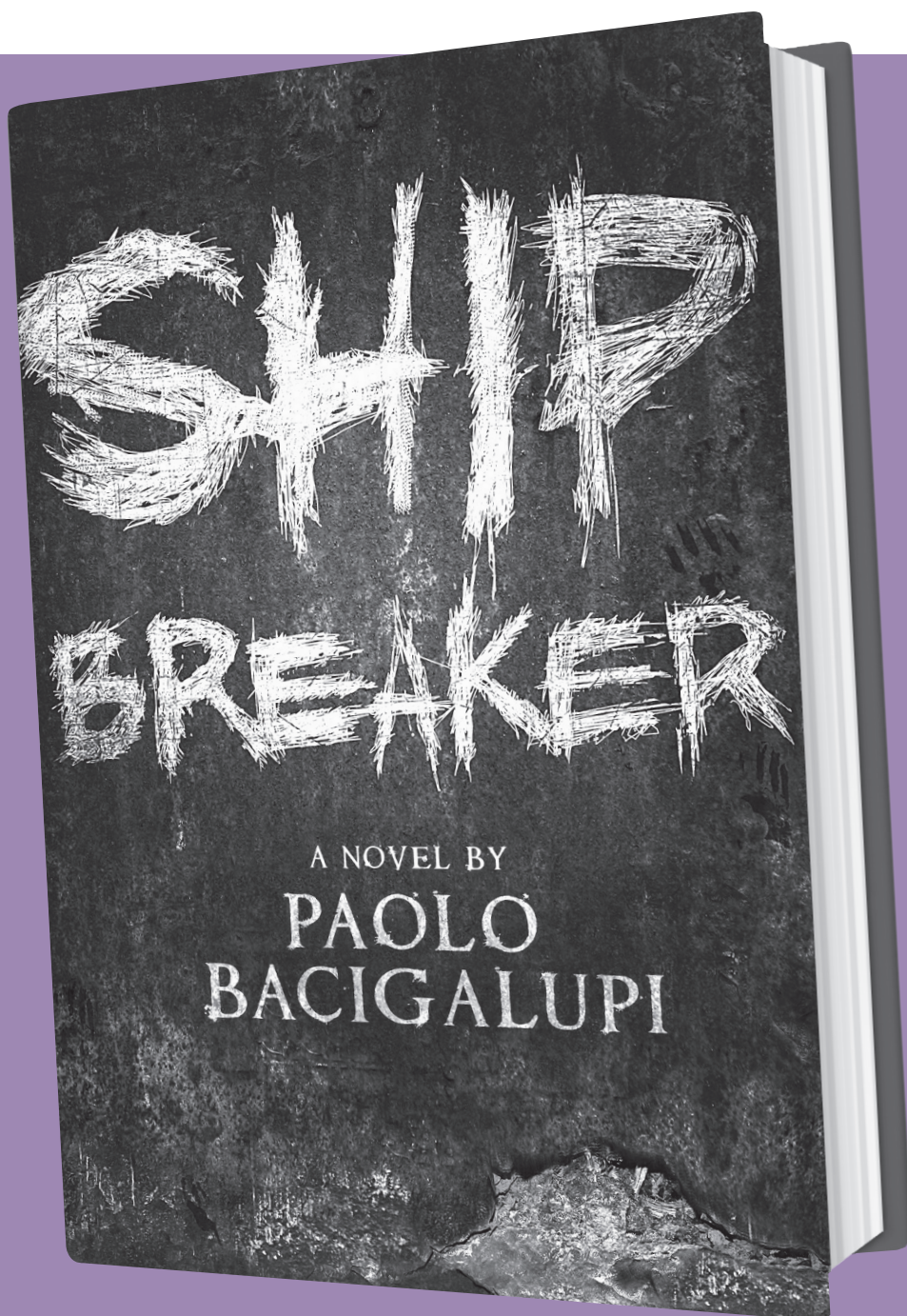


educator's guide

# SHIP BREAKER



## curriculum connections

- ✦ Environmental Science
- ✦ Social Studies
- ✦ Language Arts

Ages: 12 & up

by Paolo  
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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Compare & contrast the importance of interpersonal relationships and property for Nailer, Pima, Richard, and the people of Bright Sands Beach to that for Nita Choudhury, Pyce, Lawson & Carlson, and the “swanks”.
- Using the phrase, “In this story, loyalty means...,” discuss the issue of loyalty in *Ship Breaker*. Explain your choices.
- Discuss the role that religion plays in the lives of the characters: is it a source of hope? Of meaning for life? For some level of salvation? Of understanding their world better? Explain your responses.
- Compare the parent/child relationships in the story: Nailer and Richard, Pima and Sadna, Nita and her father, Moon Girl and her mother, Pearly and his parents. To what extent are the relationships of these characters shaped by the world around them? To what extent do their relationships shape that world?
- “But perhaps you will benefit from my wisdom,” Tool tells Nailer in an effort to convince him that the half-man will be a good asset as he and Nita make a run for the Orleans. Discuss Tool’s role in the story within the context of this quote. To what extent does it apply to the other half-men, such as Knot, Vine, or those hunting Nailer and Nita in the Orleans?
- The story takes place in a post-apocalyptic world where climate change has completely altered the processes of civilization. Discuss the importance of the setting to the events of the story.
- Sadna opens the last chapter of the book by reminding Nailer that “killing always costs.” Elaborate on this quote for characters such as Nailer, Sloth, Richard Lopez, Sadna, Lucky Strike, and Tool.

## CROSS CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

- As a pre-reading activity, have students complete an anticipation guide structured in the following manner:

BEFORE READING	AFTER READING	STATEMENTS
		The blood ties among families usually are strong enough to overcome betrayals.
		Loyalty is the most important part of a relationship between family or friends.
		Our successes in life often have as much to do with luck as with our choices or abilities.
