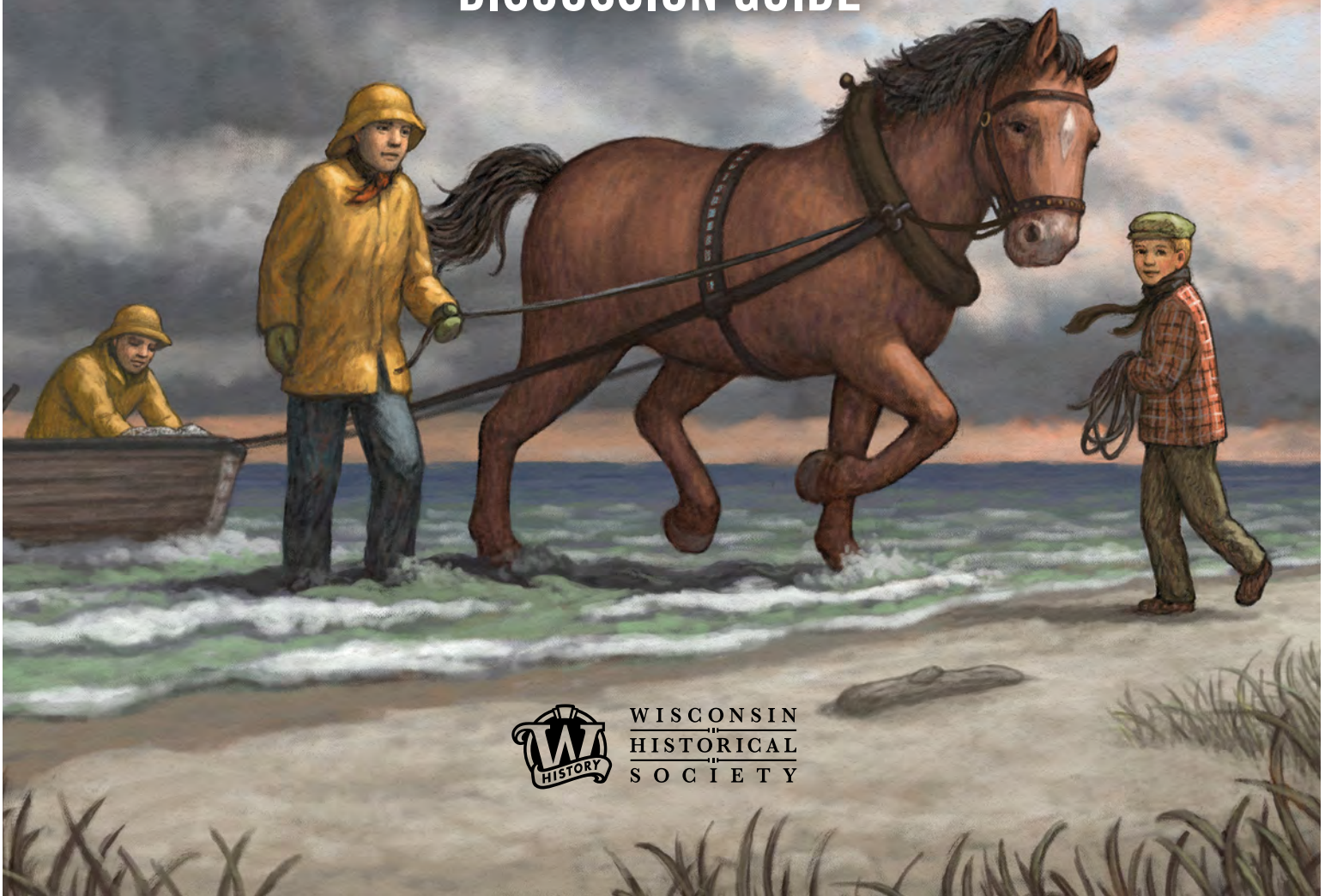




*The  
Fishermen,  
the Horse, and  
the Sea*

**DISCUSSION GUIDE**



WISCONSIN  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY



# *The Fishermen, the Horse, and the Sea*

## DISCUSSION GUIDE



Young Lester Smith is part of a fishing family on Lake Michigan. He loves playing on the beach with his little sister, helping Mama with chores, and watching the neighbor's big horse pull Papa's fishing boat onto shore. But Lester understands that the lake can be "soft as a kitten one day and terrible as a sea monster the next." On the autumn equinox of 1895, a wicked storm rolls into Port Washington, damaging a schooner on the lake and putting the lives of its two crewmen in danger. This book based on a true story follows Lester, his family, and the horse as they attempt a daring rescue.

