

# THE CHRONICLES OF THE BLACK TULIP ACTIVITY KIT

An Activity Kit for Educators,  
Librarians, Booksellers, Book Clubs,  
and Other Seaworthy Readers

To introduce Volumes I and II of  
*The Chronicles of the Black Tulip* series  
by Barry Wolverton



# ABOUT THE KIT

COMPANION TO



To deepen the reader's engagement with these Age of Discovery novels, we present you with a series of activities that can be:

- ✿ incorporated into classroom lessons;
- ✿ part of programming at a library or bookstore;
- ✿ used with a book club; or
- ✿ experienced individually by a curious reader.

Informational reading, geometry, social studies, and science are embedded into these hands-on learning activities designed for readers ages 8-12.

## ACTIVITY 1: MAPPING THE ALBATROSS

The majority of the action in *The Vanishing Island* takes place on board a ship in 1599. The reader comes to know the intricacies of the *Albatross* as the 12-year-old novice Bren Owen does. Readers will use informational text features to map their growing knowledge of the vessel and the story.

*Note: While this activity may be used at an event to introduce the book, it is best used during the reading of the book.*

In line with CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.5, RI.3-6.10

## ACTIVITY 2: NOTABLE KNOTS

At sea, knowing the right knot can save a sail or even a ship. Through hands-on learning with step-by-step instructions, readers use both the text and the illustrations to practice this sailor's skill.

In line with CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3-4.7

## ACTIVITY 3: BATTLE AT SEA

A sea battle in *The Vanishing Island* is complicated by the appearance of an impenetrable, magical fog. Readers will use their powers of prediction, geometry and deductive reasoning to fight a now-invisible foe.

In line with CCSS.Math.Content.5.G.A. 1-2

## ACTIVITY 4: NAVIGATING WITH A NEEDLE

It was either a battle at sea or the fulfillment of a mysterious wish that sent the *Albatross* wildly off course. Bren, now serving as the navigator's apprentice, must learn the science of measuring longitude, latitude, speed, and distance. In this physical science activity, readers magnetize a needle and float it in water to find north and learn about the magnetic poles.

In line with NGSS.3-P.S2-3

## ACTIVITY 5: THE PLOWMAN AND THE CLOUD MAIDEN

The unspoken mission of the *Albatross's* voyage is to find an island that no sailor or navigator has seen in 300 years. Solving the puzzle of Vanishing Island's location involves a Chinese legend and the ability to read Chinese characters. In this activity, readers can practice the brush strokes to make some simple Chinese words and build an appreciation of China's rich written language.

## ACTIVITY 6: JOIN THE ORDER OF THE BLACK TULIP

Entry into the secretive Order of the Black Tulip is only bestowed upon those adventurous sailors and explorers who are open to the world's mysteries—as well as any reader who has finished the book and completed these activities! This activity offers multiple images of The Order of the Black Tulip tattoo and instructions on how to print the sheet using temporary tattoo or decal paper.

## ACTIVITY 7: THE DRAGON'S GATE WRITING AND ART ACTIVITIES

Students will create a Dragon Boat, choose their favorite among the Eight Immortals, write a Folktale and examine the motives of the curious character, Lady Barrett.

## ACTIVITY 8: THE DRAGON'S GATE MAP PROJECTS

Students will make a map, explore the Silk Road and the Spice Trade, see how maps have changed from the past to the present, and think about what maps have to say about equality in the world.

# ABOUT THE BOOKS

*The Vanishing Island and The Dragon's Gate*  
*The Chronicles of the Black Tulip*  
Volumes 1 and 2

By Barry Wolverton

Published by Walden Pond Press

**The Vanishing Island:** It's 1599, the Age of Discovery in Europe. But for Bren Owen, growing up in the small town of Map on the coast of Britannia has meant anything but adventure. Enticed by the tales sailors have brought through Map's port, and inspired by the arcane maps his father creates as a cartographer for the cruel and charismatic map mogul named Rand McNally, Bren is convinced that fame and fortune await him elsewhere.

That's when Bren meets a dying sailor, who gives him a strange gift that hides a hidden message. Cracking the code could lead Bren to a fabled lost treasure that could change his life forever, and that of his widowed father. Before long, Bren is in greater danger than he ever imagined and will need the help of an unusual friend named Mouse to survive.

