

Summer of the Woods

ATOS 5.1 · Grades 3–5 · Central Virginia

STANDARDS OF LEARNING

Grade 4 · Virginia Studies

VS.1 SUPPORTS · Virginia's regions and physical geography — Piedmont woods, creeks, and rivers.

REAL VIRGINIA HISTORY IN THIS BOOK

- Set in the central-Virginia Piedmont; the mystery turns on the real Midlothian coal mines — among the first commercial coal mines in the United States.
- Coin-collecting subplot introduces how historians and collectors value and date objects.

CROSS-CURRICULAR

English Reading Literary Text (3–5.RL): character, setting, problem/solution, and prediction. Short chapters build reading stamina (.DSR); discussion questions support .C.

Science Local ecology and basic geology (the Midlothian coal seams; creeks and salamanders).

VISIT THE HISTORY

Midlothian Mines Park (Chesterfield County).

TALKING POINTS FOR THE CLASSROOM

- The boys keep a secret from their parents. When is it right — or wrong — to handle something on your own?
- What is the difference between something being valuable and being worth a lot of money?

Mystery on Church Hill

Grades 3–5 · Richmond & Williamsburg

STANDARDS OF LEARNING

Grade 4 · Virginia Studies

- VS.5 CORE** · The road to independence and the Declaration of Independence.
- VS.6a CORE** · Patrick Henry and the 'Give Me Liberty, or Give Me Death' speech.
- VS.4 CORE** · Williamsburg as the colonial capital; the Wythe House and William & Mary.

Grade 5 · U.S. History to 1865

- USI.5 / USI.6 CORE** · Colonial Virginia and the American Revolution.

Grade 11 · Virginia & U.S. History

- VUS.5 SUPPORTS** · Henry's speech is named in the revolutionary-period standard.

Grades 1–2

- 1.5 / 2.7 SUPPORTS** · Patrick Henry as a Virginia changemaker / revolutionary.

REAL VIRGINIA HISTORY IN THIS BOOK

- St. John's Church, where Patrick Henry delivered his 1775 speech to the Second Virginia Convention.
- The George Wythe House and the College of William & Mary's role in colonial education.

CROSS-CURRICULAR

English Reading Literary Text (3–5.RL): historical-fiction conventions; setting as a real place; making and confirming inferences.

VISIT THE HISTORY

St. John's Church, Richmond (live Patrick Henry reenactments) + the Wythe House, Colonial Williamsburg.

TALKING POINTS FOR THE CLASSROOM

- Patrick Henry weighed liberty against safety. When is a freedom worth a real risk?
- What do historical reenactors do, and why does acting out history matter?

Ghosts of Belle Isle

Grades 3–5 · Richmond

STANDARDS OF LEARNING

Grade 4 · Virginia Studies

VS.7 CORE · The Civil War and Virginia's role — major wartime sites in Virginia.

Grade 5 · U.S. History to 1865

USI.9 CORE · Causes, events, and effects of the Civil War.

Grade 11 · Virginia & U.S. History

VUS.9 SUPPORTS · Major turning points of the Civil War and Reconstruction.

REAL VIRGINIA HISTORY IN THIS BOOK

- Set at the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, on Belle Isle in the James River — site of a Confederate prison camp whose ruins remain.
- Wartime Richmond and Hollywood Cemetery anchor the history.

CROSS-CURRICULAR

English Reading Literary Text (3–5.RL): setting and mood; distinguishing legend from documented history.

VISIT THE HISTORY

Belle Isle / James River Park System, Richmond.

TALKING POINTS FOR THE CLASSROOM

- The 'ghosts' have an ordinary explanation. How can you tell a legend from a historical fact?
- Why do people preserve places like prison-camp ruins instead of tearing them down?

Secret of the Staircase

Grades 3–6 · Richmond

STANDARDS OF LEARNING

Grade 4 · Virginia Studies

VS.9 CORE · The growth of cities and new industries in late-1800s Virginia (Gilded-Age Richmond).

VS.7 SUPPORTS · A Tredegar Iron Works thread connects to Civil War industry.

REAL VIRGINIA HISTORY IN THIS BOOK

- Set at Richmond's historic Jefferson Hotel — famous for its grand staircase and the lobby-alligator lore of its early years.
- Tredegar Iron Works appears as a thread linking the city's industrial past.