## Introduction

This guide is intended for use with *The Fishermen, the Horse, and the Sea* by Barbara Joosse and Renée Graef. It contains discussion questions and activities that will primarily support teachers in grades K–4 with English Language Arts education and Social Studies education. Some questions and activities also overlap with Art and Design Education standards. Please feel free to modify any part of this guide for use in your classroom.

## Enduring Understanding

Writers and artists creating historical nonfiction use words and illustrations to communicate different ideas about the past that help us understand the present.

## Essential Questions

- What can you learn from the front cover and back flap of a book?
- How do you research and tell a story based on historic events?
- How have light sources, heat sources, chores for children, and jobs for men and women changed between 1895 and now?
- What is horsepower and how does the term apply to modern vehicles?
- How do words and pictures tell different parts of a story?
- How do authors use different writing tools to tell an engaging story?



# Vocabulary

<b>anchor</b> (ang-kur) <i>noun</i>	A heavy metal hook that is lowered from a ship or boat to stop it from drifting.
<b>breaker</b> (bray-kur) <i>noun</i>	A big sea wave that breaks into foam when it reaches the shore.
<b>crewman</b> (kroo-man) <i>noun</i>	A member of a crew (a team of people who work together on a ship).
<b>driftwood</b> (drift-wud) <i>noun</i>	Wood that floats ashore or is floating on water.
<b>coach horse</b> (kohch horss) <i>noun</i>	A breed of horse developed to pull a coach (a large carriage).
<b>equator</b> (i-kway-tur) <i>noun</i>	An imaginary line around the middle of the earth, halfway between the North and South Poles.
<b>equinox</b> (ee-kwuh-noks) <i>noun</i>	One of the two days in the year when day and night last exactly the same length of time all over the world.
<b>Lake Michigan</b> (lake mish-i-gun) <i>noun</i>	One of the five Great Lakes of North America.
<b>oar (or)</b> <i>noun</i>	A wooden pole with a flat blade at one end, used for rowing a boat.
<b>rowboat</b> (roh-boht) <i>noun</i>	A small boat that is moved through the water by using oars.
<b>schooner</b> (skoo-nur) <i>noun</i>	A fast ship with two or more masts, a narrow hull, and sails that run lengthwise.
<b>shipwreck</b> (ship-rek) <i>noun</i>	The wrecking or destruction of a ship at sea.
<b>stable (stay-buhl)</b> <i>noun</i>	A building or a part of a building where horses or cattle are kept.

**\*Dear Educator:** Below are some ideas for teacher-led classroom discussions and activities tied to *The Fishermen, the Horse, and the Sea*. Please feel free to adapt these to your classroom's needs.

## Front Cover

A cover should give you hints about the story inside. Look at the cover and try to answer the following questions:

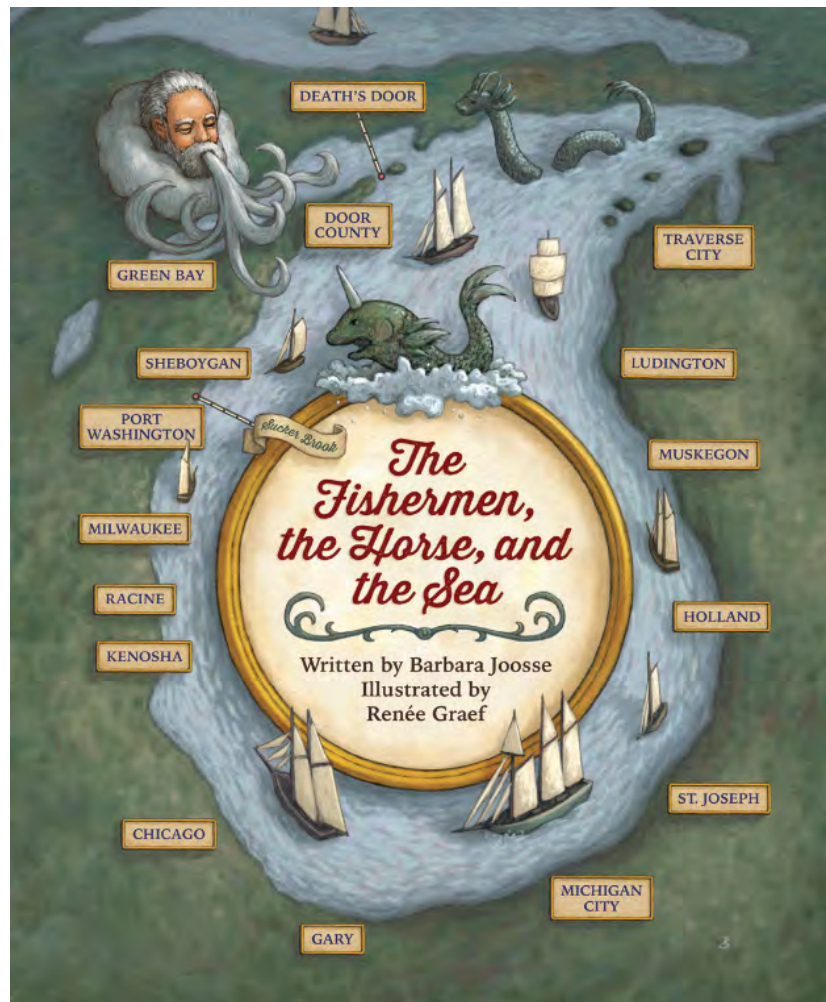
1. Where does this story take place?
2. What characters do you expect to meet in the story?
3. Does this story take place sometime in the past? How can you tell?



## Illustrated Map

Look closely at the map on page 3 (also pictured at right) and answer the following questions:

1. Can you find Sucker Brook?
2. Can you find Port Washington?
3. Have you been to any of the cities named on the map?
4. Can you name any of the four states that border Lake Michigan, even though they are not named on the map?
5. Does a sea monster really live in the lake?
6. Why do you think the illustrator added sea monsters, ships, and an old man blowing wind to this map?



## Back Flap

Look at the information about the author and the illustrator on the back flap of the cover. Sometimes creators work on books together without ever meeting. But Renée Graef (pronounced Ruh-**ney Grafe**) and Barbara Joesse (pronounced **Bar-bra Joe-see**) are very good friends in real life! Read the back flap and answer the following questions:

1. Where does the author live?
2. Where does the illustrator live?
3. How do you think they keep up their friendship?
4. Do you keep up any friendships with people far away? If so, how?

# Superstitions

Have you ever heard that walking under a ladder is bad luck? Or that finding a four-leaf clover is good luck? These are called **superstitions** (*soo-pur-sti-shuhnz*). A superstition is a belief that some action not connected to a future event can influence the outcome of the event. A person can display this behavior when they are afraid of the unknown or when they trust in magic.

This story took place on the autumn equinox. The author writes that seamen “believe wicked storms are brewed when the sun crosses the equator.” Many seafarers also believed that it was unlucky to begin a voyage on a Friday and that clapping your hands while you were on board a ship would result in thunder and lightning.

Talk to your friends and share your superstitions. What does your class believe is good luck and bad luck? Where do these beliefs come from?

## Comparing and Contrasting Words and Pictures

A good picture book tells a story using both words and pictures. The story would not be complete if there were words without pictures or if there were pictures without words. Look at the following pages and consider how the words and pictures tell different parts of the story.

### Pages 4 and 5:

What **pictures** on these pages show the weather on this day?

What **words** on these pages describe the lake on sunny summer days?

### Pages 6 and 7:

What **pictures** on these pages show how Mama is feeling?

What **words** on these pages describe what Mama did when she worried?

### Pages 8 and 9:

What **pictures** on these pages show a difference between inside and outside?