**The Dragon's Gate:** A magical white jade stone and a map inscribed in bone that may be the key to an even greater mystery—this is the treasure Bren and Mouse have found buried on the Vanishing Island. Mouse is determined to follow the map to a place called the Dragon's Gate, convinced it will explain who she really is and the powers she possesses. Bren has had

enough adventure for one lifetime and would like nothing more than to return to his father in Map. But nothing goes according to plan when the survivors of the *Albatross* are rescued by Lady Jean Barrett, a charismatic archaeologist with a sense of destiny.

The only way for Bren, Mouse, and Lady Barrett to all get what they want is to work together on a dangerous journey into the heart of China, a kingdom long closed to outsiders, where the greatest secrets about Mouse and Bren are waiting to be unveiled.

## PRAISE FOR THE BOOKS

**The Vanishing Island:** "This engaging historical narrative will draw readers in who love stories of adventure and exploration with a strong dose of fantasy."

—*School Library Journal*

**The Dragon's Gate:** "In his signature style, Wolverton cleverly overlays intricate plotting with ancient Chinese legends and history (including the Dragon Boat Festival and the Terracotta Warriors) and creates a thrilling, fast-paced story that flies by."

—*Kirkus Reviews (starred)*



COMPANION TO

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Barry Wolverton is the author of *Neversink* (Walden Pond Press). He has extensive experience creating books, documentary television scripts and website content for international networks and publishers, including Scholastic.com, National Geographic, the Library of Congress, and the Discovery Networks. Barry lives in Memphis, Tennessee.