CROSS-CURRICULAR

English Reading Literary Text (3–6.RL): place and architecture as a force in the story; setting-driven mystery.

VISIT THE HISTORY

The Jefferson Hotel + the American Civil War Museum at Tredegar, Richmond.

TALKING POINTS FOR THE CLASSROOM

- How does the author use a single building to drive the whole mystery?
- What does a grand old hotel tell us about the time and place that built it?

Midnight at the Mansion

ATOS 5.3 · Grades 3–6 · Richmond & the Blue Ridge

STANDARDS OF LEARNING

Grade 4 · Virginia Studies

VS.1 CORE · Virginia's regions — the Blue Ridge and Valley & Ridge, the Appalachian Trail, the James River.

VS.9 CORE · Post-Civil-War railroads, banking, and the rise of Gilded-Age estates.

REAL VIRGINIA HISTORY IN THIS BOOK

- Maymont, the Dooley estate in Richmond — a fortune built on railroads and banking after the Civil War.
- Swannanoa, a marble palace on Afton Mountain in the Blue Ridge; Rockfish Gap and the Appalachian Trail.

CROSS-CURRICULAR

English Reading Literary Text (3–6.RL); strong Communication (.C) potential around conservation ethics.

Science Wildlife conservation: the bald eagle's near-extinction and recovery; Blue Ridge ecosystems.

VISIT THE HISTORY

Maymont, Richmond (free admission) + the Rockfish Gap overlook on the Blue Ridge Parkway.

TALKING POINTS FOR THE CLASSROOM

- Why is it harmful for people to keep wild animals as exotic pets?
- The Dooleys had no children but funded children's charities. Why might someone build that kind of legacy?

Shadows at Jamestown

Grades 4–6 (mature 8+) · Historic Jamestown

FLAGSHIP CURRICULUM TITLE

STANDARDS OF LEARNING

Grade 4 · Virginia Studies

- VS.2 CORE** · Virginia's Indigenous nations and how archaeologists recover artifacts (Werowocomoco).
- VS.3 CORE** · 1607 Jamestown — John Smith, the Powhatan, tobacco, hardships, and the 1619 arrivals.
- VS.4 SUPPORTS** · Colonial survival and economy.

Grade 5 · U.S. History to 1865

- USI.2 / USI.3 / USI.5 CORE** · Early cultures and archaeology, European exploration, and colonial Virginia.

Grade 11 · Virginia & U.S. History

- VUS.2 / VUS.4 SUPPORTS** · The first colonies and settler–Indigenous interaction.

Grades 1–2

- 1.4 / 1.5 SUPPORTS** · Jamestown, Werowocomoco, the Powhatan, Pocahontas, and John Smith.

REAL VIRGINIA HISTORY IN THIS BOOK

- The 1607 founding of Jamestown — the keystone of the Virginia history curriculum.
- Built around real archaeology (Jamestown Rediscovery), with documented detail from the Starving Time.

CROSS-CURRICULAR

English Reading Literary Text (4–6.RL); outstanding for archaeology-as-inquiry and primary-source thinking — a direct tie to the social-studies Skills strand.

VISIT THE HISTORY

Historic Jamestown — pair the read with a field trip to the active dig.

TALKING POINTS FOR THE CLASSROOM

- How is real archaeology different from how it's shown in movies?
- Sam took a photo he wasn't supposed to take, and it helped solve the case. Was that wrong?

Spies at Mount Vernon

ATOS 5.5 · Grades 5–7 · Washington, D.C. & Mount Vernon

STANDARDS OF LEARNING

Grade 4 · Virginia Studies

VS.5b CORE · Virginians in the Revolution — including James Armistead Lafayette, the enslaved Virginian who spied for the American army (named in the standard).

VS.6a SUPPORTS · George Washington, 'Father of Our Country.'

VS.12 SUPPORTS · Virginia, 'Mother of Presidents.'

Grade 5 · U.S. History to 1865

USI.6 CORE · The American Revolution; the Marquis de Lafayette.

Grade 11 · Virginia & U.S. History

VUS.5 / VUS.6 SUPPORTS · The Revolution and the founding.