What **words** on these pages describe the difference between inside and outside?

### Pages 10 and 11:

What **pictures** on these pages show how Papa signaled the sailors?

What **words** on these pages describe why Papa used Mama’s apron as a signal?

### Pages 16 and 17:

What **pictures** on these pages show us who is helping?

What **words** on these pages describe who is helping?

### Pages 22 and 23:

What **pictures** on these pages show us how the rescued crewman is feeling?

What **words** on these pages describe how the rescued crewman is feeling?



## The Lake

On page 1, the author writes, “Lake Michigan could be soft as a kitten one day and terrible as a sea monster the next.” What do you think she means? Why did Lester have to hold Mama’s hand in the water?

The author writes, “One of the crewmen slipped into the icy water and Lester knew he was gone.” What does she mean? How does Lester find comfort? What comforts you when things are hard or scary?

Can you think of any inventions that have made Lake Michigan safer for boats and people today than it was in 1895? One example is fire extinguishers. Do you think the lake can still be dangerous today?



**Pictured above:** This photograph shows someone scuba diving. They are exploring the wreck of a schooner like the *Mary Ludwig*. This schooner is called the *Rouse Simmons*. It sank during a storm in Lake Michigan in 1912. Today, the *Rouse Simmons* sits at the bottom of the lake. Scuba divers observe it to learn more about its history.

**Image credit:** WHI ID 120447



## Then and Now

This story took place in 1895. What things have changed between then and now?

1. Lester's house did not have electricity. How did Lester "turn on a light?" List all the light sources you can see in the book.
2. How did the adults in the story keep the house warm? Do you know how your house is heated?
3. List the chores and helpful tasks you see Lester doing in the book. Do you or any of your siblings have chores? What are they?
4. List all of the jobs you see Mama doing in the book. List all of the jobs you see Papa doing. Do you think they ever traded jobs? What jobs do the adults in your life do?
5. What kind of energy powered the schooner? How are different kinds of boats powered today?



**Pictured above:** In the picture, children carry firewood as a part of their chores in 1905.

**Image credit:** WHI ID 138013

## Writers' Tools

1. **Simile:** A simile (**sim**-uh-lee) is a way of describing something by comparing it with something else using the words “like” or “as.”

The author writes, “It was dark as a fish-belly outside.” List some other things that can be very dark to create your own simile:

“It was dark as \_\_\_\_\_ outside.”

The author writes, “These waves were as big as mountains.” List some other things that can be very big to create your own simile:

“These waves were as big as \_\_\_\_\_.”

The author describes the seamen as “bobbing like corks.” List some other things that can bob or bounce to create your own simile:

“The crewmen were bobbing like \_\_\_\_\_.”

2. **Pacing:** Pacing (**payss**-ing) is a word used to describe how fast or slow a story is told. If a story has a fast pace, it moves along quickly. If a story has a slow pace, it takes longer to read. For this book, the author and illustrator wanted the story to have a slow pace in some parts and a fast pace in others.

Look through the book to see which pages have a lot of words on them, and which pages have only a few words on them. Find the place in the story where there are four sets of two pages in a row with only one paragraph every two pages. Do you notice the words or the pictures more on these pages? Why do you think the author and illustrator chose to arrange the words this way during this part of the story?

3. **Personification:** Personification (*pur-sah-nuh-fuh-kay*-shuhn) is when you give an animal or object qualities that only humans can have.

The author writes that the lake “washed to the sand in cool, foamy fingers.” She also writes that “the sky grew green and bruised.”

Can you create your own examples of personification? Try to think of verbs that usually describe human actions to fill in the blanks below.

“The branches of the tree \_\_\_\_\_ the boy as he climbed.”

“The clouds \_\_\_\_\_ across the sky.”

“The bird \_\_\_\_\_ as it sat on its nest.”

