of a Rather Small Snail (1972)
Something Upstairs: A Tale of Ghosts (1988)
Sometimes I Think I Hear My Name (1982)
S.O.R. Losers (1984)
Things That Sometimes Happen (1970)
Tom, Babette, and Simon: Three Tales of Transformation (1995)
The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle (1990)
Who Stole the Wizard of Oz? (1981)
Who Was That Masked Man, Anyway? (1992)
Windcatcher (1991)
Wolf Rider: A Tale of Terror (1986)

FURTHER READINGS ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Books

Behind the Covers: Interviews with Authors and Illustrators of Books for Children and Young Adults, Libraries Unlimited, 1985, pp. 33-41.
Bloom, Susan P., and Cathryn M. Mercier, *Presenting Avi*, Twayne (New York City), 1997.
Markham, Lois, *Avi*, Learning Works (Santa Barbara, CA), 1996.
Twentieth-Century Children's Writers, St. Martin's, 1989, pp. 45-46.

Periodicals

Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books, June, 1984, p. 180; October 1989, p. 27.
Horn Book, August 1979, p. 410; April 1980, pp. 169-70; October 1980, pp. 517-18; April, 1981, p. 136; June 1981, pp. 297-98; August 1983, p. 439; June 1984, p. 325; January-February 1985, p. 49; September-October, 1987 pp. 569-576; January-February 1992, p. 24-27.
New York Times Book Review, Sept. 11, 1977; March 1, 1981, p. 24.
Publishers Weekly, Jan. 30, 1981, p. 75; Nov. 16, 1984, p. 65; Dec. 26, 1986, p. 61; Aug. 28, 1987, p. 81; Sept. 14, 1990, p. 128; Sept. 6, 1991, p. 105.
School Library Journal, March 1978, p. 124; May 1980, p. 64;

November 1980, p. 68; September 1984, p. 125; October 1984, p. 164; December 1986, pp. 111-12; January 1987, p. 21.
Voice of Youth Advocates, August 1981, pp. 23-24; August 1982, p. 27; December 1984, pp. 261-62; February 1985, p. 321; February 1989, p. 293.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze the role of women in the early nineteenth century
2. To evaluate how ego can get in the way of judgment
3. To recognize the themes of loyalty and acceptance
4. To analyze racism
5. To understand the novel's title
6. To explore the ways dangerous situations can get out of hand
7. To find examples of peer pressure
8. To understand psychopaths
9. To describe the novel's mood or atmosphere
10. To predict what the future holds for Charlotte

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To explore why Charlotte decides to become a common sailor
2. To analyze Charlotte's pressure to be a "lady"
3. To probe the relationship between leaders and followers
4. To understand Zachariah's kindness
5. To see how different people deal with unfair conditions
6. To trace how Charlotte comes to be involved in a mutiny
7. To understand the story's theme
8. To compare and contrast Charlotte before and after her experiences aboard the ship
9. To learn more about women in the nineteenth century
10. To identify the novel's structure, especially its climax

LITERARY TERMS AND APPLICATIONS

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

foreshadowing clues that hint at what will happen later on in the story. Writers use foreshadowing to create suspense and link related details. For example, Avi foreshadows the captain's madness very early in the novel (Chapter 4) during Charlotte's first conversations with Zachariah. Charlotte firmly believes that the Captain must be a gentleman because he looks like a gentleman; Zachariah, however, knows the truth about the Captain as shown by the "look of curiosity" he gives her.

suspense the feeling of tension or anticipation an author creates in a work. Authors create suspense by unexpected plot twists. This keeps readers interested in the story and makes them want to read on to find out what will happen. Avi builds suspense by having the crew plot with their "round robin." Will they mutiny? Will Charlotte join them—or become their victim? Finally, what will happen to Charlotte after the Captain tries to frame her for murder?

figurative language words and expressions not used in a literal sense. Writers use figurative language (or "figures of speech") to create layers of meaning, reinforce their themes, and suggest intriguing relationships. On page 136, for example Avi uses the following simile "as the bow dipped, this open beak dropped and dropped again into the sea, coming up each time with foam streaming like a rabid dog." Compar-

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ing the ship to a "rabid dog" conveys the terror aboard as the mutiny brews. Avi reinforces the notion that events are careening out of control when he uses the simile "Above my head the lantern swung grotesquely, the men's possessions skittered about like billiard balls, trunks rolling helter-skelter."