## harpercollinschildrens.com

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## CREDITS

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## ACTIVITY 1

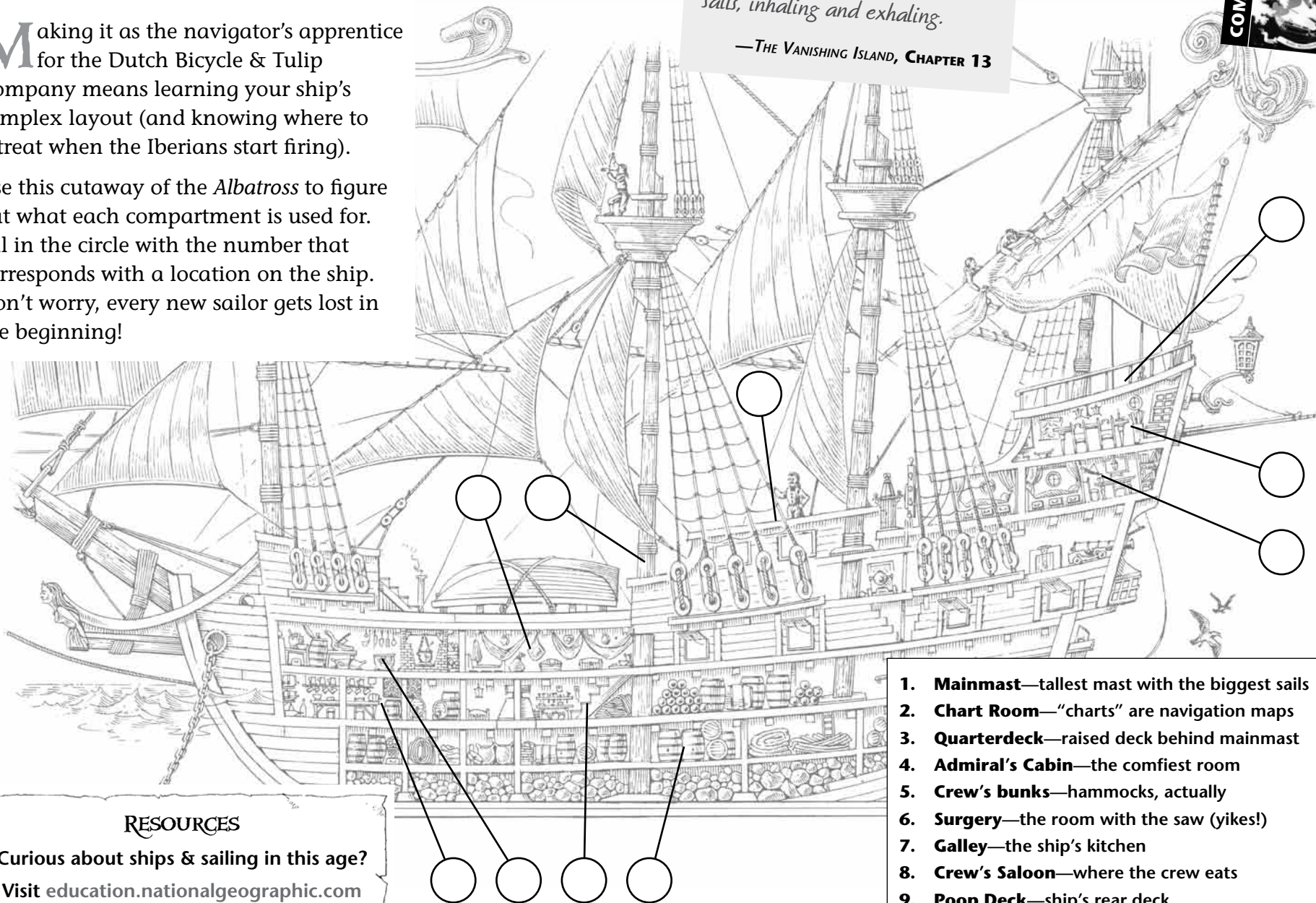
# MAPPING THE ALBATROSS

Making it as the navigator's apprentice for the Dutch Bicycle & Tulip Company means learning your ship's complex layout (and knowing where to retreat when the Iberians start firing).

Use this cutaway of the *Albatross* to figure out what each compartment is used for. Fill in the circle with the number that corresponds with a location on the ship. Don't worry, every new sailor gets lost in the beginning!

*He heard the snap of canvas and looked up in awe at a full set of sails, inhaling and exhaling.*

—THE VANISHING ISLAND, CHAPTER 13



### RESOURCES

Curious about ships & sailing in this age?  
Visit [education.nationalgeographic.com](http://education.nationalgeographic.com)  
and search for "Sailing Through History."

1. **Mainmast**—tallest mast with the biggest sails
2. **Chart Room**—"charts" are navigation maps
3. **Quarterdeck**—raised deck behind mainmast
4. **Admiral's Cabin**—the comfiest room
5. **Crew's bunks**—hammocks, actually
6. **Surgery**—the room with the saw (yikes!)
7. **Galley**—the ship's kitchen
8. **Crew's Saloon**—where the crew eats
9. **Poop Deck**—ship's rear deck
10. **Hold**—where cargo is stowed

# NOTABLE KNOTS

Knowing the right knot can save a sail and the ship. While Bren was told to learn forty-eight knots, you can probably start your sea journey with these two sailors' mainstays.

## WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

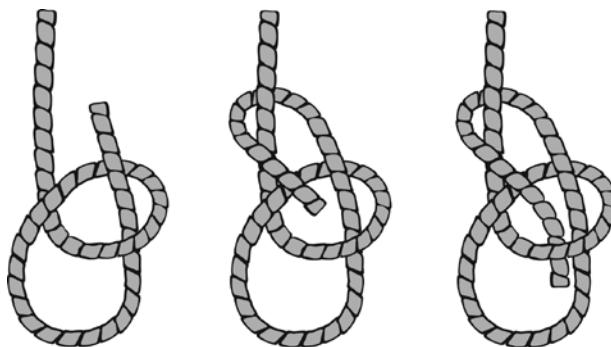
- ✿ A piece of rope. Most rope will do, but ideally you should locate a 24" length that is 1/4" thick. Look for a rope that is flexible, such as old white rope clothesline.

*Sean gave him a rope and a chart of all the boating knots he needed to learn. The chart showed forty-eight different knots, and Bren began to wonder if he was being hazed... Sheepshank, cleat hitch halyard, carrick bend, pile hitch, pig knuckle, goose neck, oxbow, triple axel, horcrux, four-in-hand...how long would this take?*

—THE VANISHING ISLAND, CHAPTER 14

## THE BOWLINE KNOT

Known as the king of knots, the bowline dates back to the Age of Sail. This knot held the square sail toward the bow of the ship and into the wind.



BOWLINE

Non-sailors use a large version of the knot to rescue people who have fallen in holes or over cliffs. That could be useful. Some people claim they can tie the bowline with one hand! Try it once you have conquered it with two hands.

## FIGURE EIGHT KNOT

This is one of the strongest knots in a sailor's arsenal, and the most trusted. On board any ship, ropes can swell and stiffen with water and salt. A knot that swells and stiffens is hard to undo. This is not the case with the mighty Figure Eight. As strong as it is, a sailor can easily undo it, even with wet, cold hands.