Grade 2

2.12 SUPPORTS · The National Mall — the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials.

REAL VIRGINIA HISTORY IN THIS BOOK

- George Washington's Mount Vernon estate and the role of Virginians in the Revolution.
- Revolutionary spycraft — codes, ciphers, and dead drops — echoing real Patriot intelligence.

CROSS-CURRICULAR

English Reading Literary Text (5–7.RL); the spy-craft angle is a natural vocabulary and inference vehicle.

VISIT THE HISTORY

George Washington's Mount Vernon + the National Mall, Washington, D.C.

TALKING POINTS FOR THE CLASSROOM

- James Armistead Lafayette was a real enslaved spy who later won his freedom for his service. Why does his story matter?
- What makes information valuable enough to risk your life carrying it?

Escape from Monticello

Grades 4–6 · Charlottesville

STANDARDS OF LEARNING

Grade 4 · Virginia Studies

VS.5a **CORE** · Thomas Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence.

VS.6b **CORE** · The Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom (written by Jefferson) and the founding of the University of Virginia.

VS.12 **SUPPORTS** · Virginia, 'Mother of Presidents.'

Grade 5 · U.S. History to 1865

USI.6 / USI.7 **CORE** · The Revolution and the new nation.

Grade 11 · Virginia & U.S. History

VUS.5 / VUS.6 **SUPPORTS** · The Revolution and the founding documents.

REAL VIRGINIA HISTORY IN THIS BOOK

- Monticello, Thomas Jefferson's home, plus the University of Virginia and Poplar Forest.
- Jefferson's authorship of the Declaration and the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom.

CROSS-CURRICULAR

English Reading Literary Text (4–6.RL); a historical-journal device supports inference and point-of-view work.

VISIT THE HISTORY

Monticello · the University of Virginia · Poplar Forest.

TALKING POINTS FOR THE CLASSROOM

- Why did Jefferson think religious freedom was worth writing into law?
- Jefferson wanted to be remembered for three things — not for being president. What would you want to be remembered for?

Pictures at the Protest

Grades 6–8 · ages ~10–13 · Farmville & Richmond

MIDDLE-GRADES 'ONE BOOK, ONE SCHOOL' TITLE

STANDARDS OF LEARNING

Grade 4 · Virginia Studies

VS.11 CORE · The Civil Rights Movement in Virginia — Massive Resistance, Brown v. Board, Barbara Johns, Robert Russa Moton, Maggie Walker, and Oliver Hill (all named in the standard).

VS.8 SUPPORTS · The Reconstruction and Jim Crow roots of segregation.

Grade 6 · U.S. History 1865–Present

USII.8a CORE · The Civil Rights Era — sit-ins and boycotts.

USII.8b CORE · Urban renewal in Jackson Ward, Richmond (Maggie Walker's neighborhood).

Grade 11 · Virginia & U.S. History

VUS.16b CORE · Brown v. Board, Virginia's Massive Resistance, Barbara Johns, Moton, and Oliver Hill.

Grade 7 · Civics & Economics

CE.6 / CE.7 / CE.10 SUPPORTS · Citizenship and peacefully working for change — Barbara Johns' student strike is a model case.

REAL VIRGINIA HISTORY IN THIS BOOK

- The Prince Edward County school closures (1959–1964) and the Massive Resistance to desegregation.
- Barbara Johns and the Moton Museum; Maggie Walker; set against the 2020 racial-justice protests.

CROSS-CURRICULAR

English Reading Literary Text (6–8.RL) plus Communication (.C) for hard-topic discussion and Writing (.W).

VISIT THE HISTORY

The Robert Russa Moton Museum, Farmville + the Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site, Richmond.

TALKING POINTS FOR THE CLASSROOM

- Barbara Johns was a teenager when she led a school strike. What gives young people the standing to push for change?
- Why is it important to learn difficult parts of our history honestly?

Engages substantively with segregation and the Civil Rights era; best for grade 6+. See the book's content notes for framing guidance.

Pirates on the Bay

Grades 3–6 · Virginia Beach & the Chesapeake

STANDARDS OF LEARNING

Grade 4 · Virginia Studies

VS.1 CORE · Virginia's Coastal Plain (Tidewater), the Chesapeake Bay, and the Atlantic.