		When in danger, it is best to play it safe rather than take a risk.
		In a life-or-death situation, almost any action is forgivable.

Instruct students to complete the guide by placing a “+” sign in the box next to the statements for which they agree, and a “0” next to those for which they disagree. They must commit to agreement or disagreement—there are no conditional responses. Students should be assured that there are no correct or incorrect positions.

Once students have had the opportunity to complete the guide, the teacher reads each statement aloud and has students who agree show it by standing or raising their hands. Each student should be permitted to provide their rationale for agreeing if they wish.

## LANGUAGE ARTS CONNECTIONS

- **Loyalty**—Have students compose an essay in which they analyze the dynamics of loyalty and examine the consequences of unquestioned loyalty or betrayal using examples from the text.
- **Considering Character**—Create an “I AM” Poem or a Biopoem.

**Purpose/Directions:** The purpose of this strategy is to help students demonstrate knowledge of a character by following written prompts to complete a poem about the individual. Students can be given the prompts to follow on a worksheet or alternatively, students may create an original slideshow using PowerPoint or Movie Maker.

## “I AM” POEM

**FIRST STANZA:**

I am (*name the character*)  
 I wonder (*something the character is actually curious about*)  
 I hear (*an imaginary sound the character might hear*)  
 I see (*an imaginary sight the character might see*)  
 I want (*something the character truly desires*)

**SECOND STANZA:**

I pretend (*something the character actually pretends to do*)  
 I feel (*a feeling about something imaginary*)  
 I touch (*an imaginary touch*)  
 I worry (*something that really bothers the character*)  
 I cry (*something that makes the character very sad*)  
 I am (*the first line of the poem repeated*)

**THIRD STANZA:**

I understand (*something the character knows is true*)  
 I say (*something that the character believes in*)  
 I dream (*something the character might actually dream about*)  
 I try (*something the character really make an effort about*)  
 I hope (*something the character actually hopes for*)  
 I am (*the first line of the poem repeated*)

