

The Sea Chest

Book by Toni Buzzeo

Unit study by Debbie Palmer

Social Studies

History of Homeschooling -

Aunt Maita was home schooled because her family lived on an isolated island. In colonial America, home education was the norm. During that time people felt that it was important for children to be able to read so that they could read the Bible. Occasionally, families would pool their money together and hire a teacher for their children. In the 1880's, the compulsory attendance (public schools) movement began. In the 1960's the US Supreme Court declared it was a violation to pray, read the Bible and post the Ten Commandments in public schools. Since then private schools have become popular and home schooling has become a nationwide trend. Your student might be interested to know that there are some very famous individuals that were home schooled. If your child is older you could have him/her research one of them. Here is a small list of those that were home schooled.

- Leonardo Da Vinci
- Alexander Graham Bell
- Thomas Edison
- The Wright Brothers
- John Quincy Adams
- Thomas Jefferson
- Abraham Lincoln
- James Madison
- Franklin Delano Roosevelt
- Theodore Roosevelt
- George Washington
- Charles Dickens
- Phillis Wheatley
- Clara Barton
- Florence Nightingale

Geography (Maine)

The story takes place in Maine. Can your student find it on a map?

Using an atlas, your child can label it according to the directions. Its capital city is Augusta and the most eastern capital in the country. It is our 23rd state and was adopted into the Union in 1820. There are numerous lighthouses along its coast including Portland Head Light, which is the oldest lighthouse in Maine. Some fun facts on Maine:

Maine produces 99% of the blueberries in our country!

Maine's nickname is the Pine Tree State since 90% of its land is covered in forests.

Maine is the only state that shares its border with only one other state. Which one?

Maine used to be a part of the Massachusetts Colony.

Maine is the most northeasterly state in the Union.

Trundle Beds -

Aunt Maita and Seaborne slept in a trundle bed. Does your child know what that is? Trundle beds are a pair of beds. The upper bed is a twin bed and the lower one is slightly smaller and on rollers. The smaller bed can be rolled under the larger one to save on space.

Families -

The little girl at the beginning of the story is listening to her Aunt Maita. Maita is actually her great-great aunt because Seaborne is her great-grandmother. Does your child know what an aunt is? An aunt would be his/her mother's or father's sister. A great aunt would be the sister of your grandmother/grandfather and a great-great aunt would be the sister of your great-grandmother/great-grandfather. Use your child's family as an example. What are the names of his aunt, great aunt and great-great aunt?

Language Arts

Personification -

There is a lot of personification in *The Sea Chest*. Personification is when an author gives human characteristics to inanimate objects. Can your student spot the personification in the book? Here are some examples:

“City lights flicker in the dusk like winking fireflies.”

“Wind shrieked”

“Our breath painting clouds”

“The frozen hinges squeaked their resistance”

“My dancing heart”

Parts of Speech (Adjectives) -

Adjectives are describing words. They describe a noun (person, place, thing or idea) better. Some adjectives are “weak” and don’t give a clear picture of the noun. Others are “strong” and enable you to almost feel, see, smell, etc. the noun being described. Can your student spot the adjectives in the story? Here are some of them: shiny, rocky, craggy, warmer, icy, towering, frozen, fragile, tiniest, frosty, purple, yellow, only.

Play this word game with your child to see if he/she can spot the stronger adjective. Call out the two adjectives in the row and your child can tell you which one is more descriptive. Can your student come up with pairs like this—a weak adjective and a strong one?

Red-ruby

Purple-violet

Turquoise-blue

Big-monstrous

Small-miniature

Hot-sizzling

Cold-shivery

Slimy-wet

Smelly-musty

Thunderous-loud

Irritated-angry

Talkative-jabbering

Fierce-mean

Legends -

Read the author's note at the end of the book. Although *The Sea Chest* is fictional, it is based on a legend. What is a legend? A legend is a story that may have some truth to it, but the story is old or been passed from person to person so that it is hard to tell the truth from the fiction. Read more about the legend:

Historian Edward Rowe Snow, in his book Famous Lighthouses of New England, related a well-known story of Hendrick's Head Light. The tale concerned a vessel wrecked near Hendrick's Head in a March gale sometime around 1870 (1875, according to a 1955 newspaper story).

According to Snow, the keeper and his wife could see those on board the wrecked ship hanging to the rigging, practically frozen to death. The high wind and rough seas made it impossible for the keeper to launch a dory. As evening arrived the helpless keeper saw a strange bundle floating toward the shore.