CROSS-CURRICULAR SOURCES

Fiction

Paula Fox, *Slave Dancer*
Charles B. Hawes, *The Dark Frigate*
David Gerrold, *Jumping Off the Planet*
Robert Heinlein, *Starman Jones*
Richard Hughes, *A High Wind in Jamaica*
Rudyard Kipling, *Captains Courageous*
Jack London, *The Sea Wolf*
Herman Melville, *Billy Budd*
Scott O'Dell, *Sarah Bishop*
Katherine Paterson, *Catherine, Called Birdy*
Gary Paulsen, *Hatchet*
Robert Louis Stevenson, *Kidnapped and Treasure Island*
Jules Verne, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*
Johann Wyss, *The Swiss Family Robinson*

Nonfiction

Richard Henry Dana, Jr., *Two Years Before the Mast*
Dorling Kindersley Editors, *The Visual Dictionary of Ships and Sailing*
Robin Lee Graham, *Dove*

CD-ROMs

Stephen Biesty's *Incredible Cross-Sections: Stowaway!* (Dorling Kindersley)

Videos/Films

Ben Hur
Cry in the Wild
Mutiny on the Bounty
Treasure Island

THEMES AND MOTIFS

A study of the central issues and situations in Avi's *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* should include these aspects:

Themes

- alienation
- gender roles in the nineteenth century
- mutiny
- friendship
- racism
- loyalty
- murder
- peer pressure
- psychopaths
- suspense

Motifs

- dealing with inflexible gender roles
- the social pressures to being a "lady" or a "gentleman"
- the importance of judging people individually
- the importance of human rights
- why sailors mutinied
- reasons why some people gravitate toward cruel masters
- remorse and regret
- the difficult life of a common sailor in the nineteenth century
- the qualities of an effective captain
- the impulse to achieve revenge

MEANING STUDY

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

1. "No, miss. It is this." He held out a knife (Chap. 2, p. 25)
(As they chat over a cup of tea, Zachariah suddenly changes the mood when he hands Charlotte a small knife. It is a dirk, a distinctive knife with a daggerlike blade. Not surprisingly, Charlotte is terrified of the knife—and what it represents. Zachariah recognizes that Charlotte is indeed in mortal danger and is trying to alert her to the importance of taking care of herself and always being on her guard. Since Charlotte is still very much trapped in her identity as a "lady," she is horrified at his suggestion and can only shake her head in denial.)
2. "Captain Jaggery said that Mr. Cranick's laboring arm was his by rights, Miss Doyle, Mr. Cranick has but one arm now." (Chap. 4, p. 39)
(Zachariah explains the reason for the crew's seething anger: on the last trip, the Captain severed the arm of one of his sailors, Cranick, when the sailor failed to tie a knot to his satisfaction. Jaggery "took the arm" for his own, leaving the sailor horribly crippled.)
3. Zachariah leaned close to me. "Revenge," he whispered. (Chap. 4, p. 40)
(Charlotte has been sheltered all of her life, so she cannot understand the implications of what Zachariah has been telling her about the Captain and the crew. "If Mr. Jaggery is so cruel," Charlotte questions, "why should they have all signed on again?" Gradually, she comes to see that the crew have all signed on again to get revenge. Charlotte is terrified when she finally understands that she has landed in the middle of a seething mutiny.)
4. It was at that exact moment that Captain Jaggery fired his musket. The roar was stupendous. The ball struck Cranick square in the chest. (Chap. 10, p.92)
(To the astonishment of the crew, Jaggery kills Cranick in cold blood, in plain sight of everyone on board. It is at this moment that Charlotte finally understands the full extent of the Captain's madness and determination to dominate the crew at any cost. Cranick's murder propels Charlotte to the next stage of her maturation, as she decides to abjure her role in society and join the crew. In so doing, she is rejecting both her social class and her gender, shocking decisions for a woman in the nineteenth century.)
5. Gasping for breath, I glanced up at the figure who was now scrambling away. It was Zachariah. (Chap. 15, p. 146)
(Charlotte is certain that Zachariah has been killed, lashed to death by the captain in a fit of rage. She had seen what appeared to be his lifeless body; the crew had tossed what she took to be his corpse overboard. Yet in the midst of a fierce hurricane, Zachariah has come to save her from a certain death by seizing her hand and yanking her upward toward the spar. She is able to grab the spar with her legs and so avoid tumbling into the roiling sea. Later, Charlotte will discover that her senses were deceiving her before but not now, for Zachariah is

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very much alive and has indeed saved her.)

