

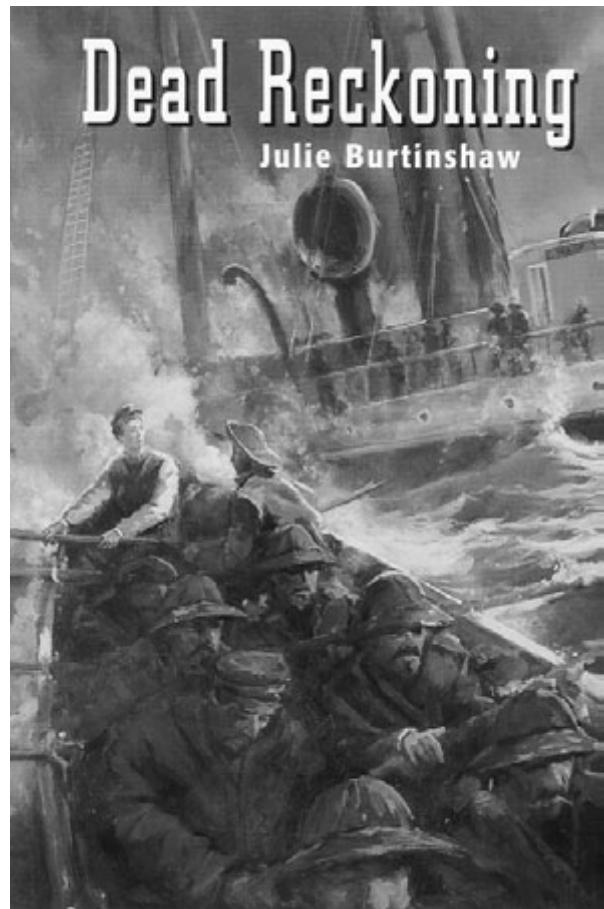
Dead Reckoning

by Julie Burtinshaw

AGES 10 AND UP • GRADE LEVEL 4 TO 7

ABOUT THE BOOK

It is 1906 and 14 year-old James is sailing from San Francisco to Victoria aboard the steamship *Valencia*. His nightmares prove omens of an ill-fated passage when violent seas and thick fog reduce the captain to “dead reckoning,” relying on instinct, winds and charts to navigate. The vessel runs aground in “The Graveyard of the Pacific,” 50 feet from a shore too rocky and in seas too rough for rescue. While victims cling to the mast or fling themselves upon the mercy of the waves, James and his friend Alex board the last lifeboat. Reminiscent of *Titanic*, *Dead Reckoning* is a white-knuckle, spellbinding story that offers a lifeboat seat to everyone who has wondered what it feels like to go down with the ship.

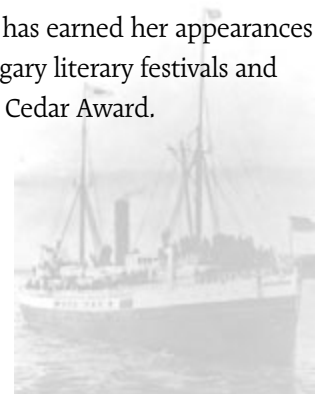


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YOUNG ADULT FICTION



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Julie Burtinshaw has a diploma in Agriculture and is completing a degree in English Literature from UBC. She is a member of the Vancouver Children’s Literature Roundtable and also works as a freelance writer, researcher and book reviewer. She has written for *Books in Canada*, *The Globe and Mail* and several other periodicals. *Dead Reckoning* has earned her appearances at the Vancouver and Calgary literary festivals and was nominated for a Red Cedar Award.



BEFORE THE BOOK • Words You Need to Know

accustomed	specimen	simultaneously	involuntarily	structural	ominous
entomology	impending	carcasses	retracted	commode	celestial portent
speculator	embark	perishables	scavenger	soundings	

• Activities

1. Write about a nightmare or bad dream that you remember. What did you do to feel safe again?
2. Have you ever travelled on a bus, boat or plane by yourself? Write about your experiences. What were your feelings before you left? During the trip? After you arrived? (If you have never travelled alone, use your imagination.)

