

Visiting Author Package

J. Scott Fuqua



Before your Author Visit

VISITING AUTHOR
J Scott Fuqua
Flying Through History

Having a visiting author read to and engage a group can be a very rewarding event, but it takes planning to do it as well as possible. The following tips are suggested to ensure that educators are able to make the most of a visit.

Most importantly, everyone (including the kids) should know about the guest BEFORE the visit. Reading the complete book is not necessary to enjoy the activities presented, but having knowledge of the book, as well as its content and characters, will lend to a richer learning experience.

Planning Ahead- Bulk quantities of discounted books are available in advance direct from the publisher. Be sure the book is in the library (<http://bancroftpress.com/contact-us/>) and download any materials in advance.

Heads Up- With advance knowledge of the visit, coordinators and hosts can make the most of book materials. Cross Curriculum activities that incorporate literature, history, and cultural studies are a great choice and can be done in single afternoon. Suggested activities include:

- Book Review
- Discussion of Historic Characters
- Incorporation of Art through images
- Interview the Author

Book Flair- Costumed events are great fun for kids and adults. Historic costumes and reenactments can help bring characters out of books.

And remember: THE MORE EXCITED YOU ARE, THE MORE EXCITED THE KIDS ARE. This gives the best result for everyone involved!

For the Author

Before the visit, take some time to collect information that would be helpful to the author. Beneficial information packages may include:

- Information about the audience age groups
- A map of the area around the event location
- Availability of Supplies and Materials (including computers, AV equipment, specific supplies for activities)

For Everyone

Direct communication with the author is strongly recommended! Please send directions, contact information, a letter of confirmation and agreed honorarium to: jsfuqua@gmail.com

Contacting the author in advance and building a rapport can be instrumental in creating a memorable, educational day for everyone. The author may have others tips and suggestions, as well as new ideas to add.

On the day of the visit:

Please feed your author! It is always nice to provide lunch and/or snacks for your visiting author. The author is likely not familiar with your area and will have a difficult time procuring meals during a full day of talks and presentations.

Setting up a luncheon or meet and greet with a few of the most motivated fans can be a special treat or an aid in fundraising for the event.

Please help with the in-house equipment. If you have computers set out for the presentation, please have someone there who can help if there are any glitches. If carrying things around is necessary, please have some volunteers to help.

Have the host or coordinator on hand. It is important to be able to reach the audience and if there are any issues, it is important for the host to take control.

Honorarium: The author will be delighted to make the visit, and it is important to show you care as well. Please be sure to provide the honorarium either before or upon arrival. Making the author hunt down the responsible party is difficult and creates an awkward situation.

Autographs: Authors have been asked to sign everything from books to bookbags, shirts, hats, and shoes. Most authors don't mind and it is fun for the guests, whether they have the book or not. Please gauge interest in this ahead of time and make arrangements for this activity; crowding around could be hard on staff and the author.

Spread the Word: Before the visit and after, spread the word. Let other schools, libraries, and your community know about it. Community involvement can make a huge difference!

Plan for Next Time: When the visit goes well, the author will want to come back! *Flying Through History* is an ongoing series with new historical events to be added in the future. For new releases we always look to find good audiences!

The following pages contain the MSDE Study Guide for
Calvert the Raven in The Battle of Baltimore.

This study guide can also be downloaded in its entirety from the MSDE
website, or the Bancroft Press website here:
<http://bancroftpress.com/calvert-the-raven/>

