

Rag & Bone Puppet Theatre
Teacher's guide for

Zoom *at Sea*

*A play developed, in part, with the assistance of
The National Arts Centre English Theatre (Ottawa)
Based on Zoom at Sea, Zoom Away, & Zoom Upstream
written by*

*Tim Wynne-Jones, with illustrations by Eric Beddows.
Published by Groundwood Books.*



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The Company

Founded in 1978 by John Nolan and Kathy MacLellan, Rag & Bone's shows include *The Nightingale*, *A Promise is a Promise*, *The Story of Holly & Ivy*, *Felicity Falls*, *The Light Princess*, *Zoom at Sea*, *The Tempest*, *The Flying Canoe*, *The Last Polar Bears*, *Owl at Home* and *The Doll's House*. Rag & Bone has been awarded a Citation of Excellence in the Art of Puppetry from UNIMA-USA, the international puppetry association.

Kathy MacLellan is an award winning writer, performer and puppet-maker. Kathy has written over fifty television scripts, including episodes of *Under the Umbrella Tree*, *Theodore Tugboat*, and *Mr. Dressup*.

Actor, puppeteer, and designer John Nolan has built sets, props and puppets for stage and television, and has appeared on television and in many theatres, including GCTC, The National Arts Centre, Opera Lyra, Odyssey Theatre and Skeleton Key Theatre. He played Jackson on YTV's *Crazy Quilt*.

Kathy & John have also taught many puppet-making and drama workshops in schools across Ontario.

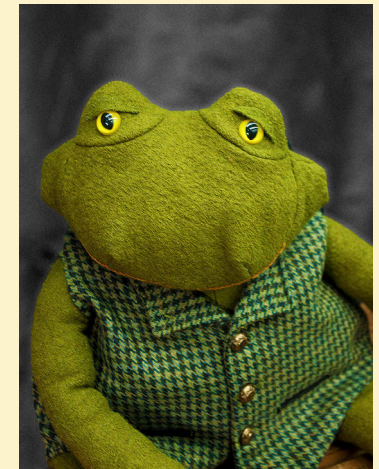
In the Ottawa area we are accompanied by musician Russell Levia. Russell is a popular Ottawa musician who appears frequently in clubs, folk festivals, and daycare centres. He has been working with Rag & Bone for 20 years.



The Last Polar Bears



Felicity Falls



The Wind in the Willows

About the Production

In our production of *Zoom at Sea* we appear in full view of the audience as we work the puppets, and freely move from being narrators to being puppeteers.

The performers are more like storytellers than puppeteers, working the puppets and narrating the story in full view of the audience. We use our puppets to tell the story in the same way that children play with toys.

This style of puppetry is called open manipulation. The children have a chance to see “how everything works”, and the puppeteers have direct contact with the audience.

In the staging of *Zoom* simple props and lengths of fabric indicate scenery, and imagination fills in the details.

The music is performed live on stage by Russell Levia. Russell based the music on *Scherazade*, the symphonic suite by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov.



*The sea was easy to get to.
Zoom took a bus.*

About the author & the illustrator of the books...

TIM WYNNE-JONES is widely known for his wonderful picture books *Zoom at Sea* and its successors, and his well-crafted, prize-winning volumes of short stories. He is two-time winner of the Governor General's Award for his first collection of short stories, *Some of the Kinder Planets*, and for his novel, *The Maestro*. He has also won the Canadian Library Association's Book of the Year for Children Award and the prestigious Boston Globe-Horn Book Award for Excellence in Children's Literature. His most recent book is *The Ruinous Sweep*. Tim lives with his family near Perth, Ontario.

KEN NUTT works both as a fine artist and, under the pseudonym Eric Beddows, as a children's book illustrator. Eric Beddows is an amalgam of Nutt's middle name (Eric) and his mother's family name (Beddows). He has won the Ruth Schwartz Award for *Zoom at Sea*, twice won the Amelia Frances Howard-Gibbon Award for both *Zoom at Sea* and *Zoom Away*, and was named to the IBBY Youth Honor List for *The Emperor's Panda*. In 1996, he was given a Governor General's Literary Award for *The Rooster's Gift*. Ken Nutt lives in Stratford, Ontario.



