

Pirates of the Caribbean – The Curse of the Black Pearl

Elaine O'Reilly



Summary

Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl is an adventure story set in the 17th century, an era when villainous pirates scavenged the Caribbean seas. Will Turner, an apprentice blacksmith, and Captain Jack Sparrow, a pirate himself, must fight a dangerous band of pirates, led by Captain Barbossa, who are trying to lift an ancient curse that leaves them stuck between life and death. In order to save Elizabeth Swann, the love of Will's life, recapture the Black Pearl, and recover a lost treasure, they fight on the mysterious Isla de Muerta.

Chapter 1: When new governor Swann and his daughter, Elizabeth, sail to Port Royal on the *Dauntless*, they see a shipwreck and its only survivor, a boy named Will Turner. Elizabeth discovers a gold medallion with a skull around his neck. Fearing he will be arrested as a pirate, she hides it under her dress. She also sees a big, black ship, which soon disappears.

Chapter 2: Eight years later, Captain Norrington of the British Navy is promoted to Commodore. Elizabeth wears a new dress to his party. Will Turner delivers a fine sword that the governor will present Norrington with.

Chapter 3: When Norrington proposes to Elizabeth, she faints because her dress is too tight, and falls into the water. While trying to seize the *Interceptor*, pirate Captain Jack Sparrow sees Elizabeth fall into the bay and rescues her. He is promptly arrested for piracy, but uses Elizabeth to escape.

Chapter 4: In a blacksmith's store, Jack meets Will Turner, who is now a blacksmith's apprentice and has learned how to use a sword skillfully. They fight. Jack is knocked unconscious and finally caught.

Chapter 5: That night, Port Royal is besieged by the *Black Pearl*, a pirate ghost ship. Seeking the medallion, the pirates attack and set fire to the town. Elizabeth is captured.

Chapter 6: On the *Black Pearl*, she tells Captain Barbossa her last name is *Turner*. She persuades the pirates to stop the attack on Port Royal in exchange for the medallion, but Barbossa keeps Elizabeth prisoner with a trick.

Chapter 7: Will fails to persuade Norrington to help rescue Elizabeth, so he turns to Jack Sparrow. Jack agrees to go after the pirates with him, so Will frees him from his cell. They fool the sailors and sail away on the *Interceptor*.

Chapter 8: On the *Black Pearl*, Elizabeth has dinner with Captain Barbossa. He can't eat and talks about the medallion. He explains that it is Aztec gold, given to Cortés on his arrival in the Americas. When the pirates took the gold from the *Isla de Muerta*, they spent it but they were cursed: they are ghosts. The curse can only be lifted when all the gold and pirate's blood are returned to the island. Having retrieved the medallion and believing Elizabeth is the daughter of the late pirate Bill Turner, he is happy that their curse will end. She is taken to a cave.

Chapter 9: Jack tells Will he knew his father, who was a good pirate. On the island of Tortuga, Jack meets Gibbs and tells him he is after Barbossa. Gibbs helps him recruit a crew of good sailors. While en route, Will learns the *Black Pearl* was formerly commanded by Sparrow but Barbossa staged a mutiny, took over the ship, and left Jack on an island with only his gun. But he escaped.

Chapter 10: Jack and Will find Elizabeth in a cave. Barbossa wants her blood to end the curse but it does not work it is not Turner's blood. Will rescues Elizabeth, who takes the medallion with her.

Chapter 11: On the *Interceptor*, Elizabeth gives Will the medallion back. He understands the pirates are after his blood. On the *Black Pearl*, Jack barter with Barbossa: Turner's blood in exchange for his ship. The *Black Pearl* catches up with the *Interceptor* and after a short fight, Barbossa and his men take control over the other ship's crew. Will threatens to kill himself unless Elizabeth is set free. Barbossa promises to let her free on a small island. Jack will go with her.