Grade/Course	4/5	Unit	History/MD History	Lesson Title	Calvert the Raven: The Battle of Baltimore
Essential Questions	How am I connected to those in the past?				
Enduring Understanding	Knowledge of the past helps one understand the present and make decisions about the future.				
State Standards	<p>History</p> <p>D2.HIS.3-5 Explain probable causes and effects of events and developments</p> <p>Geography</p> <p>D2.GEO.3-5 Construct maps and other graphic representations of both familiar and unfamiliar places.</p>				
Common Core Standards	<p>Reading</p> <p>Grade 4 CCSS ELA-Literacy RL.4.1 Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.</p> <p>Grade 5 CCSS ELA-Literacy RL.5.1 Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and drawing inferences from the text.</p> <p>Writing</p> <p>Grade 4/5 CCSS ELA-Literacy W.4/5.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.</p> <p>Speaking and Listening</p> <p>Grade 4/5 CCSS.ELA-Literacy SL.4/5.4 Report on a topic or text or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.</p>				
Student Outcomes	Students will read a historical-fiction text to gather facts about the Battle of Baltimore and create maps that highlight important events from the War of 1812.				
Summative Assessment	Students will rewrite Daniel's report (from the book <i>Calvert the Raven: The Battle of Baltimore</i>) on the War of 1812 using details from the book and other sources. In the report, students will address the prompt: <i>In the story, the author states that Daniel understood what being an American meant. What does the author mean by that statement? Cite examples from the story that support that claim.</i>				
Materials	<p>K-W-L Chart</p> <p>Daniel's Report</p> <p>War of 1812 Map (Maryland Region)</p> <p>Directions for Four-Section Book</p> <p>Crayons, makers or colored pencils</p> <p>Paper for maps and Four-Section Book</p> <p>Book for Read-Aloud: <i>Calvert the Raven: The Battle of Baltimore</i> by J. Scott Fuqua</p>				
Vocabulary	Tier 2 – (academic language) – cawed, whisked, bristling, plummeting, skittered				
Prior Knowledge	Tier 3 – (content language) – British Redcoats, muskets, bombardment, settlement, bow (of a ship), masts, hulls, fortifications, barricades				
Students should have a basic awareness of the Revolutionary War and America's struggle to establish itself as a new nation.					

Lesson Procedure – Day 1

	Teacher Action:	Students Action:	Suggested Modifications:
Engagement	<p>Create and display a K-W-L chart. Ask students to state everything that they know about the War of 1812. List that information on the “K” section of the chart. <i>(“K” – What I Know; “W” – What I Want to Learn or Know; “L” – What I Learned)</i></p> <p>Post or distribute the report that Daniel wrote (use Teacher Resource Sheet 1).</p> <p>Using information from Daniel’s report, have students complete the “L” column of the K-W-L chart. (Students will not be able to list any details because Daniel did not provide any information about the War of 1812. Use this opportunity to discuss why this is not a good report and what needs to be added to create a good report.)</p> <p>Ask students what questions they still have about the War of 1812 that cannot be answered by the information already listed. Use those questions to complete the “W” column of the K-W-L chart.</p>	<p>Students participate as a class in listing everything they know about the War of 1812.</p> <p>Students read Daniel’s report and attempt to identify information about the War of 1812.</p> <p>Students provide questions about the War of 1812.</p>	<p>If the students have previously read or studied about the War of 1812, allow them to work as partners to recall content already presented prior to the total class activity.</p>

Procedure Steps

Prior to reading the book, tell students that they are going to hear a story about a boy who is magically transported back in time to witness events that took place in Maryland during the War of 1812. Have them listen for details that could answer questions listed on the “W” section of the K-W-L chart.

Also, ask them to listen for specific locations/events that are mentioned in the story (List these places on the board or on chart paper: *Baltimore, Battle of North Point, Washington, D.C., and Fort MCHenry*). While listening to the story, the students are to record information about those sites.

Read aloud *Calvert the Raven: The Battle of Baltimore* by J. Scott Fuqua. Revisit the “L” column of the K-W-L chart and list any new details learned from the book. Also check the “W” column to see if those questions have been answered.

Display a map of Maryland (make sure it includes Washington, D.C.) Point out and review the elements of a map (title, border, legend/key, date, origin/author, scale). Have students locate on the map the sites mentioned in the story (*Baltimore, Battle of North Point, Washington, D.C., and Fort MCHenry*).

Distribute large sheets of white paper, markers, crayons, or colored pencils. Have students work individually or in pairs to construct maps showing the sites referenced in the story. Have them draw pictures or add captions at each site to illustrate or explain the importance of that site. Direct students to use pictures or captions not already listed on the sample map. Remind the students to include all the elements of a map.