Tim Wynne-Jones

The Stories

Zoom at Sea

Zoom is a cat who loves water and dreams of the sea. One afternoon he finds a diary in the attic. It's addressed to him from his Uncle Roy, an old sea captain. On the last page is a map which says: *The Sea and how to get there.*

Zoom follows the instructions and goes to Maria's house. Maria turns an enormous wheel, pushes a button, cranks a crank and the sea comes tumbling into her room, which is larger than Zoom thought. He dances all day on the deck of his home-made raft, calling, "More waves," or "More sun," or "More fish." Then he sits and lets the tide carry him back in for tea with Maria. At the end of the day, he thanks her and promises to come back.

Zoom Away

Uncle Roy is in the High Arctic and Maria hasn't heard from him in months. She's off to the North Pole to search for him, and asks Zoom to come along.

Zoom has never been upstairs at Maria's before. The way is cold, and very steep. They pass windows prickly with ice and halls carpeted with snow. Finally they come to a narrow room with a very small doorway, too small for Maria. "I'll have to find a different way," she says. "I'll meet you on the other side."



Zoom dreamt of the sea.



Zoom travels through a long tunnel into the bright Arctic sun. Birds laugh and seals clap as he skates round and round on the Arctic sea. Then, tired, he climbs to the top of a frozen hill, looks through his spy glass and sees Uncle Roy's boat, *The Catship*, stuck in the ice.

In the galley, he finds a note: Uncle Roy and his crew boarded a passing iceberg and are heading south. Zoom is sad; he hoped to see his uncle. Then he hears Maria calling him. Maria takes him home, and he wakes up in front of her fireplace, dreaming about travelling to rescue *The Catship* once the ice melts. He hopes it won't be too long.

Zoom Upstream

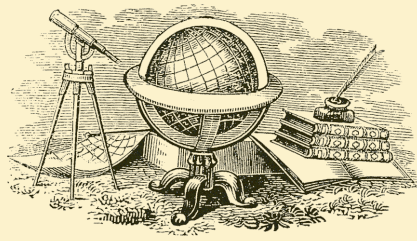
It's fall, and Zoom is napping in Maria's garden when she answers an urgent phone call from Uncle Roy. Zoom wakes up and follows her muddy footprints to the library. He goes through a bookshelf and down a staircase of books. There he finds a dark river, climbs aboard a dusty old crate, and floats on the current all the way to a stone dock in Egypt.

In a room crawling with pictures of cats Zoom sees a mummy—a mummy whose shape looks awfully familiar. Maria. With his pruning shears, Zoom cuts the mummy open, and together he and Maria follow a trail of silver buttons from Uncle Roy's captain's uniform.

The buttons lead them out of the tomb onto a pier, where a row boat awaits them. On the seat the last button glints silver in the starlight. Maria rows the boat out onto the wide black river to a clipper sitting under a crescent moon. It's Uncle Roy's *Catship*. Zoom finally meets his long-lost uncle, and together they sail upstream, to search for the source of the mighty Nile.



Word Search



*There are words hiding in
the box of letters.
Can you find them?*

arctic, books, captain's whistle, cat (2 times), catacomb,
catship, concertina, diary, drums, fog, hurt, levee, logs,
Maria, moon, mummies, nod, north pole, northwest
passage, photograph, pilot, porthole, procession, prun-
ing shears, raft, rapped, row, sails, sat, sea, sentinel,
silver button, spyglass, thermos, torch, town, tunnel,
upstream, Uncle Roy, water, wave, wolf, Zoom.