6. There, beneath it, lay Mr. Hollybrass, face down. A knife was stuck into his back, plunged so deeply only the scrimshaw handle could be seen. I recognized the design of a star. This was the dirk Zachariah had given me. (Chap. 15, p. 148)

(In the midst of the hurricane, Charlotte finds the dead body. This is shocking under any circumstances, but here it is terribly dangerous as Charlotte discovers when she is blamed for the murder. The Captain not only killed Hollybrass but framed Charlotte by using her knife. In this way, he hopes to justify his plan to kill her as well.)

7. "The Captain told us, when we was committing Hollybrass to the sea, that" — now his darting eyes flicked toward me, then away — "it was you...that...murdered him." (Chap. 16, p. 154)

(The Captain tries to frame Charlotte for Hollybrass' murder — and very nearly succeeds because the crew is too terrified to come to Charlotte's defense. It is a combination of accident and bravery that saves Charlotte's life.)

8. "About Zachariah. Yes, Miss Doyle, I know your friend is alive and has been hiding in the hold." (Chap. 21, p. 200)
(In this scene, the Captain reveals his role in the previous events. As a result of his speech, Charlotte learns two important things: first, that Zachariah is indeed alive and thus had rescued her during the storm; and two, that the Captain is every bit as devious and mad as the crew had warned her. After the Captain reveals what he knows, he tips his hand when he says: "No charge of murder shall be put to me, shall it?" Now Charlotte fully understands the gravity of her situation: the Captain intends to frame her for Cranick's murder.)

9. "She's nothing but an unnatural girl, a girl trying to act like a man." (Chap. 21, p. 208)

(Amid the fast-paced adventure tale, Avi weaves in a subtle but significant thread of feminism. When Zachariah first gave Charlotte the sailor suit, she was appalled by the concept of dressing as a man rather than as a proper young lady. As the novel progresses, however, she begins to understand the folly of wearing long, confining dresses aboard a ship. The dresses, as with the sailor suit, symbolize gender roles. As she throws off her dresses and puts on the sailor suit, Charlotte assumes the traditional attributes of a male in the nineteenth century: physical labor, bravery, and assertiveness. The Captain, a product of his times, deems this role change as "unnatural.")

10. "A sailor," he said, "chooses the wind that takes a ship from safe port...but winds have a mind of their own." (Chap. 22, p. 226)

(At the end of the novel, Charlotte's transformation is complete, as she rejects the woman's sphere for a life of adventure on the sea. Like the wind, Charlotte has a mind of her own and cannot be ruled by society.)

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 opens in England on June 16, 1832, as Char-

lotte is preparing to sail to her home in Providence, Rhode Island. Then the action moves to the sea as the ship travels across the Atlantic Ocean. The plot concludes in Rhode Island on September 9, 1832, as Charlotte once again prepares to set sail.)

2. How does Charlotte end up on the ship without an adult chaperone?

(At first, Charlotte assumed that she would sail with the rest of her family, but her father decided that it would be best if she remained in England until spring, when she completed the school term. He arranged for Charlotte to sail with two families. At the last moment, however, both families backed out of the voyage. One family sent word that they could not reach Liverpool in time; the other family had a seriously ill child who could not be moved. The man taking Charlotte to the ship, Mr. Grummage, refuses to listen to Charlotte's protests that it would be improper for her to travel alone.)

3. Why does the crew want to mutiny against their captain?
(Captain Jaggery had cut off the arm of Cranick when the sailor did not tie a knot to his satisfaction. Every one of the crew members, except Hollybrass, has signed back on the ship to effect their revenge on the cruel captain. They plan to bring him to their form of justice, as the officials had refused to punish him for his cruel crime.)

4. How does Captain Jaggery die?

(After he has convicted Charlotte of the murder of Cranick and "unnatural behavior," Jaggery aims his pistol at Charlotte. He shoots, but his aim is thrown off when the ship suddenly pitches. Charlotte keeps edging further and further out on the bowspring as he scrambles after her, intent on pushing her off. With a snarl, he lunges at her, the Seahawk dips, and he plunges into the foaming sea.)