Students listen to the reading of *Calvert the Raven: The Battle of Baltimore* by J. Scott Fuqua and list any learned facts /information about the sites mentioned in the story.

Students individually record information about the sites referenced in the story.

Students identify the elements of a map and the sites referenced in the story.

Students work individually or in pairs to construct a map of the areas referenced in the story. The maps will include pictures or captions that describe what happened at each site and should include all of the map elements.

If copies of the book *Calvert the Raven: The Battle of Baltimore* by J. Scott Fuqua are available for individual or small groups of students, have students read the book. First clear vocabulary (see vocabulary list on page 1 of this plan.)

Use this resource with students who need additional practice in reading maps.

Maryland Historical Society:
<http://www.mdhs.org/sites/default/files/How%20to%20interpret%20a%20map.pdf>

Use electronic maps when available.

Mapquest Map: Use Fort MCHenry-Baltimore, MD and North Point State Park, MD as the starting and ending points.
[Http://www.mapquest.com/](http://www.mapquest.com/)

Google Earth
<http://www.google.com/earth/index.html>

Note: The map included with this lesson cites places and events not cited in the book. Students can research those places and events as an extension or enrichment activity.

Closure	<p>Allow students to share their maps. (Check for accuracy and provide feedback where needed.) Display the maps in a prominent place in the room or hallway after Day 2. (Students will use the maps on Day for a story retelling activity.)</p>	<p>Students will share their maps with the class.</p>	
----------------	--	---	--

Lesson Procedure – Day 2

	Teacher Action:	Students Action:	Suggested Modifications:
Engagement	<p>Display the map of Maryland. Revisit the locations identified on Day 1. Have students retell the story <i>Calvert the Raven: The Battle of Baltimore</i> by J. Scott Fuqua.</p>	<p>Students will retell the story <i>Calvert the Raven: The Battle of Baltimore</i> by J. Scott Fuqua. (Have students use the maps constructed on Day 1 as props while retelling the story.)</p>	
Procedure Steps	<p>Reread the book <i>Calvert the Raven: The Battle of Baltimore</i> and have students identify the historical figures named in the book (Major Armistead, Major General Samuel Smith, Commodore John Rodgers, and Francis Scott Key.)</p> <p>Ask students what they would like to know about each of these historical figures pertaining to their role in the Battle of Baltimore. List those questions.</p> <p>Have each student select one of the historical figures and have them conduct research in order to answer the questions generated by the class. Direct students to other resources (primary sources, appropriate websites, etc.)</p> <p>Students will construct a Four-Section Book (see worksheet). Each tab will contain one of the historical figures (name or picture) and information about that person.</p>	<p>Students will listen to the story <i>Calvert the Raven: The Battle of Baltimore</i> and record any information given about Major Armistead, Major General Samuel Smith, Commodore John Rodgers, and Francis Scott Key.</p> <p>Students will generate questions about Major Armistead, Major General Samuel Smith, Commodore John Rodgers, and Francis Scott Key and their role in the Battle of Baltimore.</p> <p>Students will use their questions to conduct research about one of the historical figures they have selected.</p> <p>Students will construct a Four-Section Book using information that they and their group members gathered about the 4 historical figures (Major Armistead, Major General Samuel Smith, Commodore John Rodgers, and Francis Scott Key).</p>	<p>If copies of the book <i>Calvert the Raven: The Battle of Baltimore</i> by J. Scott Fuqua are available for individual or small groups of students, have students reread the story and list the historical figures named.</p> <p>National Park Service War of 1812 website: http://www.nps.gov/history/1812/kids.html</p> <p>Ft. MCHenry Hold the Fort http://www.nps.gov/fomc/holdthefort/</p> <p>War of 1812 Map Timeline http://warof1812.thinkport.org/#interactive-map.html</p>