The keeper snatched the bundle from the waves with a boat hook and discovered that it was actually two featherbeds tied together. He cut apart the ropes and discovered a box between the beds. Opening the box, the keeper discovered a tiny baby girl, crying and very much alive. The box also contained a note from the baby's mother, commending the girl's soul to God.

The keeper and his wife immediately took the baby to the warmth of their kitchen. After seeing that the baby was in good health, the keeper went outside and saw

that the vessel had vanished beneath the waves. Wreckage was soon washing ashore. The keeper and his wife adopted the baby girl and raised her at the lighthouse, according to the story as it usually told.

Some local historians question whether the events ever took place, and no such incident was ever reported by the local newspaper. Barbara Rumsey of the Boothbay Region Historical Society believes the story may have originated with a 1900 novel called Uncle Terry, which told a very similar story.

But according to some of the descendants of Jaruel and Wolcott Marr, the story is true. Elisa Trepanier, Jaruel Marr's great-great granddaughter, says, "I know the story of the baby girl in the mattress to be true as told to us by Jaruel's children and grandchildren. The baby girl was adopted by a doctor and his wife who were summer residents, as Jaruel and Catherine had too many children of their own to care for. I remember the baby girl was named Seaborn."

Source: <http://www.lighthouse.cc/hendrickshead/history.html>

A Story Within a Story -

There are actually two story lines in the book. Have your student identify both. There is the little girl's story of her waiting with her Aunt Maita for her parents to bring back her newly adopted sister from across the Atlantic. And then there is Maita's story of living on an island, finding Seaborne, and their life together.

Art

Reflections -

On the author's note page (last page) there is a picture of a candle by a window with a reflection of the candle in the window. Point out to your child that the reflection is not painted with as much detail and is not as bright. Can your child create a drawing with a reflection in a window? You can also see another example of reflection on the page opposite the sea glass. Can your child find it? (It is the reflection of the sun in the water). Notice that it too is not as distinct as the sun itself.

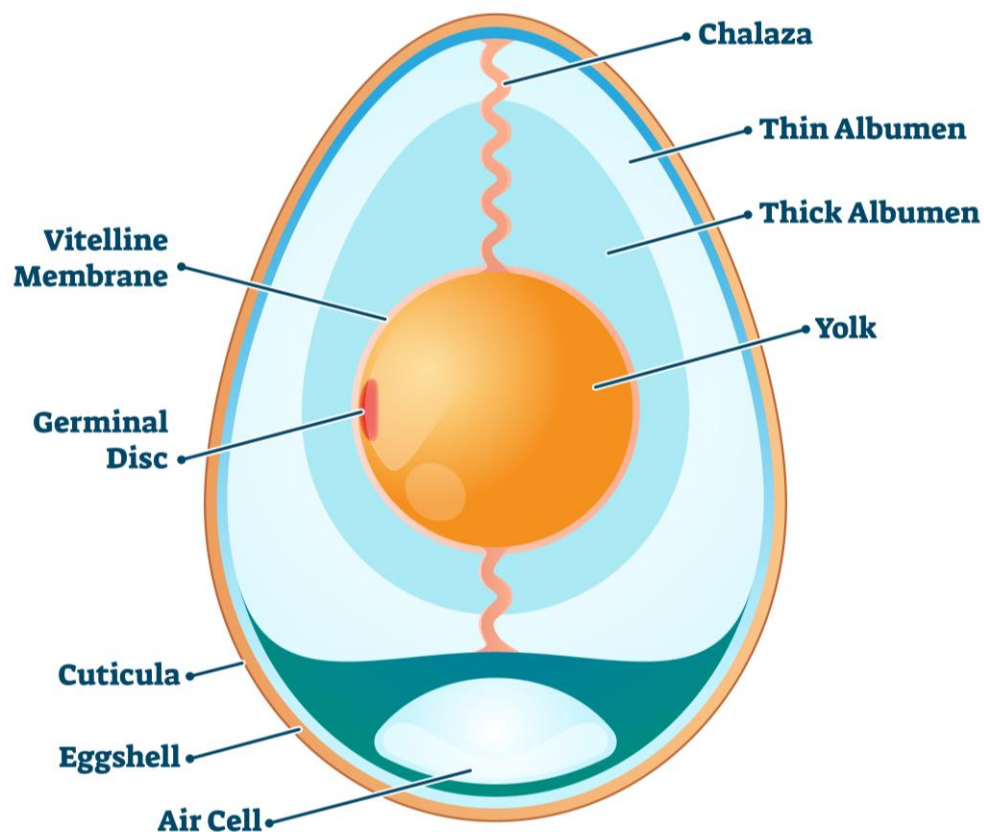
Showing Wind -

There are many examples throughout the book of swirling winds. Even the title page has sea gulls flying in the wind! Have your child find all the examples of wind in the story. Notice especially that the swirling wind is used to show that Aunt Maita is remembering her past (See the page that starts with, “I was a solitary child...” and the page that says “I taught her reading...”). These two pages are like “bookends” to the story that is within the story. Have you child create his/her own picture with wind.