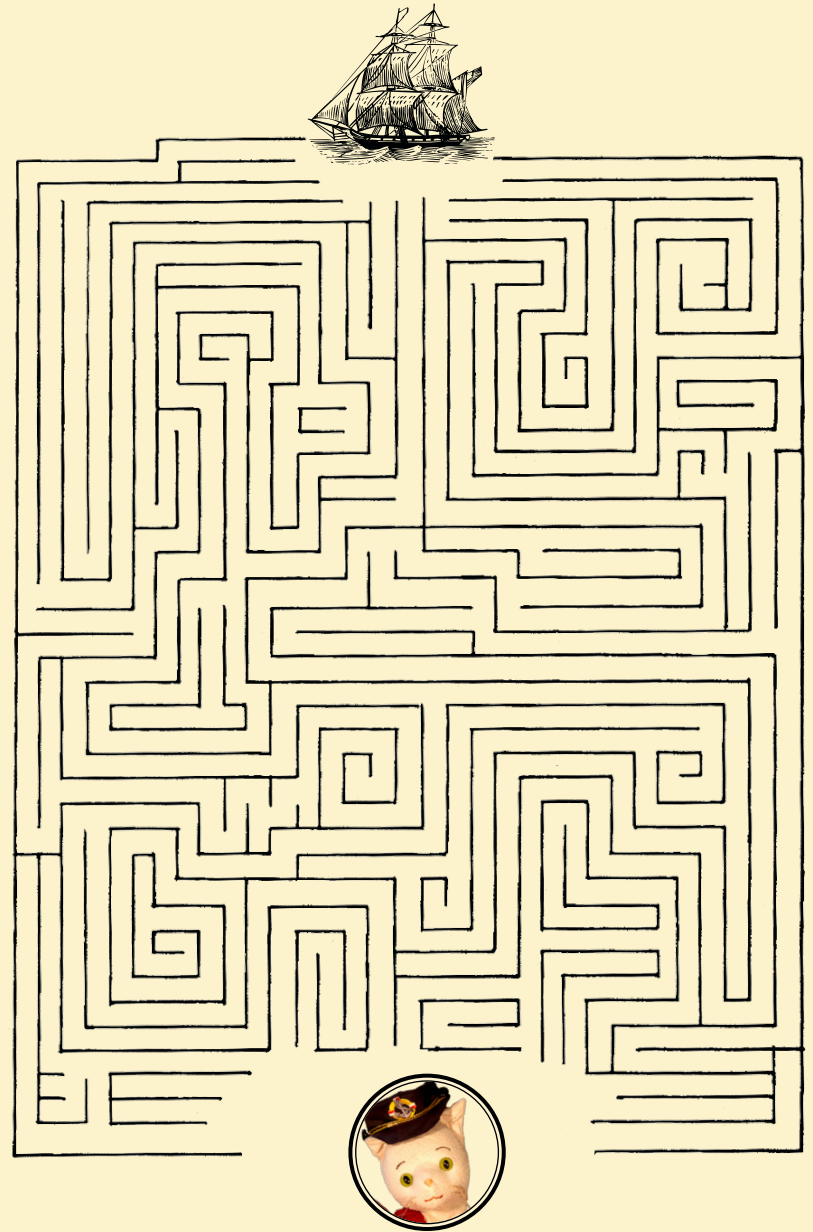
Circle the letters of the list words. The leftover letters
will spell out the mystery phrase.

N	Z	D	R	U	M	S	P	T	U	N	N	E	L	C	M
S	O	U	N	C	L	E	R	O	Y	O	O	R	A	O	U
I	O	R	A	F	T	A	U	W	M	D	R	P	S	N	M
L	M	U	T	M	O	O	N	O	A	I	T	H	E	C	M
V	A	P	L	H	G	G	I	L	R	A	H	O	N	E	I
E	A	S	T	O	W	N	N	F	I	R	P	T	T	R	E
R	N	T	T	D	G	E	G	N	A	Y	O	O	I	T	S
B	P	R	O	C	E	S	S	I	O	N	L	G	N	I	P
U	W	E	R	O	W	W	H	T	B	I	E	R	E	N	Y
T	A	A	C	O	H	S	E	U	P	S	N	A	L	A	G
T	T	M	H	I	C	A	A	E	R	A	P	P	E	D	L
O	E	P	S	I	E	I	R	C	A	T	S	H	I	P	A
N	R	T	T	V	U	L	S	B	O	O	K	S	P	P	S
E	L	C	A	T	T	S	B	M	O	C	A	T	A	C	S
E	R	W	T	H	P	O	R	T	H	O	L	E	E	G	A
A	T	R	T	H	E	R	M	O	S	E	L	E	V	E	E

Write the mystery phrase here (five words):

Where is the Catship?