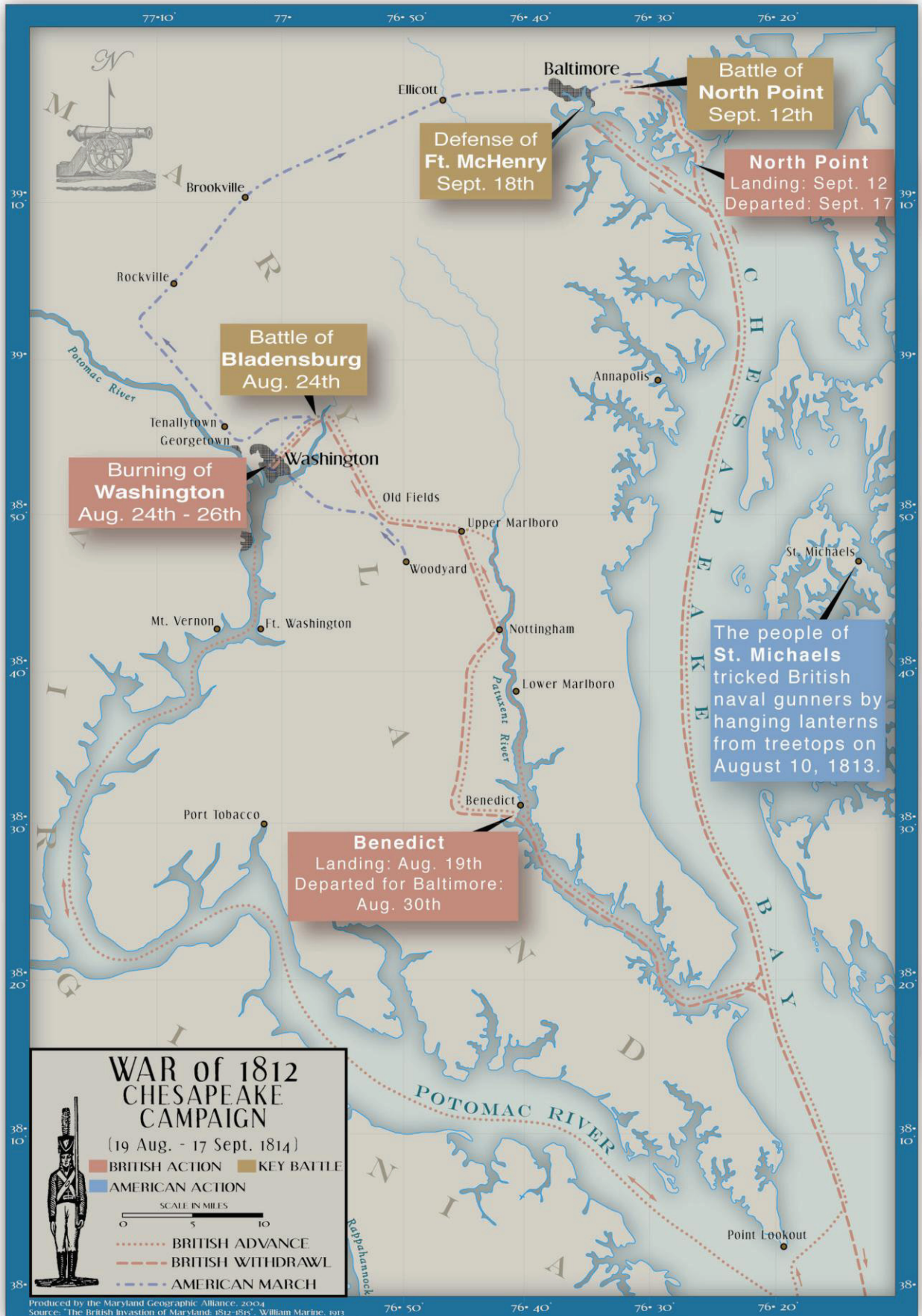
Closure	Have students share their reports with the class.	Students will share their reports with the class.	
Summative Assessment	<p>Students will rewrite Daniel's report (from the book <i>Calvert the Raven: The Battle of Baltimore</i>) on the War of 1812 using details from the book and other sources.</p> <p>*In the report, students will address this prompt: <i>In the story, the author states that Daniel understood what being an American meant. What does the author mean by that statement? Cite examples from the story that support that claim.</i></p> <p>If necessary, conduct a class discussion about what they think it means to be an American. List the students' responses as a guide.</p>	<p>Students will rewrite the report written by Daniel in the book <i>Calvert the Raven: The Battle of Baltimore</i> by J. Scott Fuqua using information gathered during this 2 day lesson. They will also address this prompt: <i>In the story, the author states that Daniel understood what being an American meant. What does the author mean by that statement? Cite examples from the story that support that claim.</i></p>	<p>Set the criteria for the report based on your school's or district's standards.</p>