Science

Double-Yolk Eggs –

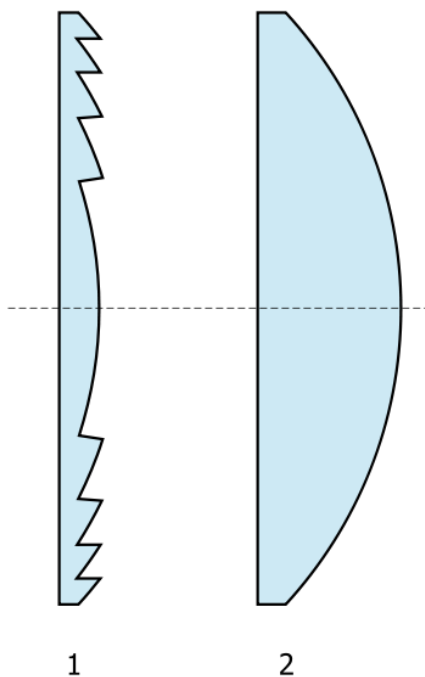
Maita circles on the calendar double-yolk days. Go over with your child the parts of an egg: the shell, the membrane (which can sometimes be seen with a hard-boiled egg), the air cell (seen with the hard-boiled egg), Chalaza (stringy part in the white but connected to the yolk-best seen in a raw egg), the white or albumen (contains all the protein to help and chick grow) and the yolk (which has the fat for the growth of the chick).



You could have a fresh and hard-boiled egg available for your student to look at. Can your student find all the parts? Double-yolk eggs are not common. This abnormality normally happens when a hen is young and just beginning to lay. Normally, a double-yolk egg is longer and thinner than a regular egg. Frequently, double-yolk eggs result in the unborn chicks fighting each other and at least one of them dying.

Fresnel Lens and Lighthouses -

There is mention of a Fresnel lens that was used in the lighthouse on Maita's island. The Fresnel lens was developed by a Frenchman named Augustin-Jean Fresnel. He originally developed it for use in lighthouses. Look at the diagram below (taken from [Wikipedia](#) where you can find more information on the lens). The Fresnel lens is much thinner which allows the light to be seen for farther distances. The lens labeled #1 is a Fresnel lens. The second lens is what we would normally think of as a lens.



Lighthouses are built along coasts and on islands to warn ships of danger. They normally use lights and bells (in foggy and stormy weather) to warn boats and ships.

Minot's Ledge Light in Massachusetts is particularly fascinating. It was built in the middle of the ocean on the Cohasset Rocks. If your child is interested, find a website and explore more about the Minot's Ledge Light in Massachusetts.

Math

Calendars -

Maita marks off the days on her calendar. Double-yolk days are circled in yellow. Supply boat days are given double blue stars. The first day of home school is boxed in red. Does your child have a calendar? Does he/she mark off the dates? This might be a fun activity. If he or she shows interest provide them with a calendar where they can mark off the dates. This might be a good time to review the days of the week and the names of the months. How many days are in a week? How many months in a year? How many days in a year? Weeks in a year?

Word Problems -

1. If each hen lays 3 eggs and there are 4 hens. How many eggs total? What if there are 5 hens, 7 hens, etc.?
2. If you have 5 double yolk eggs, how many yolks are there total?
3. Maita went back to the island for two months to visit. How many days is that? How many weeks?
4. You have 7 trundle beds in your house. How many people can sleep in your house?
5. Maita picked 7 yellow flowers and Seaborne picked 5 purple flowers. How many flowers do they have all together?
6. Maita brought a basket of yellow and purple flowers into the house. There are 11 flowers total. Six of them are yellow. How many are purple?

Skip Counting by 2's -

This is a great time to teach or review skip counting by twos. Print out the double-yolk eggs and cut them out. If your child is unfamiliar with skip counting, model it first by counting the first yolk in the egg quietly and the second number louder. By doing this several times your child will get used to hearing 2, 4, 6, etc. If you have an older child, you may want to challenge them by printing out several pages of eggs and seeing how high they can go. You could also ask questions like, "If I have 7 eggs, how many yolks do I have?"

Materials and information on this website may be used for your own personal and school use. **Material may not be shared electronically or be used for resale.**

© Homeschool Share