VS.5d CORE · The American victory at Yorktown and the role of the French navy.

VS.2 SUPPORTS · The Powhatan world and the 1607 First Landing.

VS.13 SUPPORTS · Virginia Beach's port and military economy.

Grade 5 · U.S. History to 1865

USI.2 / USI.3 / USI.6 CORE · Early cultures, European exploration, and the Revolution (Yorktown).

Grade 11 · Virginia & U.S. History

VUS.5 SUPPORTS · The revolutionary period.

REAL VIRGINIA HISTORY IN THIS BOOK

- The Chesapeake Bay and Virginia Beach; the 1607 First Landing at Cape Henry.
- The legend and documented history of Blackbeard; the British surrender at Yorktown.

CROSS-CURRICULAR

English Reading Literary Text (3–6.RL); excellent for analyzing fact vs. legend (Blackbeard's record vs. the myth).

Science Tides and the tidal Chesapeake; lighthouse engineering; marine biology.

VISIT THE HISTORY

First Landing State Park / Cape Henry, Virginia Beach.

TALKING POINTS FOR THE CLASSROOM

- Which parts of Blackbeard's story are fact, and which are legend? How can you tell?
- The kids 'borrow' a boat without asking. Is borrowing without permission the same as stealing?

Danger on the Stage

Grades 3–6 · Abingdon (Southwest Virginia)

STANDARDS OF LEARNING

Grade 4 · Virginia Studies

VS.6d CORE · Westward movement — the geography and technology of the early 1800s; Daniel Boone and the Cumberland Gap.

VS.7 SUPPORTS · Civil War home-front and hospital service.

VS.1 SUPPORTS · Valley & Ridge / Appalachian geography.

VS.13 SUPPORTS · The arts as a regional Virginia industry.

Grade 5 · U.S. History to 1865

USI.8 CORE · Westward expansion and reform, 1801–1861.

REAL VIRGINIA HISTORY IN THIS BOOK

- Abingdon's Barter Theatre, founded during the Great Depression — audiences once paid with crops and livestock.
- Daniel Boone, the Cumberland Gap, and the Wilderness Road into the western frontier.

CROSS-CURRICULAR

English Reading Literary Text (3–6.RL); the theater and songwriting craft supports Writing (.W) and theater/music electives.

VISIT THE HISTORY

The Barter Theatre, Abingdon.

TALKING POINTS FOR THE CLASSROOM

- The Barter Theatre let families pay with food during hard times. Why do communities protect institutions like theaters?
- Try writing the first line of a song about a place with a long history.

Conspiracy at the Launch

Grades 5–7 · Virginia aerospace

STANDARDS OF LEARNING

Grade 6 · U.S. History 1865–Present

USII.8c CORE · The Apollo missions and the moon landing (named in the standard).

USII.7 SUPPORTS · Cold War context and the Space Race.

USII.9 SUPPORTS · Ongoing advances in science and technology.

Grade 4 · Virginia Studies

VS.13 CORE · Innovations and advancements of Virginians in the 21st-century global economy.

Grade 7 · Civics & Economics

CE.2 / CE.3 CORE · The legislative process and government oversight.

CE.9 CORE · The role of the press and asking hard questions.

Grade 2

2.10 SUPPORTS · Changemakers Neil Armstrong and Mary Jackson (of Hidden Figures).

REAL VIRGINIA HISTORY IN THIS BOOK

- The legacy of Project Apollo and the moon landing, with a Hidden Figures connection.
- A U.S. Senate hearing brings the legislative process and a free press into the story.

CROSS-CURRICULAR

English Reading Literary Text (5–7.RL); the 'procedure as heroism' theme is a rich Communication (.C) anchor.

Science Earth & Space Science; rocketry and the physics of spaceflight.

VISIT THE HISTORY

Virginia Air & Space Science Center, Hampton.

TALKING POINTS FOR THE CLASSROOM

- The heroes win by handing a folder to a Senate committee — not by a chase. Can quiet, 'boring' actions be heroic?
- A character quotes a true, inspiring line to justify cutting safety corners. Can something true still be used the wrong way?