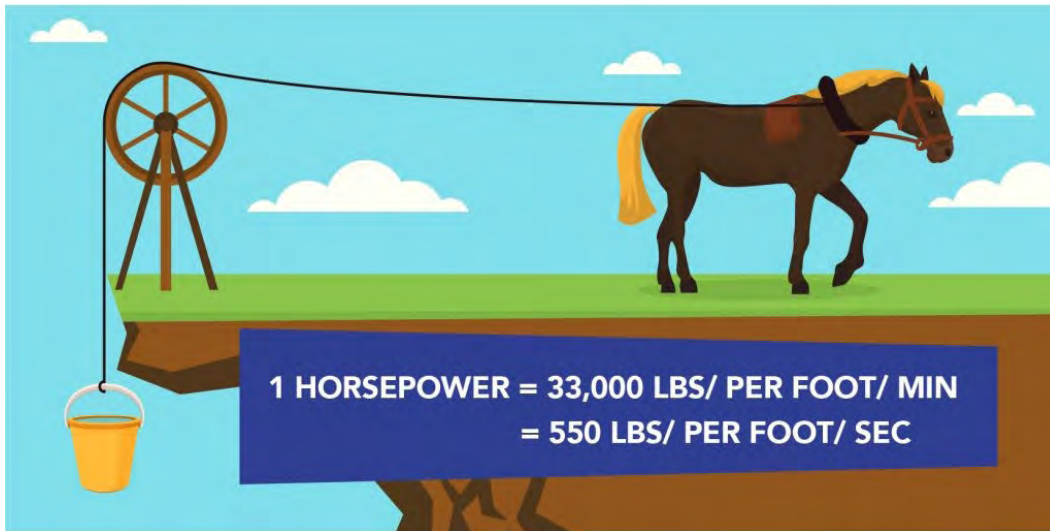




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## Horsepower

Horsepower is a unit used to measure power, or the rate at which work is done. It is usually used to describe engines and motors. One horsepower is the amount of work it takes to move 33,000 pounds one foot in one minute. This is based on about how much weight one horse can move in that time.



**Pictured left:**  
This illustration demonstrates how horsepower is measured.

**Image credit:**  
Mr. Tyre, Ltd.

The Frank horse in this book had one horsepower. *The Mary Ludwig* schooner was powered entirely by the wind. It did not have an engine. The power and speed of the schooner on any given day depended on the wind, the waves, and other factors. Follow the steps below to learn about the horsepower of modern vehicles.

### Steps

1. Using the internet, start at Google's homepage: <http://google.com>.
2. Type "2021 MINI Cooper horsepower" into the search bar.
3. Record the result that appears at the top of the search results on the next page (134 to 228 hp) next to 2021 MINI Cooper on the Horsepower List.
4. Now go back to the Google search bar and type in "2021 Ford F150 horsepower."
5. Record the result next to 2021 Ford F-150 on the Horsepower List.
6. Look up the other vehicles on the Horsepower List using Google and record their horsepower.
7. When you are done, answer the following questions:
  - a. Which vehicle has the most horsepower?
  - b. Which vehicle has the least horsepower?
  - c. Which vehicle would be best for pulling a heavy load?
  - d. Which vehicle would be best for driving long distances on a small amount of gas?
  - e. Which vehicle do you think would be the most fun to drive? Why?

# Horsepower List



## Small car

2021 MINI Cooper horsepower:

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## Pickup truck

2021 Ford F-150 horsepower:

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## Sports car

2021 Lamborghini Urus horsepower:

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## Minivan

2021 Honda Odyssey horsepower:

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## Semi-trailer truck

2021 Freightliner Cascadia horsepower:

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## Write Your Own True Tale

The back cover says this story is “A True Lake Michigan Tale.” What does that mean? The author did a lot of research before she wrote this book. She explored the internet and looked at old newspapers. She talked to the Port Washington harbor master. She also talked to Lester Smith’s grandson. He was an old man at the time when the author wrote this book.

Choose a friend or relative and write a “true tale” about them. Start by asking them to tell you a true story from their life. Then, try to learn more about the story by doing research. Here are some ways you can do research:

- Talk to other people who know the story.
- Read newspaper articles or diary entries about the story.
- Look at photographs from the time when the story took place.

Then write the story. Include all of the facts you’ve discovered. (Examples: “When Grampa Jack Was Born” or “The Day Maria Won the Big Game.”) You can even use the pictures you found to help tell the story!

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