
Storm Codes

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Publisher: Windward Publishing
An Imprint of Finney Company, Inc.

Ordering: Call: (800) 846-7027 or (952) 469-6699
E-mail: feedback@finneyco.com

Jacketed Hardcover:

ISBN 10: 0-89317-063-1
ISBN 13: 978-0-89317-063-9
Order Number: WW-0631.....\$17.95

Paperbound:

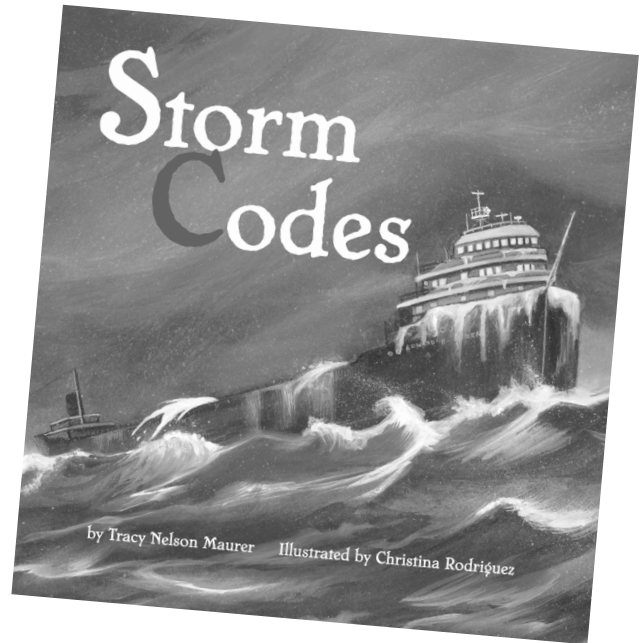
ISBN 10: 0-89317-064-X
ISBN 13: 978-0-89317-064-6
Order Number: WW-064X.....\$8.95

Description: 11"x11", 40 pages, © 2007

Category: Children's, Historical Fiction, Regional History

Suggested Levels: Primary Grades 1-4, ages 5 and up—Read aloud
Intermediate Grades 2-6, ages 7 and up—Read aloud or student self-read

Summary: *Storm Codes* presents the sights and sounds of Great Lakes shipping in the late 1960s through seven-year-old Katy's story of hope and determination. As a fierce ice storm rips through northern Minnesota, Katy and her mother wait restlessly for her father's ship to return to their harbor in Duluth. *Storm Codes* vividly combines historically based illustrations with nautical terms and descriptions. Katy even creates her own secret code to help bring her father home safely.



Core Lessons

Highlights shipping on the Great Lakes during the late 1960s, including taconite descriptions and nautical terms; introduces nautical codes.

Learning Areas

Great Lakes history; transportation; geography; production

Academic Standards

(based on Minnesota's standards)

- Social Studies – Minnesota History; Geography; Economics
- Language Arts – Reading and Literature

Geographic Connections

- All states and areas of Canada surrounding the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway
- All states and areas of Canada that produce or produced iron ore or taconite
- Minnesota: Author, illustrator and publisher from Minnesota; story set in Duluth
- Wisconsin: Author and her grandfather, who inspired the story, grew up near Superior
- Ohio: Story's ship is part of a fleet once based in Cleveland
- Cities/regions mentioned: Duluth, Iron Range, Two Harbors, and Silver Bay (Minnesota); Superior (Wisconsin); Chicago (Illinois); Detroit (Michigan); Cleveland (Ohio); Canada

Listening Question to Ask Before Reading

(Repeat afterward for answers)

- 9. What products are made from taconite? (A. Steel products, such as cars and refrigerators)
- 9. How long did Katy's father stay at home during the summer? (A. One to two nights between trips)
- 9. What is the code for "greetings" using a ship's horn? (A. One long and two short whistle blasts)

Discussion Questions to Ask After Reading

- Have you seen cargo ships like the *Edward B. Greene*? How did they unload or load cargo?
- Have you made a secret code before? Who knew your code? How did you use it?
- Would you like to be a sailor on the Great Lakes? Why or why not?
- Katy's father "battened down the hatches" to keep the ship safe. What are some good ideas for safety on boats or ship? Discuss life jackets, lifeboats, checking the weather, avoiding risky behavior, etc.

Words to Know

breakers: a term sailors use for waves with curling white tops

cargo: a load carried on a ship, such as taconite, wheat, or cement

hatches: the covers over the lower areas of the ship

nautical: something related to ships or sailor

salties: deep-water vessels, often those that sail in saltwater such as the Atlantic Ocean

taconite: small, hard balls of baked iron ore used to make steel

Activities

Art: Draw or paint a stormy scene on land or water. Discuss how colors and tone show the stormy weather.

Art: Each student draws and colors or paints his/her name using the letters of nautical flags. (Visit <http://www.soundkeepers.com/kids/alphabet/> for samples.) String the flags across the classroom ceiling for a festive nautical effect.

Geography: Draw the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway; label the lakes, states, and provinces along the route between Duluth (Minnesota) and the Atlantic Ocean.

Language Arts: Imagine you are the captain of a ship on Lake Superior; write a letter to your family. Describe what you see, hear, and smell. Describe the weather and the ports that you have visited.

Language Arts: Make up a secret code of your own. Share it with a partner and try it out. Write a page that describes the code, why you chose it, and how you might use it.

Related Titles

- *Mail by the Pail* by Colin Bergel and illustrated by Mark Koenig. Wayne State University Press, 2000.
- *The Edmund Fitzgerald: Song of the Bell* by Kathy-Jo Wargin and Gijsbert Van Frankenhuyzen. Sleeping Bear Press, 2003.
- *Fact Finders Land and Water: Great Lakes* (Series) by Anne Ylvisaker. Capstone Press, 2006.

Suggested Links

- SoundKeepers (printable nautical flags) <http://www.soundkeepers.com/kids/alphabet/>
- Ironworld Discovery Center <http://www.ironworld.com/>
- Duluth Shipping News <http://www.duluthshippingnews.com>
- Boat Nerds <http://www.boatnerd.com/>
- The Steamship *William G. Mather* Museum teacher's guide http://wgmathernhlink.net/ed/guide_2004/
- *Storm Codes* author site <http://www.stormcodes.com> or <http://tracymaurerwriter.com>
- *Storm Codes* illustrator site <http://www.christinarodriguez.com>

Keywords for Online Searches

- <great lakes ships>
- <nautical flags kids>