**BIOPOEM:**

**Line 1:** First name

**Line 2:** Three traits that describe the character

**Line 3:** Relative (or friend/ally, or enemy) of \_\_\_\_\_

**Line 4:** Lover of \_\_\_\_\_ (three things)

**Line 5:** Who feels \_\_\_\_\_ (three things)

**Line 6:** Who needs \_\_\_\_\_ (three things)

**Line 7:** Who fears \_\_\_\_\_ (three things)

**Line 8:** Who gives \_\_\_\_\_ (three things)

**Line 9:** Who would like to see \_\_\_\_\_ (three things)

**Line 10:** Resident of \_\_\_\_\_

**Line 11:** Last name \_\_\_\_\_

- **Essential Quotes Analysis** The language that an author uses in his work is essential to getting across the intended meaning. Select four quotes from *Ship Breaker* that signify key ideas that the author hopes that readers take from the text. These might be quotes spoken by characters or might be from the narration, page numbers should be included with the quotes. Have students develop a chart with the following four columns:

- Quote
- Page Number
- Relevance to the Novel
- Intended Meaning for Readers

The intended meaning should have relevance not only to the characters in the text, but to the life of anyone who reads the book.

## SOCIAL STUDIES CONNECTIONS

- With the exception of allusions to some business and political entities who function in an advanced capacity, most of the characters in the story are in a survival situation each day of their lives after climate change and natural disasters have virtually destroyed modern civilization. Have students develop an outline describing the skills that would be most valuable in the world of the story, and also listing those skills that are valuable in our own society that would have little use or application in Nailor's world. They should also analyze the factors that make certain skills or occupations extremely valuable today but of minimal use in the world of the story.
- Discuss with students the alignments and affiliations exhibited by characters in the story. For example, characters like Nailor and Pima are aligned into clannish work gangs tied together by blood oaths and physical markings. Assign student groups to research tribal or clannish groups around the world (historical or contemporary) and the means that they use to establish codes of loyalty, allegiance, etc. Encourage them to compare and contrast these to the means used to establish affiliation or loyalty to institutions such as schools, businesses, governments/states, etc. You may also want them to consider actions or consequences for those who either lose their affiliations or simply don't have any.
- Religious allusions in *Ship Breaker* reflect a kind of collection of rituals and beliefs from around the world and across history. Have students research the religious origins of applicable items mentioned in the story: The Fates, Ganesh, sacrifices to the Scavenge God, offerings made by the Life Cult & the Harvesters, etc.

## SCIENCE

- The clipper ships represent one of the few instances in *Ship Breaker* where the technology of the era of the story met or exceeded that of our own time, "the Accelerated Age." Have students investigate the means that engineers and scientists are currently using to improve conditions. This might include advances in materials; new methods of propulsion, stabilization, or navigation; computer systems utilized in radar, sonar, weather tracking, and defense; and fuel and energy alternatives.
- The life that the author describes for the ship breakers of Bright Sands Beach is very similar to that lived by

many people today in the coastal regions of several of the world's poorer countries in South Asia, East Asia, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Eastern Mediterranean. Have students research the health and environmental hazards of ship breaking, and potential effects of this practice on countries who carry it out. They may also research alternative methods of ship disposal, such as artificial reef building and green ship recycling.

- Central to establishing the setting for the story is some speculation on the effects of climate change on sea levels and weather events. Have students research some of the data on the potential effects of polar melt and rising seas, and cross-reference this with map resources. How might modern coastlines be altered by such an event? What coastal cities might face the fate of the Orleans, Orleans II, or the Teeth? This can also be connected to a social studies activity that would investigate how such an event would affect world economies, the concentration of populations, and potential political and economic responses to such an event.