K What I Know	W What I Want to Learn or Know	L What I Learned

Daniel's Report

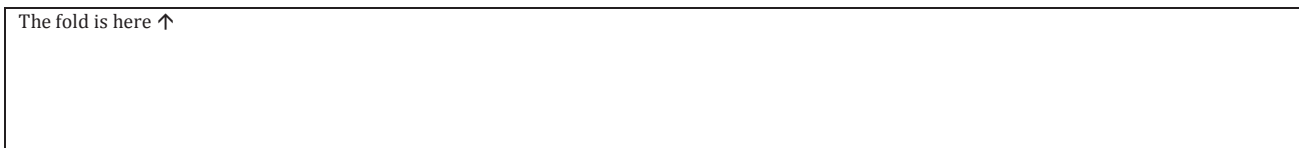
When you look back at the War of 1812, you wonder a lot of things. You wonder why somebody didn't invent the camera yet so that you could see real pictures of everyone instead of paintings. And, you think everything seems a little boring. Stories about back then put me asleep in about five seconds. So, on account of being scared of going asleep, I couldn't not even open a book. If I could, I couldn't of written this essay. That's why I had to make so many things up. It's true.

Maryland Growth and Change (1800 - 1875)

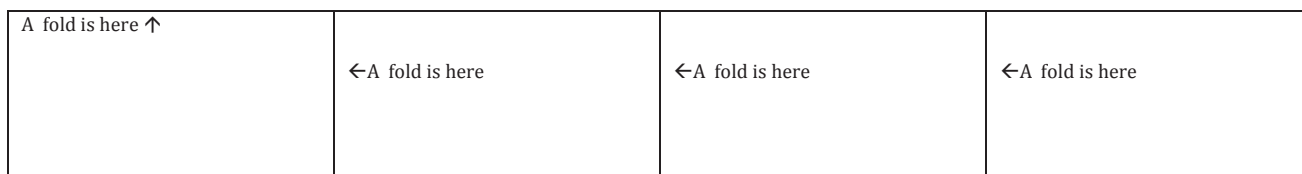


Instructions for a Four-Section Book

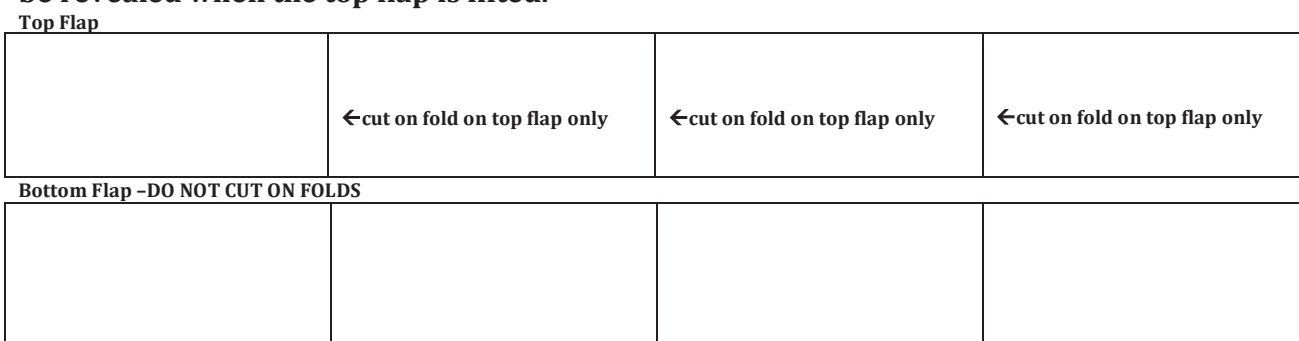
- 1. Fold a legal size sheet of paper (preferably card stock or construction paper) in half so that it resembles a long rectangle.**