Zoom has to get through the maze to reach *The Catship*.
Starting at the bottom of the page, can you help him
find his way?



A Rag & Bone Production

How did you make the puppets? How long did it take? How long does it take to rehearse? These questions are frequently the first questions students ask in the question period that follows a Rag & Bone performance.

Once we pick a story, we spend a lot of time developing ideas about the plot, the characters and the setting before Kathy writes the script, turning the story into a play. We have a lot to figure out: What should the set look like? What should the puppets be like? How big should they be? How should the puppeteer hold them? What should they be made out of?



of paper for papier maché. Kathy's mask was made by casting her face with dental mould material, and then making a plaster mould from that.

The Egyptian cat masks, and Maria's mask, were made out of epoxy resin and fibreglass cloth. John made the cat's face in clay, and then poured plaster over it to make a mould. Into the mould he brushed the resin and added fibreglass cloth, just as if he was using strips



Zoom and Uncle Roy are hand puppets, sewn from fabric and stuffed. Kathy experimented with several patterns, cutting, reshaping and re-stuffing until she got just the shapes she wanted.



The Catship was carved out of a block of wood, using patterns derived from a real clipper ship.

After making all the things we needed, we rehearsed the show. We had to decide how the puppets should talk, and what actions they should perform. We *blocked* the play: that is, we planned all the movements. Of course, we also had to learn our lines.



We also decided what sound effects and musical instruments we'd use in the play.

The music for *Zoom* was created by Russell Levia, a well known Ottawa based singer, songwriter and instrumentalist. Russell plays accordion and electric guitar in this show.

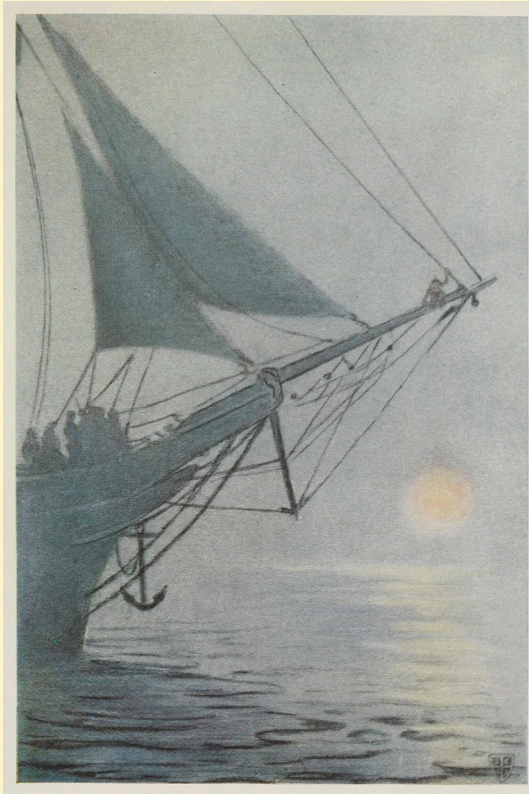


Rimsky-Korsakov

Russell based the music for the play on *Scherazade*, an orchestral work by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. He worked with John and Kathy for the first week so that musical ideas could be developed, John and Kathy rehearsed with the puppets for two weeks, and finally Russell came back for the fourth week of rehearsal.

More ideas develop and grow once the show is on the road, but those four weeks set most of the action and sound effects.

Discussion Topics



Zoom at Sea is a good opportunity to fulfil some of the knowledge expectations outlined in the Ontario Arts Curriculum, such as the elements of drama, the use of music to create mood, and the impact of design elements.

Elements of Drama

CHARACTER

Who is in this play? Which character is the most important?

CONFLICT

What does Zoom want at the beginning of the first story?

What is stopping him from this goal? How does Uncle Roy's message help? How does Maria help?

In the second story, Zoom and Maria go searching for something together. Who or what? What do they find?

In the third story, Maria disappears and Zoom follows her, but who are they both looking for? Do they find him? What problems do they run into?



STRUCTURE

There are three stories in this play, but each has its own beginning, when we find out who's in the story, middle, when we see the problem, and end when the problem is resolved. Identify the beginning, middle and end of each story.



