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Activity Guide

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Fireboat

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ABOUT THE STORY

In New York City, in 1931, a fireboat called the John J. Harvey was built. It worked for many years putting out fires on the water and on the city's piers. When it grew old and didn't work well anymore, the city planned to destroy it, but a group of people saved the boat and rebuilt it. Then came the events of September 11, 2001. The John J. Harvey was called into service. It helped put out the fires in New York, and it saved many lives. Now the fireboat, and the people who worked on it on that terrible day, are heroes.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ ILLUSTRATOR

Maira Kalman is the author of a dozen children's books, including *What Pete Ate from A-Z* and *Next Stop Grand Central*. Her illustrations have been published in *The New Yorker*, *New York Magazine*, and many other publications. *Fireboat* has been named one of *Booklist's* "Top of the List" picture books and a *Publishers Weekly* Best Children's Books 2002. Part of the proceeds for the book are donated to the Twin Towers Orphan Fund.

INTRODUCING THE STORY

Ask children if they know what happened on September 11, 2001. Guide the discussion to focus on the people who helped out on that day — the firefighters, the police, the doctors and nurses, and the ordinary people who lent a hand. Explain that the book they will read is about a boat that helped save lives on that terrible day.

READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

- "What was the original purpose of the John J. Harvey?"
- "Why was the fireboat going to be destroyed?"
- "What did the group of people who saved the John J. Harvey do with it?"
- "Why was the John J. Harvey called back into service?"
- "Do you think the people who worked on the John J. Harvey were heroes? Explain." (*Make Judgments*)

Vocabulary

Write these words from the book on the chalkboard. Have children work in pairs to look up each word and use it in a sentence of their own. Children can read their sentences aloud to the class when they have finished.

Diesel nozzles piers propellers rivets barnacles

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Social Studies: The Year 1931

Have children use yearbooks and other reference books to find out about other events of 1931, the year the John J. Harvey was built. Possible events include the conviction of Al Capone, the declaration of "The Star Spangled Banner" as the national anthem, Spain becoming a republic, and the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. Ask each child to find one event and report on it to the class.

Art: Design a Medal

The John J. Harvey won an award for its actions. The people who manned the boat were also heroes. Ask children to design a medal for the people on board the fireboat. The medal should include the date September 11, 2001, and state what the recipient did to deserve the award.

Social Studies: The George Washington Bridge

The George Washington Bridge was built in 1931. Have children learn about the building of the bridge by looking in encyclopedias and other reference guides. Ask them to find out who designed and built the bridge, how long it took, and what materials were used.

Physical Education: Babe Ruth and the Yankees

Babe Ruth had a great year in 1931. Ask children to work in groups to find out more about this sports hero and his team, the New York Yankees. They can look in biographies and reference books to learn about Babe Ruth's life. Each group can focus on one aspect of Ruth's life and career: his childhood, his early years in baseball, his time with the Yankees, or his later life. Groups can report on what they learn to the rest of the class.

INTERNET ACTIVITY

Before you send children to do research using any of the keywords listed below, you may wish to try them yourself to be sure the sites are suitable.

The Fire on the Normandie

The John J. Harvey helped put out the fire on the great ship S.S. Normandie. Have children use the keywords *Normandie fire* to search the Internet for information on the ship's fire. They can use the information they find to write a news article about the fire as if it had just happened.