

JEWELL PARKER RHODES

TREASURE



EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



About the Book

Three kids. One dog. And the island of Manhattan, laid out in an old treasure map.

Zane is itching for an adventure that will take him away from his family's boarding house in Rockaway, Queens. So when he is entrusted with a real treasure map, that leads to a spot somewhere in Manhattan, Zane wastes no time in riding the ferry over to the city to start the search with his friends Kiko and Jack and his dog, Hip-Hop.

Through a strange coincidence, they meet a man who is eager to help them find the treasure: John, a sailor who knows all about the buried history of Black New Yorkers of centuries past—and the gold that is hidden somewhere in those stories.

As a vicious rival skateboard crew follows them around the city, Zane and his friends begin to wonder who they can really trust. And soon it becomes clear that treasure hunting is a dangerous business...

About the Author

Dr. Jewell Parker Rhodes is the *New York Times* bestselling author of several books for youth, including *Ghost Boys*; *Black Brother, Black Brother*; *Paradise on Fire*; *Towers Falling*; and the Louisiana Girls Trilogy: *Ninth Ward*, *Sugar*, and *Bayou Magic*. She is the recipient of many distinguished awards, including the Coretta Scott King Honor, the Jane Addams Children's Book Award, an NAACP Image Award nomination, and the Walter Award. Rhodes is the Virginia G. Piper Endowed Chair in Creative Writing at Arizona State University.



Jay Watson

A Note from Jewell Parker Rhodes

Dear Readers,

I'm thrilled to share *Treasure Island: Runaway Gold*. It's been a memorable and exciting journey inspired by my interests in African American history, literature, and the exuberance of adventure tales.

When I thought about writing an updated version of Robert Louis Stevenson's novel *Treasure Island* set in contemporary New York City, my mind and heart were immediately engaged.

Flashes of thoughts, feelings, images, and voices exploded in my dreams:

Click. I remember how a plaque was installed in 2015 to memorialize the eighteenth-century market where Black people were stood against a wall and sold. This wall inspired the famous and infamous name "Wall Street."

Click. I remember teaching Stevenson's explorations of psychological horror and realism as well as his characters' ambiguous motives. Long John Silver is notable for his complexity, his shifting personas, and his love for, yet willingness to betray, a child.

Click. Pirates! Nothing more to be said. What kid (or adult?) doesn't love pirates? But how does a modern American kid sail? On a skateboard!

Skateparks are a perfect metaphor for the focus, camaraderie, derring-do, and resiliency of today's young people!

Click. Dream and dream some more. Write and write some more. Wrestling imaginative chaos, I did my best to blend American history as well as literary and pop-cultural tropes.

Click. Zane and his dog, Hip-Hop, bloom in my mind, demanding to be born, to skate, and to demonstrate their mutual love and loyalty. Zane narrates my dreams.

I loved writing this book!

I hope kids and adults everywhere can learn much about our nation's history from *Treasure Island: Runaway Gold*. I hope readers will cheer (and maybe weep a little?) as Zane and his friends overcome treachery with allegiance, dishonesty with honesty, and betrayal with morality.

This novel is my praise-song to kids everywhere—each of you is a hero of your own life's adventure. Set sail!