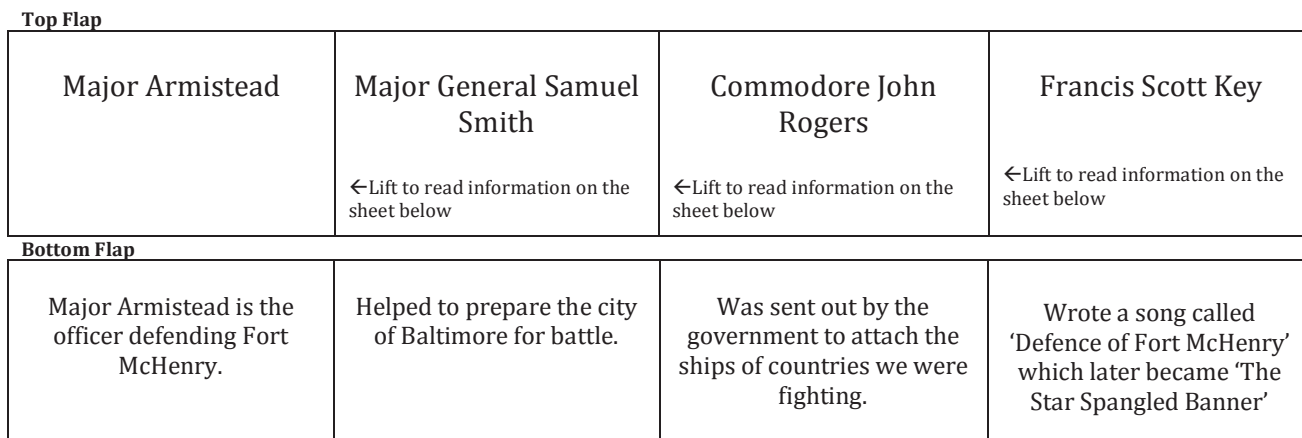
- 2. Fold this long rectangle in half and then in half again so that you now have 8 squares when completely opened. Refold the paper to the original long rectangle shape.**



- 3. Cut the top flap only. This will leave a bottom sheet on which to record information that will be revealed when the top flap is lifted.**



- 4. Draw a picture or write the name of each of the historical figures on each of the top flaps. On the bottom uncut sheet write a brief description of the contribution that each made during the Battle of Baltimore.**



Note: Students should conduct additional research to gather more facts about these historical figures.

A Much-Acclaimed Book On A Key Event in American/Maryland/Baltimore History



“With an MSDE-written Core Curriculum lesson plan accompanying it, the fourth and fifth grade teachers of Maryland (as well as their students) will love Calvert the Raven in the Battle of Baltimore.”

-*Marcie Taylor-Thoma, Supervisor of Social Studies, Maryland State Department of Education*

“Makes it easy to teach kids about the War of 1812. The bright and colorful illustrations bring the War of 1812 to life in a fun way. A great title.”

-*Brodart Library Services*

“Teachers and parents need more tools like this beautifully-illustrated book to re-engage students with history and its relevance. The fantasy of riding atop a friendly raven over historically accurate views of an active battle field, swooping in between warships, their cannons roaring, during a battle that shaped our nation, will be irresistible to young readers.”

-*Dr. David Andrews, Dean, Graduate School of Education, Johns Hopkins University*

“The breezy tone and ample amounts of dialogue will draw in readers, and the dramatic, well-executed watercolors add impact to the telling . . . The descriptions of the fighting—almost hand-to-hand combat—will surprise and inform children, who will also learn something about the causes of the war.”