5. Why does Mr. Doyle destroy Charlotte's journal?
(Charlotte's father cannot accept what his daughter has written because it so goes against the conventional behavior of women and gentlemen of the time. Mr. Doyle says: "Justice, Charlotte, is poorly served when you speak ill of your betters such as poor Captain Jaggery." Avi injects a note of humor when he has Mr. Doyle criticize Charlotte's spelling: "More to the point, Charlotte, your spelling is an absolute disgrace. Never have I seen such abominations.")

Questions 6-8 (Interpretative Level)

6. Why does Charlotte believe at first that the Captain is a good man, despite what she hears from Zachariah and the crew?

(It takes Charlotte a long time to accept the Captain's evilness because she has been carefully groomed by society to judge people by their appearance and station in life rather than by their character or behavior. Since the Captain looks like a gentleman, sounds like a gentleman, and dresses like a gentleman, Charlotte cannot imagine that he can be anything but a gentleman. When she does understand how she has been conditioned by her time and place, Charlottes rebels and returns to the sea.)

7. What function does Zachariah serve?

(Zachariah is the novel's conscience, its moral compass. Since he is the prototypical outsider as a poor black man, Zachariah is not taken seriously by those outside

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his social sphere, mainly Charlotte. But to those with common sense and a world view (the sailors and Jaggery), Zachariah is recognized as a true leader. This is shown in the end of the novel when Charlotte is appointed the new ship captain, but it is Zachariah who fulfills the role.)

8. How does Charlotte change as a result of her experiences?

(Charlotte comes to realize that she can be her own person and attain freedom; she does not have to fulfill a preordained role as a helpless female. No longer a victim of her class and gender, Charlotte is now willing to throw aside all her early training to lead a satisfying and free life—the life denied to other women at that time.)

Questions 9 and 10 (Critical Level)

9. Do you agree with Charlotte's decision to ship out to sea again? Why or why not?

(Students who do not agree with Charlotte's decision can cite the dreadful conditions at sea, the lack of food and comfort, as well as the extreme physical danger from storms and accidents. They might also say that it is not proper for a young woman to sail unchaperoned with so many young men. Those who agree with Charlotte, in contrast, can argue that freedom is worth any price, even physical discomfort and danger.)

10. Is Charlotte a victim of her time and place or a hero in spite of it? Explain your answer.

(Students might argue that Charlotte is a victim of her time and place because she must leave her home and her family to be free. In so doing, she is forced to sever all contact with them because she has disgraced them. On the other hand, Charlotte does manage to wrest personal freedom from a society that denies it to women.)

Questions 11-13 (Creative Level)

11. Working with a small group of classmates, discuss some ways that you might have coped with Charlotte's situation had you been in her place.
12. Argue that mutiny was or was not justified. Would you have joined the mutiny if you had been on board the *Seahawk*? Why or why not?

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Art and Music

1. Design a poster for a movie version of *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*.
2. Create a cartoon version of the novel in which you use art and captions to summarize the plot.
3. Construct a scale model of the *Seahawk*, the ship on which the action takes place.
4. Draw the "round robin," the sign of the mutiny that the sailors make.
5. Fold a piece of paper in half, lengthwise. On the left, draw Charlotte when she sets foot on the *Seahawk*. On the right, draw Charlotte when she leaves the ship several months later.
6. Carve the coconut face that Charlotte sees under the deck, the face she first assumes is human.
7. Using scenes from the novel, create a mural that shows its main themes.

Drama

1. Debate whether *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* is a feminist novel, an adventure novel, or both.

2. Role-play a scene between Cranick and Jaggery in which Jaggery defends his actions and Cranick explains why he is so angry.
3. Create a scene in which Charlotte meets up with her parents twenty years later.
4. Imagine that Captain Jaggery had been alive at the end of the novel, not killed at sea. How would the novel have been different? Explain the differences in a brief speech.