Enjoy,

Jewell Parker Rhodes



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe the family situations of the three friends—Zane, Kiko, and Jack. How is each of them affected by the circumstances of their family life? How do their family situations affect their friendships with each other?
2. How does Zane know he has to get home after his encounter with the stranger at the skateboard park? Why do you think the boy attacks Captain Maddie? Make a list of the contents of Captain Maddie's room. How many objects of her pirate past are there? What does the "black spot" mean to her?
3. Why do you think Captain Maddie calls Zane her "First Mate"?
4. What does Dr. Kitaji mean when he says, "One's spirit never dies" (p. 34)? How many ways does Captain Maddie's spirit aid Zane in the search for treasure on Manhattan Island? Is he seeing her along the way or simply remembering things she told him?
5. List the clues that Captain Maddie leaves on the map, in her room, and in the last words she says to Zane. As you read, make a chart of how each clue is solved and which of the treasure hunters "unlocks" the mystery of that clue. Number the clues and locate them on the map you create (see Explorations below).
6. How do Zane, Kiko, and Jack prepare for the return of Rattler and his crew to Zane's house? How do they prepare for their trip to Manhattan? Why don't they tell their parents where they are going? Why is it important to Zane to take Hip-Hop with them?
7. Describe John as Zane first sees him. What is his first impression of the man? Why does Zane feel he can trust him at first and then begin to feel suspicious? How does Zane's father's death make him more vulnerable to John's influence? Why doesn't Kiko trust John? Why do you think Jack wants to trust John? How does the accident on the boat affect how each of them feels about John?
8. Compare the apartment where John takes them to Captain Maddie's room. What does Zane mean when he thinks "everything seems staged" (p. 117)? Why does Zane finally decide to trust John and show him the map? How does John help them interpret the map? Why does he tell them about Thomas Downing (p. 134)?
9. What do the treasure seekers find in the basement of the Morgan Building? How does Zane know where to look and how does Hip-Hop help? Why does Jack go back to look for John after they escape? What do Zane and Kiko learn when they go back to the library?
10. What is the significance of the sign at the African Burial Ground monument Sankofa (p. 184)? How are Zane and Kiko learning from the past in their journey through this story? How does seeing the African Burial Ground monument from the Woolworth Building—a monument to wealth and capitalism—impact Zane's growing understanding and moral development?
11. What does John mean when he says, "Hopelessness is part of every journey. Every hunt" (p. 216)? How does he convince Zane to follow him into the subway tunnel after all the times Zane has become suspicious of him? What does the tunnel reveal about the truth of John's motives? Why did Jack join the pirate crew?
12. What is the secret of John's control over the boys in the pirate crew? How do Zane and Kiko escape from them? What is the final clue that leads them to find the treasure? Why doesn't Zane tell the police about John and the pirate crew?
13. Consider the agency and empowerment of Zane and Kiko. Why is it important that they donate the money? How has their journey taught them that community and honoring the past triumph over greed?

EXPLORATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Diving into history

Trinity Church in lower Manhattan is the oldest building that the treasure searchers find, and it provides a refuge for them in several ways. See what else you can learn about the past of this famous building and why it is important in American history:

<https://trinitywallstreet.org/stories-news/top-ten-things-know-about-trinity-church-wall-street>

Part of the treasure map leads the searchers to a clue about Thomas Downing. Read about this historic man and discuss his importance in the mid-19th century in New York: <https://www.fisherslandoysters.com/blog/2021/2/22/thomas-downing>

Real Life Female Pirates

Were you surprised to read that Captain Maddie, a woman, declared that she had been a pirate? While most actual pirates were men, there have been a number of notable women throughout history who led a life of crime on the high seas. Choose one of these and write a short story about her life and deeds: <https://www.history.com/news/5-notorious-female-pirates>

Sailing on a Skateboard

The author makes many references to skateboards being like sailing ships. Read the Glossary of Skateboard Tricks at the end of the book, and then look up terms used in sailing navigation: <https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/navigation/nautical-terms.html>

Make a list of skateboard terms that are similar to phrases used in sailing and sea voyages.

*Reader's Guide prepared by Connie Rockman,
Youth Literature Consultant.*

Pirates in Pop Culture

Fascination with a pirate way of life began 300 years ago with the publication in England of *A General History of the Pyrates* (1724). This volume was later used by Scottish authors Robert Louis Stevenson and James Barrie in the next century to create two of the most famous fictional pirates in literature —Long John Silver (*Treasure Island*) and Captain Hook (*Peter Pan*). These characters have also come to life in film adaptations of the books. Make a list of pirates you are aware of from books or movies. Which of the characters in this book are like those you have encountered before?

Treasure Island

This book is written, in part, as an updated homage, or tribute, to Robert Louis Stevenson's classic story, *Treasure Island*. Read that book and compare plot elements and characters to those in *Treasure Island: Runaway Gold*. Make a list of characters who are similar in both books. Compare the different settings of these stories and discuss what it means to be a modern day "pirate" in New York City. How does the history of New York connect to the pirate lore of the past?



Make Your Own Treasure Map

Mark the route that Zane, Jack, and Kiko take to find treasure in lower Manhattan on the map below. Add any other points from the book you feel are important to include.

- Pier 11 Ferry Landing
- New Amsterdam Branch Library
- African Burial Ground Memorial
- Chambers Street Subway
- Trinity Church
- 23 Wall Street
- Woolworth Building