The show has its own overall structure as well. Describe it. (In the beginning Zoom the cat loves water, in the middle there are series of problems while searching for, and not finding, Uncle Roy, leading to the worst problem, being chased by mummies. In the end Uncle Roy is found.)

SUSPENSE

Suspense is a way of building excitement by making the audience wait for an answer to a question. In *Zoom at Sea*, each of the following moments also had special music to add to the sense of mystery. Can you remember what you wondered at each of these points? Can you remember what the music was like? How did it help the mood?

- Zoom climbs the attic stairs. (*What's in the attic?*)
- Maria's prepares for the sea. (*What's Maria doing?*)
- Zoom finds a small door. (*What's behind it?*)
- The abandoned ship. (*Where did everyone go?*)

- Zoom finds a stairway behind the library shelf. (*Where does it lead?*)
- The room is full of cloth-covered-cat-like shapes. (*What did they want?*)
- Zoom and Maria see a row boat. (*Who left it there? Why?*)

DIALOGUE

Maria: Captain Roy, a mummy? I doubt it!

Zoom: You mean he got away?

Maria: Yes, and he left us a clue.

When two characters in a play talk to each other, their conversation is dialogue. Can you remember another dialogue between Zoom and Maria? How did it help you know what was going on?

NARRATION

Can you remember a time when a storyteller or a character spoke directly to the audience?

ACTION

Something happens:

Where did Maria hide when the cat mummies were chasing her? What other lively events do you remember? (*e.g. Maria's magical house became the sea, Zoom battled a snowstorm in the Northwest Passage, Zoom paddled a crate down a river's winding current.*)

For Juniors

Analyse the performance focusing on the ways in which elements of drama work together.

Identify the significance of symbols.

(How do books show Zoom the way? How do the increasingly complex kinds of boats show Zoom's growing maturity and reaching out into the world: the bathtub basket, the raft, the crate, the row boat, the clipper ship?)

How do these elements of drama work together to create different effects on the audience?

(Character and conflict grab the audience's interest; suspense, music, narration and dialogue create mood, e.g., "I'm at sea!", "Zoom felt sad. He'd hoped to see his uncle.")

Show how variety and unity are used in the production.

What images and objects occur again in the three stories? *(Stairs, brooms, books, maps, characters, fabric, musical choices, quest for Uncle Roy.)*

How is each story different? *(Destination, season, weather, build of excitement, more specific quest.)*



For Primaries

Compare own response with those of peers. What was your favourite part? Your classmates'?

How could research help you to understand this play? *(Knowing more about life at sea, arctic explorations, the culture or ancient Egypt, the pyramids, navigation, maps, cats.)*

Draw a picture of your favourite part of the play. Why did you like it best?

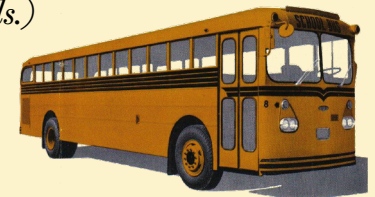
Did you ever wish you could go somewhere? Did you ever get to go? Was it like you imagined?

What would you do if a friend needed your help? Have you ever helped someone? Did anything unexpected happen while you were helping?

HOW DESIGN CREATES MOOD

How are the cat mummies made to look scary? *(Large size, big staring eyes, cold hard head shape.)* How was Zoom made to seem nice? *(Soft fabric, cuddly size, friendly expression.)*

Can you think of anything else in the play that was made to create a feeling? *(e.g. exuberant blue and green fabric for the sea, shiny fabric for the beautiful arctic sea, pictures of cats and other Egyptian symbols.)*



Maps & Navigation



Zoom at Sea is a work of fiction, but it celebrates the adventure of nineteenth century exploration and navigation, so it's not surprising to find maps, globes and a sextant in the play. Maria's house is a doorway to exotic destinations—back in time and around the world. First, Zoom finds an old globe in the attic, then a hand-drawn map directing him to the sea. Maria has a map of the north pole, and uses a sextant to help her find her way there. Here's some curriculum-based activities and discussion topics for your students:

Draw a map of Zoom's neighbourhood. Show Zoom's house, Maria's house, and the road the bus took to go to her house. Can you think of any other things you might put on the map? Older children can put a scale and a legend on the map.