History and Geography

1. Find out more about Charlotte's hometown, Providence, Rhode Island. Present your findings in the form of a poster, travel brochure, or web site.
2. Create a map that Captain Jaggery could use to cross the Atlantic from Liverpool, England, to Providence, Rhode Island.
3. Charlotte chafes under the restrictions imposed upon her by her time and gender. Find out what life was *really* like for upper-class women in the nineteenth century.
4. Zachariah comes to Charlotte's aid, but she fears that he will be ignored because he is black. Report on conditions for African-Americans in 19th-century America.
5. You learned that people traveled extensively by boat during the 1830s. How else did people travel? Consult an almanac or other reference source to find out the most popular means of transportation in the 1830s. Arrange the means of transportation on a chart from the most- to least-important.

THE TRUE CONFESSIONS OF CHARLOTTE DOYLE

VOCABULARY TEST

Complete the chart by writing a synonym and antonym for each word from the novel.

Vocabulary Word	Synonym	Antonym
indignation	1. _____	2. _____
engaged	3. _____	4. _____
suppress	5. _____	6. _____
haste	7. _____	8. _____
docile	9. _____	10. _____
decrepit	11. _____	12. _____
gnarled	13. _____	14. _____
bulky	15. _____	16. _____
compliance	17. _____	18. _____
chaotic	19. _____	20. _____
incomprehensible	21. _____	22. _____
ceaseless	23. _____	24. _____

THE TRUE CONFESSIONS OF CHARLOTTE DOYLE

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: 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.

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| ___ 1. Charlotte's maid at home | A. Keetch |
| ___ 2. stabbed to death by the Captain | B. Grummage |
| ___ 3. the black cook who befriends Charlotte | C. Ewing |
| ___ 4. the sailor who is a traitor to the crew | D. Cranick |
| ___ 5. the one-armed man shot to death by the Captain | E. Bridget |
| ___ 6. escorts Charlotte to the ship - and leaves her there alone | F. Zachariah |
| ___ 7. chooses freedom over material comfort and leaves to become a sailor | G. Charlotte Doyle |
| ___ 8. the novel's author | H. Hollybrass |
| ___ 9. the sailor who wants a needle | I. Avi |
| ___ 10. burns Charlotte's diary and forbids her to write about her adventures again | J. Mr. Doyle |

Part II: True/False (20 points)

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

- ___ 1. The novel is set in 1832, when Charlotte (the narrator) was 13 years old.
- ___ 2. Keetch gives Charlotte a dagger with instructions to keep it close by at all times. Charlotte is horrified but takes the knife.
- ___ 3. At first, Charlotte is greatly relieved to meet Captain Jaggery because she assumes that he is a gentleman.
- ___ 4. A "round robin" is a special type of song the sailors sing to pass the long, lonely nights.
- ___ 5. For many days, Charlotte spies on the crew and reports what she sees and hears to the captain. She even reveals the mutiny.
- ___ 6. Before they will let her join the crew, the sailors challenge Charlotte to climb 130 feet up the main mast. Unfortunately, she climbs only part way before getting tangled in the sail.
- ___ 7. During the third month at sea, the ship runs into a fierce tropical storm called a "typhoon."
- ___ 8. In the brig, she sees Zachariah—whom she is certain is dead.
- ___ 9. After a great deal of questioning, the captain concludes that Charlotte is unnatural for trying to act like a boy and condemns her to be hanged within twenty-four hours.
- ___ 10. Jaggery falls overboard and drowns.

THE TRUE CONFESSIONS OF CHARLOTTE DOYLE

Part III: Motivation (20 points)

Complete each line below with a reason or explanation.

1. Charlotte travels from London to America to
2. She leaves alone because
3. Charlotte decides to get off the boat, but does not because
4. The crew has signed up again because
5. Charlotte is at special risk because
6. At first, Charlotte refuses to wear the sailor suit that Zachariah made for her because
7. The Captain whips Zachariah because
8. Charlotte decides to join the crew because
9. Charlotte cuts off her hair
10. The Captain tells the crew that Charlotte murdered Hollybrass to

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Is the Captain mad or merely strict with his crew? Explain your answer.
2. Provide three details from the novel that make *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* seem to be nonfiction, even though it is really fiction.
3. Compare and contrast Charlotte in the beginning of the novel and at the end.
4. What function does Cranick serve in the novel?

THE TRUE CONFESSIONS OF CHARLOTTE DOYLE

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Sentence Completion (20 points)

Underline a word or phrase from the list below to complete each of the following statements.