-*Booklist (Magazine of the American Library Association)*

“Historical fiction can be a terrific way to introduce young readers to the fascinating days of the past—as long as the history part of the book remains accurate and the story is captivating. Calvert the Raven and the Battle of Baltimore succeeds in both areas and is an interesting look at one of the most important battles in American history... The fast pace, dramatic situations, and realistic characters will win over even reluctant readers. A great addition to a discussion on American history as well as a great resource for any student looking for an exciting book to read.”

-*Third Grade Reading*

“This is a great jumping-off point for anyone trying to teach the history of this important battle. Discussing what Daniel saw, what he didn't see, and why they are fighting, all serves to bring the significant details into view. I highly recommend this as a companion to teaching history to third to sixth graders.”

-*Marvelous Middle Grade Monday*

“For some time, I’d been looking for a picture book to share the story of the Battle of Baltimore with my students. Then I found Calvert the Raven the Battle of Baltimore! Vicariously seeing the Battle of Baltimore through Daniel and Calvert, my students grasped much more than they would have by reading about the events of 1814 from a textbook. Not only were my fourth graders enthralled by the story, they were also intrigued by the many details Fuqua provided that just aren’t in the standard textbook . . . A great Social Studies resource, this book provides a framework for further discussion about the Battle of Baltimore. Also, Mr. Fuqua visited our class. The kids adored him. They couldn’t get enough of him.”

-Craig Whiteford, Fourth Grade Teacher, McDonogh School (Baltimore)

“A colorful children’s picturebook with an ingenious take on teaching young readers about American history. Although it has a fantastic premise about a time-traveling journey, it’s solidly grounded in Baltimore’s proud history, and highly recommended . . .”

-American History Bookshelf, Midwest Book Review

“An utterly charming way to teach kids about important American history.”

-Dr. Abe Bortz, American Historian

“A GREAT connection for Social Studies classes involving students up to the age of 14.”

-Sara Griffiths, Middle School Teacher, Orange, NJ

“Children interested in history, or battles in particular, will love this book. Teachers will also love it. Five out of five stars!”

-KidLit Reviews

Special Honor

Maryland Center for the Book’s and Maryland Humanity Council’s 2013 selection for the National Book Festival’s Books of the States run by the Library of Congress.

Title Information

ISBNs & PRICES:

Library of Congress Control Number: 2012944778

ISBN 978-1-61088-077-0 (cloth, \$17.99)

ISBN 978-1-61088-078-7 (paperback, \$7.99)

ISBN 978-1-61088-079-4 (mobi, \$6.99)

ISBN 978-1-61088-080-0 (epub, \$6.99)

TITLE: Calvert the Raven in the Battle of Baltimore

AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR: J. Scott Fuqua

PUBLISHER: Bancroft Press

PUBLISHER PHONE NUMBER: 410-358-0658

PUBLISHER WEBSITE: www.bancroftpress.com

PUBLISHER E-MAIL ADDRESS: bruceb@bancroftpress.com

Against the tide

J. Scott Fuqua perseveres as a prolific (dyslexic) author and a gifted (colorblind) illustrator

By Mary Carole McCauley
The Baltimore Sun
August 18, 2013



LLOYD FOX/BALTIMORE SUN PHOTO "I never want people to think I'm taking the easy way out," says Baltimore author and illustrator Jonathon Scott Fuqua. His 16th book, a Gothic thriller for teens, is due out next year.

Jonathon Scott Fuqua

Age: 47

Birthplace: Frankfurt, Germany

Residence: Mayfield

Profession: Author/illustrator of 16 books and graphic novels for children and adults; instructor at the Maryland Institute College of Art

Notable titles: “The Reappearance of Sam Webber” (1999), “Darby” (2002), “The Willoughby Spit Wonder,” (2004), “Medusa’s Daughter” (2008), “Calvert the Raven in the Battle of Baltimore” (2013)

Education: College of William & Mary, bachelor’s degree in fine arts, 1990

Family: Married to Julie Lauffenburger, senior conservator at the Walters Art Museum; a daughter, Calla, 17; a son, Gabe, 10; and two cats, one dog and an aquarium of fish



LLOYD FOX/BALTIMORE SUN PHOTO Jonathon Scott Fuqua looks through illustrations for his latest book. Many of his works carry a theme of political or social justice. “If someone is downtrodden,” he says, “I care.”