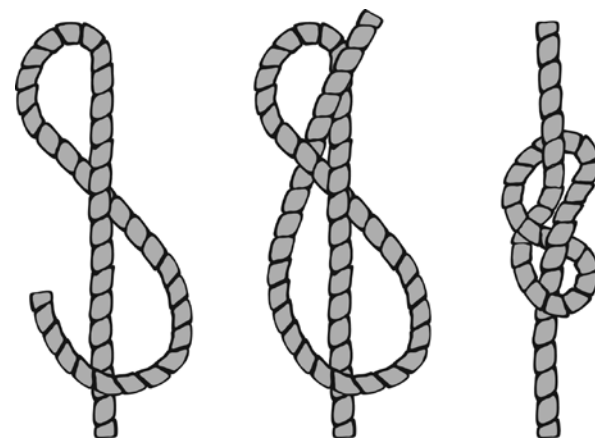


FIGURE EIGHT

## RESOURCES

Curious about other knots?  
Visit [animatedknots.com](http://animatedknots.com)



# BATTLE AT SEA (PAGE 1 OF 2)



## A GAME FOR TWO PLAYERS

Imagine this. You are in the middle of a battle between a fleet of ships from the the Dutch Bicycle & Tulip Company (DB&TC) and an Iberian fleet when a mysterious fog descends! All the ships become invisible to one another. Despite the impenetrable fog, however, the two fleets continue to blindly exchange fire. Has your ship been hit? Has your return volley missed? Which ship will win the day? Play this game with a friend (or foe) to determine the victor of this battle at sea.

*"We can't still outrun them?"  
"Not if we're full of holes."*

—THE VANISHING ISLAND, CHAPTER 16

## PREPARE YOUR FLEET

- ✿ Choose your fleet. Are you an admiral in the **DB&TC** or an **Iberian** admiral?
- ✿ Locate scissors, tape, and two pencils.
- ✿ Cut out the two ships in your fleet.
- ✿ Find an object to block the other admiral from seeing your game board (following page).
- ✿ Tape both your ships onto your Fleet Game Board, wherever you choose.

### THE DB&TC FLEET

*Cut out your ships along the dotted lines.*



### THE IBERIAN FLEET

*Cut out your ships along the dotted lines.*



## ENGAGE THE OTHER FLEET

- ✿ Notice that your game board has a grid with letters on one axis and numbers on the other.
- ✿ Your enemy will fire at you by calling out a letter and a number (example: A5). These are called coordinates.
- ✿ Where the A and the 5 intersect on your Fleet Game Board is where your enemy's shot will land.

Has your enemy hit you? Say "hit" and mark an "X" on your ship where A and 5 intersect.

Has your enemy missed you? Say "miss" and mark an "O" on the square where A and 5 intersect.

- ✿ After your enemy fires, you can take a turn. Call out your coordinates. Mark an "X" for a "hit" or an "O" for a "miss" on your opponent's Fleet Game Board to keep track of your shots.
- ✿ Each ship can take six hits before it sinks.
- ✿ Whoever has the last ship still floating, wins! (Don't forget to rescue those left without a ship!)

ACTIVITY 3

# BATTLE AT SEA (PAGE 2 OF 2)



Each player will need a copy of this page. Tape your two ships onto the grid of *your* Fleet Game Board anywhere you choose—each ship will take up 6 squares. Use the other fleet's game board to keep track of your hits and misses.

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



THE DB&TC FLEET GAME BOARD

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



THE IBERIAN FLEET GAME BOARD



## ACTIVITY 4

# NAVIGATING WITH A NEEDLE

When a ship gets turned around in a storm, in a battle, or by an ancient paiza, the navigator must use all of his or her skills and instruments to find the ship's longitude and latitude.

The navigators of the Dutch Bicycle & Tulip Company knew how to find their position at sea with very simple tools. But for those who were not trained to use the tools, the indicators of location might have seemed invisible and mysterious. A scientific mind like yours, though, knows that while some things are invisible, they need not be mysterious. Follow these directions to find the invisible—but powerful—magnetic poles that can show you (and any good navigator) magnetic north.