EXPLORING THE BOOK • Chapter Questions and Activities

CHAPTER ONE

1. What does James do to try to combat his nightmares?
2. Write an advertisement encouraging people to sail on the *Valencia*.

CHAPTER TWO

1. This chapter ends with an epigram — a short pithy saying. Write it on a separate page and add to the page as you come across other epigrams in this story.
2. Why does James panic before going on board the *Valencia*?

CHAPTER THREE

1. Where was Alex's family travelling?
2. How many passengers and crew were aboard the ship?
3. Sailors have a reputation for being very superstitious. Keep a list of the superstitions mentioned in this story.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. Why was James worried about the tulle life jackets?
2. Mark the *Valencia*'s route on a map of the west coast of North America.
3. Draw and label a diagram to show how a steam engine works.

CHAPTER FIVE

1. Why was the ship going so slowly?
2. What is dead reckoning?

CHAPTER SIX

1. What pact did James and Alexander make?
2. Draw a diagram to show how a sounding is taken.
3. Why was it so important to take frequent soundings?
4. Why did James want to see the captain or the first officer?



CHAPTER SEVEN

1. How did James know what the time would be before he looked at his watch?
2. How many meters is 50 feet?
3. Why did the captain order the lifeboats lowered only part way?

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. What was it that James told Alex to trust?
2. In what two ways did the crew try to get safety lines ashore?



CHAPTER NINE

1. Who lived at the lighthouse?
2. Why was it so hard to fill the last lifeboat?
3. How long did it take the boat to cross the 50 feet to shore?
4. What difficult choice did James and Alex have to make?

CHAPTER TEN

1. How would surfboats and lifelines have helped the rescuers?
2. What happened to Alexander's family?
3. What happened a year after the *Valencia* was wrecked?

BEYOND THE BOOK • Activities

1. Write an interview with James or Alexander that might have been published in a newspaper of that time.
2. Draw a picture of the place where the *Valencia* was wrecked.
3. Look at navigation charts of the west coast of Vancouver Island and locate the "Graveyard of the Pacific." What symbols do you see in this area? What do those symbols indicate?
4. Write a ghost story about the men trapped in the cave.
5. Make a videotape of an interview that the elderly James Moffat might have given to a TV reporter 60 years after the wreck.
6. Draw a cartoon to illustrate one of the epigrams you have collected from the story.

• Curriculum Extensions

LANGUAGE ARTS *Newspapers* • Write a newspaper article about some of the other ships that were wrecked in the "Graveyard of the Pacific."

Epigrams • Write an explanation of the meaning of three of the epigrams from the story.

Poetry • Look up one of the poems that are quoted at the beginning of each chapter and memorize several verses.

Try writing a poem of your own about one of the themes of this story.

SCIENCE *Butterflies* • Write and illustrate a report on the monarch butterfly and its migration from Canada to Mexico.

Mapping the Ocean Floor • Draw a map of the ocean floor along the west coast of British Columbia.

Steam Engines • Write a report on the development of the steam engine for use in transportation.

Weather • Set up a small weather station and record precipitation, temperature and wind twice a day for a week. Make a chart of your findings.

Earthquakes • Draw a diagram to show the different types of wave action and the resulting damage caused by earthquakes.

Navigation • How do ships navigate in bad weather today?

SOCIAL STUDIES *History of Western Canada* • Make a timeline to show the changes in transportation on the west coast of Canada from the canoes of the First Nations people to the various methods used today.

Geography • Find information about the West Coast Trail and Pacific Rim National Park. Create a poster advertising them to tourists.

San Francisco Earthquake • Write a report on the San Francisco earthquake of 1906.

Gold Rush • How would people have travelled to the gold fields after leaving their ship in Victoria or Vancouver?



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Dead Reckoning Teacher's Guide (1-55192-535-4) and other learning resources for Raincoast titles are also available at www.raincoast.com.

Many of these activities are inspired by the Reading 44 document published by the North Vancouver School District.

Raincoast Books grants teachers permission to photocopy this guide for classroom use.

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