Chapter 12: Jack agrees to go the island and asks for two guns. Barbossa gives only one: to shoot the girl with. Jack and Elizabeth swim to the island. Once there, Elizabeth

Pirates of the Caribbean – The Curse of the Black Pearl

wants to help Will: as soon as Jack falls asleep, she starts a fire. Luckily, the *Dauntless* sees the signal smoke.

Chapter 13: On the *Dauntless*, Norrington wants to put Jack in chains, but Elizabeth suggests Jack help them catch Barbossa and rescue Will. She promises to marry Norrington, so he agrees. On the island, Barbossa is about to kill Will when Jack warns him that the *Dauntless* has come to take them. Barbossa decides to attack the *Dauntless* and make it his.

Chapter 14: While the ghostly pirates attack the *Dauntless*, Jack's sailors attack the *Black Pearl*. Elizabeth asks them for help, but they refuse, so she goes to the island on her own. In the cave, they all want the gold, so Jack fights Barbossa and Will, Barbossa's men. When Barbossa tries to kill Jack, he notices he has become a skeleton as well. When Barbossa puts his sword near Elizabeth's head, Jack shoots him and Will ends the curse. Now Barbossa falls down, dead.

Chapter 15: Jack is about to be killed in front of Norrington, the governor, and the town people, but Elizabeth pleads for his life. Suddenly Will appears, tells Elizabeth he loves her, and throws a sword to Jack, who fights with Norrington's men. When Norrington orders his men to shoot him, Will and Elizabeth stand in front of Jack. Just then, Jack falls into the harbor: the *Black Pearl* was waiting for him. Norrington allows them one day's head start before following Jack and his sailors. Noticing Elizabeth loves Will, he wishes them a happy life.

The original text

The original text is an award-winning Disney film starring Johnny Depp, Orlando Bloom, and Keira Knightley. It was released in 2003.

Background and themes

Pirates and privateers: The European monarchs could not afford to send their naval forces to the Caribbean, which was thousands of miles from European control, so they allowed the owners of private ships to attack ships from rival nations. These captains were known as privateers, legal pirates who turned over a portion of what they seized to the government that sponsored them. Pirates, on the other hand, mercilessly harassed anyone who passed by.

The Caribbean, Port Royal: In the mid-1600s Jamaica was a British colony surrounded by Spanish and Portuguese

property. Port Royal was a safe harbor centrally located along the trade routes between Panama and Spain. Spain and England were at war. Sailors flocked to Port Royal, which became the headquarters of raids against Spanish ships. When the British set up a fort in Port Royal, there wasn't a navy to protect it, so the governor recruited privateers from among the sailors in Tortuga.

Curses: Belief in curses and blessings is found in many cultures. They are sometimes associated with superstition, magic, or witchcraft. They frequently appear in folktales. Ask students: Do you believe in curses? Are there any traditional stories with a curse in your culture?

Discussion activities

The following teacher-led activities aim at **discussion and extension**.

Chapters 1–3

Before reading

- 1 **Discuss:** Have students talk about the book cover.
 - a Discuss these questions: *Can you name any of these actors? Can you describe the characters? Did you see this film? What was it about?*
 - b Have students read the title and discuss these questions. *What do you know about pirates? What is the Caribbean and where is it? Would you like to go?*

While reading

- 2 **Discuss:** Have students read the introduction and discuss pirates in pairs: *What is a pirate's life like? What kind of people are they? What do they do?*
- 3 **Predict:** Ask the students: *Is the book going to be different from the film? If so, how?*
- 4 **Role-play:** Read page 2 and role play the conversation: *Will Turner wakes up and sees Elizabeth. He doesn't know what happened to him. He asks Elizabeth and she explains.*

After reading

- 5 **Write:** Ask students to complete Elizabeth's diary entry after Norrington's party: *We are in Port Royal now. My father wants me to marry Mr. Norrington, but . . .*

Chapters 4–6

Before reading

- 6 **Discuss:** Have students read the titles of the next three chapters and discuss the following.
 - a *Who is in the blacksmith's store? What will happen there? (page 9)*
 - b *Who are these pirates? Why are they in Port Royal? (page 11)*
 - c *Who is on the Black Pearl? Who is the captain? (page 12)*

Pirates of the Caribbean – The Curse of the Black Pearl

While reading

- 7 Role-play:** Have students imagine a speech by the governor: *The day after the fire, Governor Swann talks to the public in Port Royal and tells them what happened the night before.*
Dear friends,
Yesterday was a very bad day for our town. Many dangerous pirates came and . . .