COMPASS

Property of The Dutch Bicycle & Tulip Company

## WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

- Wide-mouthed bowl
- Water
- Scissors
- Sewing needle
- Magnet (Most fridge magnets will work)

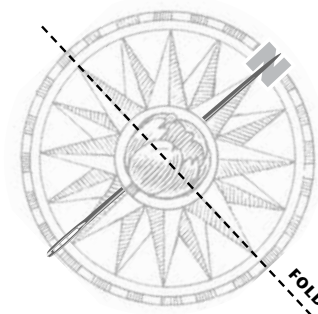
## STEPS TO MAKING A COMPASS

- Fill your bowl with water and set it aside.
- Cut out the paper compass on this sheet and set it aside.
- Pick the sewing needle up by the eye with the point facing away from you.
- Swipe the point of the needle in the same direction on one side of the magnet 30-40 times. The needle is now magnetized!
- Fold the compass in half (with the picture on the outside) and look for the "N" for North. Be careful of the point!

*"I can always tell where we are north and south on the map. But east-west? Hope and pray, jongen, hope and pray."*

—THE VANISHING ISLAND, CHAPTER 17

- Guide the needle through the bend in the compass so that the needle points to **N**.
- Carefully flatten out the compass. The needle point and the needle eye should now show on the picture side of the compass. The middle of the needle should be on the opposite blank side of the compass. (See below)



EXAMPLE

Pin Through Compass

- With the picture and needle point on top, gently float the compass in the middle of the bowl of water.

Does the compass move? Where does the needle point and "N" face? You have found magnetic north! The ship and crew may yet be saved!

## RESOURCES

Curious about the magnetic poles?

Visit [www.scientificamerican.com](http://www.scientificamerican.com) and search for "Find Magnetic North."





# THE PLOWMAN & THE CLOUD MAIDEN (PAGE 1 OF 2)



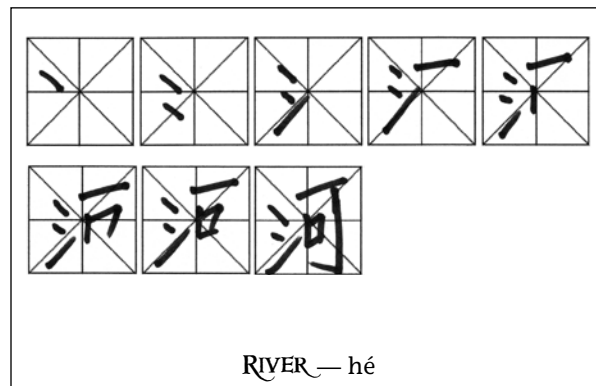
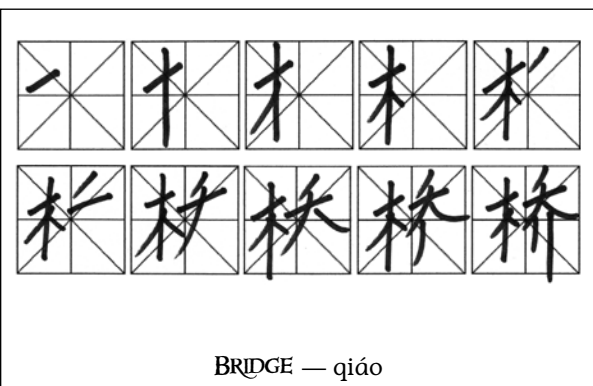
The Age of Discovery drew the men and women of Europe across the seas and around the world. Some, like Bren and the Admiral, were lucky enough to encounter the cultural riches of China and meet seafaring Plowman people like Mouse.

“The Plowman & the Cloud Maiden” (or “The Weaver Girl & the Cowherd”) is a tale from Chinese mythology about star-crossed lovers kept apart by a wide river between their worlds. That tale and the knowledge of Chinese characters will help Bren and Mouse locate Vanishing Island.

You can experience the intricate, beautiful strokes of modern Chinese characters that represent the words **river**, **bridge**, and **bird** by copying the strokes on this page. The task is not easy. In fact, one can spend a lifetime exploring the 3,000-year-old Chinese written language. Trying and practicing can be a bridge across any cultural river.

## WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

- ✿ A marker or pen
- ✿ The character guide blanks (next page)
- ✿ A keen eye!

