



TeachersFirst READING TREKS

Whirligig

[TeachersFirst Reading Treks Link](#)

Synopsis of Book

Whirligig by Paul Fleischman is a journey of penance and redemption for seventeen-year-old Brent Bishop told non-linearly through multiple narrators. Brent, in a drunken car accident that is a suicide attempt, kills a stranger, eighteen-year-old Lea. At the request of her family, instead of prison, Brent is ordered to travel the U.S. constructing whirligigs in Lea's memory. In his travels, while Brent finds redemption, he never realizes the good he has done with his creations. Interspersed with Brent's odyssey are the stories of those who are positively touched by seeing the whirligig with Lea's image.

Using a TeachersFirst Reading Trek to Explore This Book

TeachersFirst Reading Treks are a way of creating a virtual field trip of resources about a piece of literature or text using the My Maps feature of Google Maps. To motivate and enrich student reading, teachers and students can reference this visual collection of web resources and images as they relate to a book.

TeachersFirst has done the hard work for you! Use the activities in this Instructional Guide and the accompanying Reading Trek as you and your students explore this book. And, if you feel inspired, you (or your students) can create your own Reading Trek about this or another book!

Grade Level & Content Areas

Grades 7 - 10 English Language Arts, English, reading, literatures, RL = 4.7 grade, Lexile = 760L

Common Core State Standards for MS/HS

Reading

- **Informational Text** (key ideas and details and craft and structure)
- **Literature** (key ideas and details and craft and structure)

Literacy

- **Integration of Knowledge and Ideas** – Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

Writing

- **Text Types and purposes**
- **Research** (to build and present knowledge)

National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

- **Theme: People, Places and Environments**

Next Generation Science Standards

- **Motion and Stability: Forces and Interactions**

ISTE: Student Standards

(1) Empowered Learner: Students leverage technology to take an active role in choosing, achieving and demonstrating competency in their learning goals, informed by the learning sciences.

(3) Knowledge Constructor: Students critically curate a variety of resources using digital tools to construct knowledge, produce creative artifacts and make meaningful learning experiences for themselves and others.

(6) Creative Communicator: Students communicate clearly and express themselves creatively for a variety of purposes using the platforms, tools, styles, formats and digital media appropriate to their goals.

Using the Reading Trek in Class

1. This story is a hero's journey represented by Brent's travels around the U.S. building whirligigs.
 - a. Use the Google map to introduce the book to the whole class and have students visually follow Brent's journey.
 - b. Have students individually or in groups research the different areas of the country using the Reading Trek map as a starting point.
2. Create [character maps](#) and timelines of the events in the story. For additional ideas see the [OK2Ask webinar on timeline tools](#).
3. Using the book and the map, chart each whirligig location, what it looks like, who was there, who saw the whirligig later, and other details.
4. Brent read some books on his journey. Have students read and discuss these titles. Ask students what books they might take on a trip. Have students create a book talk or trailer about the books.

Additional Activities

1. Students can trace their path around the country from their home figuring mileage, etc. Ask students to explain where they might build a whirligig.
2. Have students singly or in groups build their own whirligig. If you have a school makerspace, this would be an excellent project to do there. Here is a [simple example](#) made with a shoebox and a hanger.
3. Discuss and research the importance of music in the story and references to music and instruments, such as harmonica, concertina, contra dancing, and the noises whirligigs make.

4. Research star charts or constellations - or use the app Sky Map, available for Android and IOS - to find stars that Brent might have observed.

Helpful Resources

- [Prestwick House Teaching Unit: Whirligig](#)
- [Meet the Author, Paul Fleischman](#)
- [ReadWriteThink Resources on Paul Fleischman](#)
- [Study Questions for Whirligig](#)
- [Science/Math Lesson Plan on Whirligigs](#)
- [OK2Ask: Mapping Across Content Areas with Google](#)
- [Ok2Ask: Seeing is Believing: Make Literature Come Alive with Google Lit Trips](#)