After reading

- 8 Write:** Barbossa tells the governor about his plan to leave and take Elizabeth. Write the note.
9 Predict: Have students discuss the following.
Where is Barbossa taking Elizabeth? Will he kill her now that he has the medallion?

Chapters 7–9

Before reading

- 10 Predict:** Ask students to look carefully at the pictures on pages 16 and 19. Have them describe them and speculate about what happens next.

While reading

- 11 Role-play:** Have students imagine how Norrington explained to Governor Swann how Jack and Will sailed away on the *Interceptor* (page 16). Role play the conversation.
12 Discuss: Barbossa explains what the curse is about. Have students in groups make up different curses for pirates/Norrington./ Elizabeth/Will. Then they share them with the class.

After reading

- 13 Write:** Gibbs has difficulty in finding sailors for Jack Sparrow. He decides to put posters all over Tortuga. Have students design the poster.
14 Guess (after reading page 21): Have students speculate which of these possibilities is the most realistic. They should account for their answers.
 a *Elizabeth is going to be killed.*
 b *Elizabeth fights Ragetti and escapes.*
 c *Norrington comes to the cave and takes her home.*
 d *Will helps her.*

Chapters 10–12

While reading

- 15 Discuss:** Have students discuss why people in the story said the following:
 a *"I'm sorry, Jack," Will said. (page 22)*
 b *"When this curse ends, I'm going to eat fruit. A lot of fruit!" Barbossa said. (page 22)*
 c *"Why don't I go onto the ship and talk to them?" Jack said. (page 25)*
 d *"Last time you gave me a gun," Jack said to Barbossa. (page 27)*

After reading

- 16 Check:** Have students answer the following questions.
 a *Why did Jack and Will get into a smaller boat?*
 b *What was in the middle of the gold?*
 c *Why did Barbossa cut Elizabeth's hand?*
 d *Why didn't the curse end?*
 e *Why did Jack thank Barbossa?*
 f *Jack wants his ship back. What did he promise Barbossa?*
 g *Why did Barbossa give Jack a gun when Elizabeth and Jack went to the island?*
17 Guess: Encourage students to find an answer to the following. *Why was Jack angry when he swam to the island with Elizabeth?*
18 Predict: Ask students to predict the following.
 a *Will the captain of the Dauntless see the fire on the island?*
 b *Will they rescue Elizabeth and Jack?*
 c *Will Jack go to prison again?*

Chapters 13–15

While reading

- 19 Guess:** (after reading page 29): Have students compare the information on page 29 to their predictions in the previous activity.
20 Discuss: Have students discuss the following in pairs. *"I don't understand you. Are you with them or with us?" Barbossa asks Jack. (page 33) Why couldn't Barbossa understand? Why did Jack say, "Remember, I am a pirate!"*
21 Discuss: Ask students to decide on the following: *Must Jack help Will? Why? Will this help him recover his ship? Will this help him become richer? Will he feel better?*

After reading

- 22 Write:** Ask the students to complete Norrington's diary. *Yesterday was a sad day. We came back to Port Royal. I love Elizabeth, but she does not love me, . . .*

Activities after reading the book

- 23 Discuss:** Have students talk about the film vs. the book.
 a *Which is more interesting? Which gives more information?*
 b *Which do you prefer to do first: see the film or read the book? Why?*
 c *There is a lot of action in this story. Which part is the most difficult to film?*