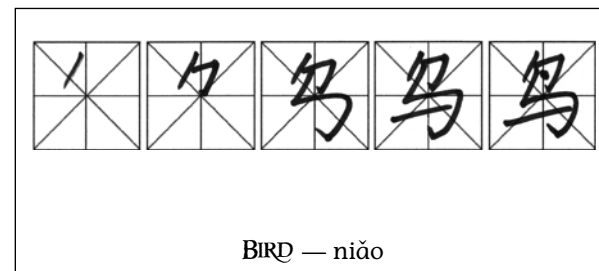


The admiral stood up from his desk and walked over to a cabinet, taking from it a small leather portfolio. He returned to the desk, unfolded a good-size sheet of parchment, and motioned for Bren to sit down. He pushed a pen and inkwell toward him.

“And you’d better be right,” he added. “I’m sure I don’t have to tell you that even small differences in the strokes of Chinese symbols can change meanings entirely.”

“No, sir,” said Bren.

—THE VANISHING ISLAND, CHAPTER 13



## RESOURCES

Curious about Chinese characters?  
Visit [YouTube.com](https://www.youtube.com) and search for the user “ABCsOfChinese.”



# THE ORDER OF THE BLACK TULIP (PAGE 1 OF 2)



Entry into the secretive Order of the Black Tulip is only bestowed upon the most adventurous of sailors and explorers, those that are open to the world's mysteries. Any reader of *The Vanishing Island* by Barry Wolverton deserves admission to the Order.

Not surprisingly, The Order of the Black Tulip tattoo is harder to come by. To turn this image into a temporary tattoo, you must first seek out tattoo paper. We suggest the “tattoo decal paper” and tutorial at [decalpaper.com](http://decalpaper.com). Once you have tattoo paper in your hands, the possibilities are endless.



## WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

- ✿ Temporary tattoo or decal paper
- ✿ An inkjet or laser printer
- ✿ Scissors

## HOW TO MAKE YOUR ORDER OF THE BLACK TULIP TATTOO

- ✿ Follow the directions that come with the tattoo/decal paper. Use the next page as artwork for your tattoos.

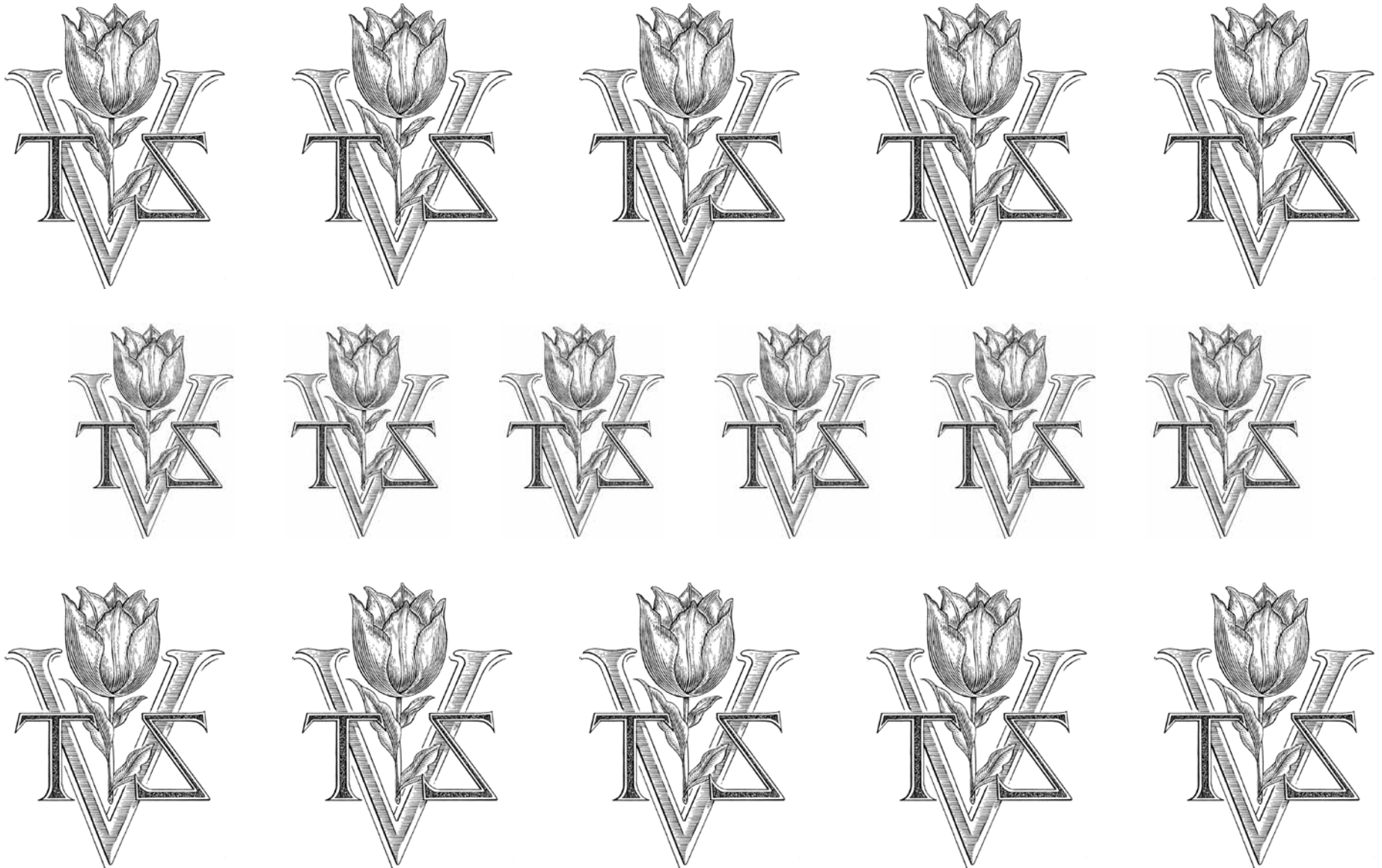
*“I’m afraid my tattoo has outlived the brotherhood,” he continued. “The Order was once an elite group of Netherlanders, committed to exploration of the extraordinary. You see, in our culture, the black tulip is a sort of Holy Grail. All attempts to find or cultivate a truly black tulip, which would be the rarest of rare plants, have failed. Some say it is impossible, that nothing in nature can be black, except in death. Thus the black tulip has come to symbolize the impossible—things that defy nature and religion. Immortality, even. Needless to say, membership in the Order was not easily earned.”*