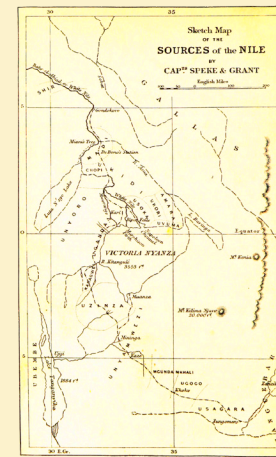
Zoom goes from the north pole to Egypt, right near the equator. Look at a globe. Where is the equator? The north pole?



Older children can draw a map of the polar regions, marking the route they'd take if they were going to the pole.

At the end of the play *Zoom*, Maria and Uncle Roy are planning to go in search of the source of the Nile.

Try to follow the Nile river back to its source on a map. (You'll need a bigger map than this!) Do you think they can sail there? What difficulties might they encounter?



✍ Captain Roy says, “We’ve got quite the trip ahead of us.”, and he’s not kidding: the Nile is longest river in the world. It starts at the Luvironza River in Burundi, and flows through Egypt into the Mediterranean. 18th and 19th century explorers searched for the source of Nile. James Bruce journeyed to Lake Tana, the source of the Blue Nile, in 1770.

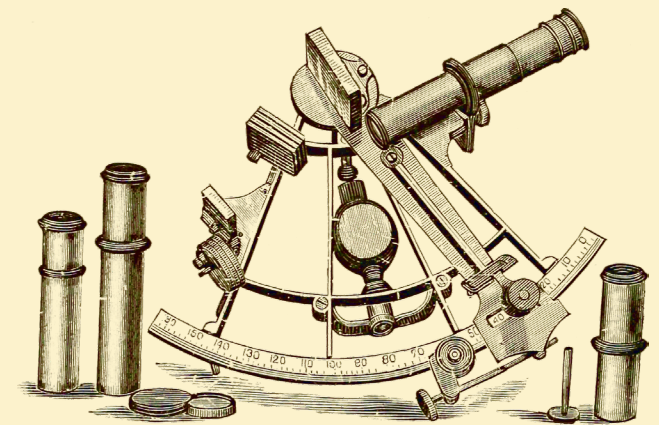
John Speke identified Lake Victoria and Ripon Falls as the source of the White Nile in 1861.



Captain Roy's ship, is a *clipper ship*. Clipper ships had their heyday in the mid 1800s. They were named for their ability to "clip" the time taken for a passage. These beautiful ships were very fast for their time, even beating out steamships. The Californian gold rush of 1848 and the Australian gold rush of 1851 fuelled demand for clipper ships. They were also used for the lucrative Australian wool trade and the China tea trade.

When Zoom and Maria are getting ready to go to sea, and when they're on their way to the North Pole, Maria brings out a *sextant* like the one below.

Sextants are used to find angles, and navigators use them to determine the position of the sun, or particular stars. With this information, and an accurate clock, they can compute their latitude and longitude. Surveyors use sextants to find the height of an object, like a building or a hill. If they know the distance to the object, and the angle, they can find its height.



“Bisso Bubastis Bastet!”



When Zoom and Maria go to Egypt, they see cloth covered cat-like shapes chanting *Bisso Bubastis Bastet*. What does it mean?



The ancient Egyptians worshipped many gods, including the cat goddess *Bastet*. She was a kind god, known for good fortune and good health. She represented the sun's power to make things grow. She was often depicted as having a woman's body and a cat's head.

The city of *Bubastis*, near the modern town of Zagazig, was the centre of Bastet's cult, with her temple located on an island in the Nile river.

The ancient historian Herodotus thought that it was the most beautiful temple in Egypt.

As for the word *Bisso*, well, Tim Wynne-Jones, the author, made it up. He just thought it sounded good with *Bubastis* and *Bastet*.



The ancient Egyptians revered cats so much that they mummified them, and in 1888 a farmer digging near the town of Beni Hasan discovered thousands of these cat mummies. This is what they looked like.



Rag & Bone

1693 Boyer Road, Ottawa, ON

K1C 3L1

(613) 824-5972

WWW.RAGANDBONE.CA

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