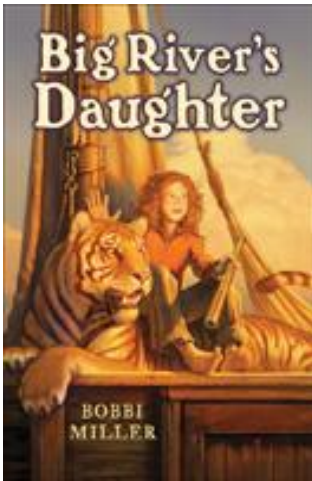


# EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



## BIG RIVER'S DAUGHTER

by Bobbi Miller



GRADES 4–7

### About the Book

Raised by her pirate father on a Mississippi keeler, River is a half-feral river rat and proud of it. When her powerful father disappears in the great earthquake of 1811, she is on the run from buccaneers, including Jean Lafitte, who hope to claim her father's territory and his buried treasure.

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*E-book available*

## SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

### Literature/Language Arts

#### Questions for Discussion/Writing

Students may discuss the following questions as a whole group or in small groups, or choose one or more about which to write. (Note: It might be helpful for students to read the Author's Note on pages 195–199 for explanations of some of the actual people mentioned in the story.)

- Throughout the story, River describes feeling great anger at what has happened in her life. How does this anger propel her toward the various actions she undertakes, usually for a good reason? How does this change as the story progresses? Describe situations in your own life when anger perhaps made you do something for a good cause.
- Many of the events, characters, and conversations in the story have parallels in tall tales and other examples of folklore—especially the concept of exaggeration. What are some examples of exaggeration that stood out for you in the story? Think of an event or incident in your life and talk or write about it, exaggerating the details to make it more entertaining.
- Throughout the story, Da was always with River through her memories of things he had done or had said. Give an example from your own life of a lost loved one whom you feel is still with you and the way that this person continues to inspire you or govern your life.
- Annie Christmas: portrayed as a heroine in the story and a role model for River. Do you think she was a good role model? Why or why not? What qualities did she have that made her a heroine?
- River, Da, Annie Christmas, Catiche, and others made choices as to how they would live their lives, even though these choices put them outside the norm for their times. How do people make these types of difficult choices or decisions? What choices have you made so far in your own life? Why? River said, “I belong to the big river.” Where do you think you belong? Why?
- After River frees Tiger from his cage, they begin to understand each other and protect each other. Describe similar feelings and interactions you may have had with an animal—maybe a pet.

- As the story ends, River and her friends are illegally transporting slaves from New Orleans to the north so they can be free. Do you believe it is okay to do something unlawful even if it's for a good cause? Why or why not? Can you find other examples throughout history where illegal actions were carried out for good reasons?

**CCSS 4-7.W.3, 4-7.SL.1, 5.RL.3**

**4-7.W.3 Writing Standards/Text Types and Purposes**—Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

**4-7.SL.1 Speaking and Listening Standards/Comprehension and Collaboration**—Engage effectively in a range of collaborate discussion with divers partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

**5.RL.3 Reading Standards for Literature/Key Ideas and Details**—Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text.

## Research

The author used the idea of possible imaginations to create a story that included actual historical people and events interwoven with the fictional ones. Students can find further information using print and electronic resources on Annie Christmas, Jean Laffitte, Mike Fink, the War of 1812, Mississippi pirates, Blackbeard (Edward Teach), New Orleans life in 1812, and the Underground Railroad. Ask students to write a short paper on the historical person of their choice.

**CCSS 5.W.7, 5.W.8 Writing Standards/Research to Build and Present Knowledge**—

**5.W.7**—Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

**5.W.8**—Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; summarize or paraphrase information in notes and finished work, and provide a list of sources.

## Online Resources

[http://earthquake.usgs.gov/earthquakes/states/events/1811\\_overview.php](http://earthquake.usgs.gov/earthquakes/states/events/1811_overview.php) presents information of the earthquake of December 16, 1811, that begins River's story.

[www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/327716/Jean-Laffite](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/327716/Jean-Laffite) presents information on what is known about the life of Jean Laffite.

[www.gmc.edu/library/neworleans/index.htm](http://www.gmc.edu/library/neworleans/index.htm) presents brief descriptions of the history, people, food, culture, music, etc. of New Orleans

[http://www.crt.state.la.us/hp/nationalregister/historic\\_contexts/The\\_African\\_American\\_Experience\\_in\\_Louisiana.pdf](http://www.crt.state.la.us/hp/nationalregister/historic_contexts/The_African_American_Experience_in_Louisiana.pdf) presents an extensive discussion of the history of African Americans in Louisiana and includes information on Freetown.

Classroom activities prepared by Sandy Schuckett, school library consultant.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Bobbi Miller** is a story collector, a storyteller, and a writer who teaches writing. Exploring the American landscape and spinning tall tales are her passions. She is the author of several picture books for children. *Big River's Daughter* is her first novel. Bobbi lives in a log cabin in Connecticut. Visit her website at [www.bobbimillerbooks.com/](http://www.bobbimillerbooks.com/).