—THE VANISHING ISLAND, CHAPTER 11

# THE ORDER OF THE BLACK TULIP (PAGE 2 OF 2)



Use this page to make your tattoos. We have already reversed the images for you.



# THE DRAGON'S GATE WRITING & ART PROJECTS



## DRAGON BOATS:

Bren and his companions borrow a traditional Chinese dragon boat for the first leg of their 1,000 mile journey to Qin's tomb. It proves impressively agile in the water, though Bren is a little disappointed to find it undecorated. Research dragon boats and help lift Bren's spirits by designing and drawing one of your own, complete with traditional head and tail adornments, colorful scales, magical accents, and more.

## THE EIGHT IMMORTALS:

In *The Dragon's Gate*, the character Yaozu teaches Bren, Mouse, and Lady Barrett about the Eight Immortals, powerful figures from ancient Chinese history:

- ✿ The lotus flower, giving the power of persuasion;
- ✿ The jade tablet, for divination;
- ✿ The flute, which can call the wind and rain;
- ✿ The bottle gourd, offering protection from evil;
- ✿ The basket of flowers, which can heal;
- ✿ The bamboo drum, for summoning;
- ✿ The fan, which can bring the dead to life;
- ✿ The sword, the Tamer of Beasts.

If you could possess one of these Immortals, which would you choose?

Write a short story about your choice, how you came to possess it, why you admire its powers, and how you might use it to better humankind.

## FOLKTALES:

Recall Bren's folktale explaining the formation of the great stone pillars the group passes through on their way to Qin's tomb:

*"Before the Ancients," Bren began, "before the Eight Immortals, there were two brothers, Sky and Earth. And Earth raised these great pillars to hold the Sky up, and in return, Sky had a daughter, the Cloud Empress, to give Earth rain. Later Earth had a son, whose job was to dig holes and trenches so the rain could become rivers and lakes and seas.*

*"...The son of Earth and the daughter of Sky fell in love, against their parents' wishes, and when they sneaked off to be together, there was a drought. This angered Earth, who in a fit of spite ripped the tops of these pillars from the Sky, leaving them only as tall as we see them today. His anger nearly caused his ruin, because the Sky would have come crashing down, except for a bargain*

*struck at the last minute. The Cloud Empress would knit together enough clouds to support the Sky, but in return, Earth had to give his son to the Sky, and he became the Moon. Which is why the moon is a symbol of love."* (*The Dragon's Gate*, page 209)

Make up your own folktale about a geographic feature near your home.