## THE ARTS

- Encourage students to utilize descriptions of the characters in the story to become "sketch artists." Have them create their perceptions of characters who have distinctive physical descriptions (scars, tattoos, piercings, clothing, hair, facial features, etc.: Nailor, Richard Lopez, Pima, Moon Girl, Nita, Tool & the half-men, Lucky Strike, etc.).
- *Ship Breaker* moves at a rapid pace, with the flow and intensity of an action movie or video game. Assign students to imagine the book as a game or movie and create an original playlist for several scenes in the novel. The music they select should incorporate both the intensity and the action of the scene, be it thrilling, fearful, mournful, or elated. Create original art for the jewel case and on the interior, and after including appropriate artist information, offer an explanation for the selection of each song.
- Using a variety of mediums, have students create an original piece of art which is symbolic of one of the major themes of *Ship Breaker* (these may include but are not limited to the following: loyalty, family, courage, betrayal, risk-taking, fortune, friendship, pain, redemption).

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# SHIP BREAKER

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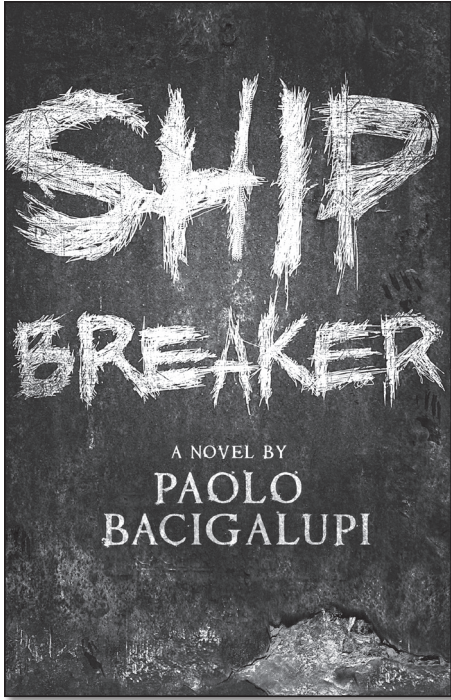
## SHIP BREAKER POST-READING ACTIVITY

**Purpose:** Students make connections between characters or events in *Ship Breaker* with people and events in their lives. After reading *Ship Breaker*, ask students to complete the chart considering the ways in which the story relates to their life and the world at large.

<p>As I read <i>Ship Breaker</i>, I observed...</p>	<p>As I read <i>Ship Breaker</i>, I wondered...</p>
<p>Sensory Descriptions Included in <i>Ship Breaker</i> (smell, hear, touch, sight, taste)</p>	<p>Some of the things I realized in reading <i>Ship Breaker</i> were...</p>

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## about the book



ISBN: 978-0-316-05621-2

In a desperate world centuries after climatic disasters forever altered Earth's physical landscape and the human communities that shaped it, young Nailer Lopez and his comrades on the light crew eke out an existence stripping wire and fittings from the decaying hulks of cargo and oil tankers beached on the American Gulf Coast. Fearful of his murderous father and an uncertain future, Nailer dreams of finding a "Lucky Strike" that will allow him to escape Bright Sands Beach to the open ocean on one of the swift clippers that haul cargo to ports around the world. The course of Nailer's life changes when a hurricane beaches the wreck of a clipper, and he finds the wealthy daughter of one of the world's great shipping magnates. In order to capitalize on his Lucky Strike, he alternatively relies upon and jeopardizes his own strength and wits, his ability to trust friends and strangers, and the benevolence of the Fates. From the toxic wreck yards of the Gulf Coast, to the ramshackle slums of the port of the Orleans, to the towering waves of the high seas, Nailer and his friends struggle to preserve their lives, their humanity, and the true meaning of family.

## about the author



Paolo Bacigalupi is the author of *The Windup Girl* and *Pump Six and Other Stories*. He has received acclaim for his work in science fiction, including two Locus Awards for best collection and best novelette, and the Sturgeon Memorial Award for best science fiction short story. He has also received four Hugo Award nominations and three Nebula Award nominations. Paolo lives with his wife and son in western Colorado.