1. In 1832, Charlotte's father decided that it was time to return to (England, America).
2. The cook, a black man named Zachariah, gives Charlotte a (dagger, pistol).
3. The Captain had cut off the arm of a sailor, Mr. Cranick, because he (did not tie a knot correctly, shot at the Captain).
4. Charlotte is terrified when she sees what she takes to be a human skull, but it is really a (huge rat, carved brown nut).
5. Zachariah makes Charlotte a (special cake, sailor suit).
6. Zachariah begs Cranick be given a (funeral, bunk) but the captain refuses.
7. The sailors challenge Charlotte to (swim among the sharks, climb the main mast).
8. On the forty-fifth day, the ship runs into (a hurricane, an iceberg).
9. The Captain catches Charlotte as she sneaks into his cabin to steal (a key, some food).
10. The crew makes (Keetch, Charlotte) their captain.

Part II: 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 blanks provided.

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| ___ 1. novel's author | A. Keetch |
| ___ 2. found with Charlotte's knife in his body | B. Grummage |
| ___ 3. becomes the <u>real</u> captain | C. Ewing |
| ___ 4. second mate | D. Cranick |
| ___ 5. loses an arm because of a knot | E. Bridget |
| ___ 6. insists Charlotte go on board the ship | F. Zachariah |
| ___ 7. changes ideas about what makes a gentleman | G. Charlotte Doyle |
| ___ 8. sailor who wants a needle | H. Hollybrass |
| ___ 9. Charlotte's maid at home | I. Avi |
| ___ 10. leaves for America before Charlotte | J. Mr. Doyle |

THE TRUE CONFESSIONS OF CHARLOTTE DOYLE

Part III: Identification (20 points)

Explain why each is important in the story.

1. the dirk
2. Zachariah
3. the "round robin"
4. the sailor suit
5. Charlotte's journal

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Who is the novel's main character? Why?
2. Trace the novel's plot. Include the rising action, climax, and denouement.
3. Is Charlotte a good sailor? Why or why not?
4. What role does the novel's setting play in the story? Why is the setting so important in this novel?

THE TRUE CONFESSIONS OF CHARLOTTE DOYLE

ANSWER KEY

VOCABULARY TEST

Possible response:

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. resentment | 13. twisted |
| 2. calmness, patience | 14. straight |
| 3. hired | 15. big, clumsy |
| 4. fired | 16. slim |
| 5. restrain, quell | 17. agreement |
| 6. allow | 18. rebellion |
| 7. speed | 19. disordered |
| 8. indolence, leisure | 20. neat |
| 9. calm | 21. mysterious |
| 10. untamed, wild | 22. clear, plain |
| 11. frail, aged | 23. never stopping |
| 12. hearty, healthy | 24. stopping |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

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

Part II: True/False (20 points)

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

Part III: Motivation (20 points)

1. Rejoin her family there, since they have traveled ahead.
2. The two families who were supposed to travel with her do not arrive.
3. It is too late: the *Seahawk* is already sailing!
4. They want to get revenge on Jaggery for cutting off Cranick's arm.
5. Her father is part owner of the ship and thus is Jaggery's boss.
6. It is inappropriate for a lady.
7. He wants to punish one sailor for the mutiny.
8. She realizes that Jaggery is cruel and a dangerous captain.
9. To make it easier for her to battle the hurricane.
10. Avenge Zachariah's death.

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Sentence Completion (20 points)

1. America
2. dagger
3. did not tie a knot correctly
4. carved brown nut
5. sailor suit
6. funeral
7. climb the main mast
8. a hurricane
9. a key
10. Charlotte

Part II: Matching (20 points)

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

Part III: Identification (20 points)

1. The dirk is important for two reasons. First, it shows that Charlotte is in very real danger from the captain. Second, the Captain uses it to kill Hollybrass and frame Charlotte for the murder.
2. Zachariah is Charlotte's friend and protector. He is the moral center of the novel, its conscience.
3. The "round robin" is the sailors' sign for a mutiny. Its presence reveals their plot to overthrow Jaggery.
4. The sailor suit is the first step in Charlotte's transformation from a typical nineteenth-century genteel lady to a rebel who chooses freedom. When she wears the suit, she throws off the bonds of her time and gender expectations.
5. Charlotte's journal is the record of her remarkable adventures.

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.



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