## MIXED MOTIVES:

Lady Barrett frequently uses deceit to achieve her goals, swipe rare artifacts, and make her way as an antiquary.

However, she also agrees to do Mr. Black a favor by taking on his quest to find Bren. Think about Lady Barrett's motivations, both professional and personal. Does she work mostly in her own interest, or is she ever guided by a moral compass? Do you think Bren was right to trust her so quickly? Or do you think Sean was right to maintain a healthy skepticism? Based on what you think about Lady Barrett's motives, write a scene exploring what you think happened to her after she disappeared at the end of the book.



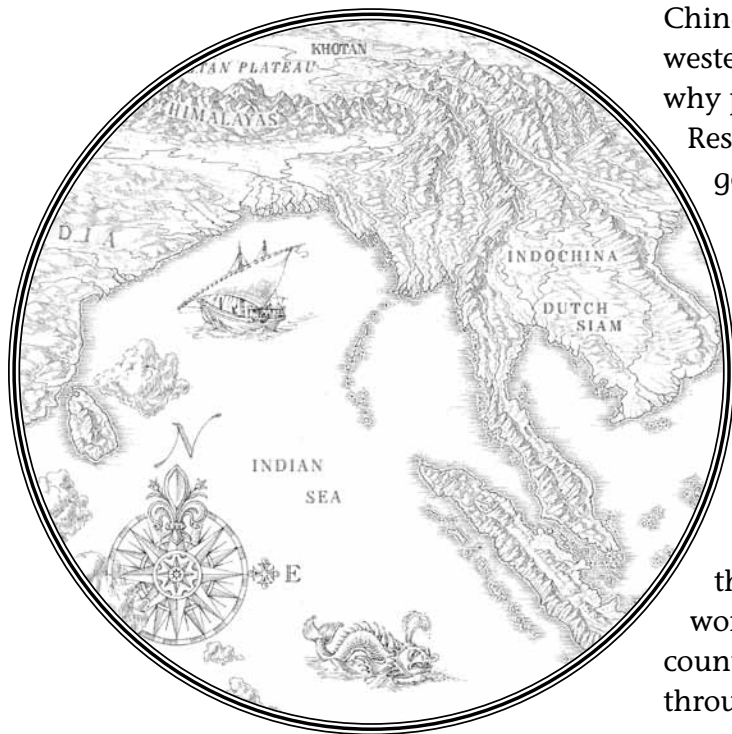
## ACTIVITY 8

# THE DRAGON'S GATE MAP PROJECTS



### MAPMAKING:

Use a compass, a ruler, and your imagination to design your own map to the mysterious uncharted land of your choice. Include geographical details, locations of settlements (if your magical land has any yet), landmarks, and anything else your heart desires. Does your map only appear when you brush sand over it like Lady Barrett's? Or is it derived from an ancient skeleton with strange marking on its bones, like Mouse's?



Include instructions with your map for how to find or view it.

### THE SILK ROAD & THE SPICE TRADE:

Bren is often enchanted by the travels of Marco Polo and other merchants, who journeyed along the Silk Road trading goods between the east and west. He notes that the smooth silk and flavorful spices he experiences on his adventure through China are particularly luxurious to his western senses, and he can understand why people back home find them valuable.

Research the silks, spices, and other goods traded along the Silk Road. Which ones pique your interest? Are there any eastern goods that are considered rather commonplace in western homes today? For which goods would you make the arduous trek along the Silk Road?

### MODERN MAPPING:

Compare the map of Bren's journey at the front of the book with a map of the world as we know it today. What modern countries did Bren and his friends pass through or near? What about Archibald



Black and Bren's father David Owen? Draw Bren's and his father's routes on a modern map to your best estimation, and ruminate on how the world has changed!

### EQUALITY IN CARTOGRAPHY:

Think about the traditional Mercator map projection with which we are familiar. Research some less-commonly known projections: Robinson, Gall-Peters, the Waterman Butterfly projection, and more. Now look up the upside-down Gal-Peters projection; how does this change your worldview? Did anything about these modified projections surprise you? Of all the map projections you've researched, which one do you think should be taught in schools in order to give a more accurate and socially equal representation of the world?