Painting and writing through the challenges

Everyone who meets Jonathon Scott Fuqua has the same question: How in the world does he do it?

Fuqua recently explained how a dyslexic author taught himself to write and how a colorblind painter has learned to “see” green and red.

Many writers begin a story from a point in time — a line of dialogue, a face or a scene, and build outward. Fuqua works in reverse. He starts out with the big picture and gradually zooms in for the close-up.

“I start with the story line,” he says, “with a topic I want to write about.

“Next I work out the plot, and then I find the voice.”

Finally, his focus becomes so narrow that he's down to the level of individual words and sentences. The author compares that process to sorting through bricks of various sizes and shapes until he finds the ones that best fit the structure he's trying to build.

"It's labor," he says. "It's like construction."

To create his watercolors, Fuqua painstakingly analyzes the "temperatures" of colors.

Over time, he has learned that different shades of red and green evoke specific reactions in his audience, even though he can't see them himself. He juxtaposes hot shades with cooler hues to create depth and to make the colors pop.

"Yellows and reds can only be hot," Fuqua says, "but a green can be hot or a green can be cold. Any dimension that you see in painting at all is based primarily on contrasting degrees of heat."

—*Mary Carole McCauley*

When Jonathon Scott Fuqua was 13 years old, he and his older brother put on their swimming trunks and went surfing during a Florida hurricane.

The wind bent the palm trees rimming the Gulf of Mexico nearly double, like boomerangs. The teens were buffeted by waves as tall as a house. During a brief rest on a sandbar, Scott looked over his shoulder and saw a huge shark silhouetted in the water about 15 feet away. He was certain that any moment, razor-sharp teeth would close around his calves and pull him under.

As he began to swim hard for the shore, he held tight to the image in his mind's eye of a place with firm footing and abundant oxygen.

If his determination never wavered, perhaps that's because he'd spent his entire life outmaneuvering his own self-doubt — a predator that was faster than any shark and just as deadly.

That was more than 30 years ago. Fuqua has become a husband, father and respected author who writes and illustrates children's books. When the school year starts later this month, his newest novel, "Calvert the Raven in the Battle of Baltimore" will become recommended reading for fourth- and fifth-graders throughout Maryland who are studying the War of 1812.

At age 47, he's still determined to master the most difficult challenges he can devise. He's the same kid who, despite very real danger and debilitating fears, didn't give up on himself. As he puts it: "I never want people to think I'm taking the easy way out." Fat chance. Fuqua is color-blind and can't distinguish between red and green. So he became a children's book artist who in one illustration might use seven different shades of red and 13 minute variations of green. He's dyslexic, which means his brain jumbles the order in which he sees letters on a page, making it as difficult to discern meanings as if the words were written in Cyrillic. So he chose a career that consists of nothing

"He pushes himself to the edge of scary and difficult things."

Cary Monet, of her son, Jonathon Scott Fuqua

but arranging letters in their proper order. His 16th work of fiction, a Gothic thriller for teens, will be published in March.

In college, Fuqua was diagnosed with bipolar disorder after experiencing two breakdowns. His books not only deal candidly with his childhood demons, but he also visits schools to talk about his struggle with mental illness.

More recently, the discovery of three crumbling neck vertebrae has resulted in four spinal surgeries in three years, months of recovery, infections, a lifetime regimen of antibiotics to suppress harmful bacteria, and recurring pain.

So last week, he and his 10-year-old took an 18-mile bike ride.

“He pushes himself to the edge of scary and difficult things,” says Cary Monet, Fuqua’s mother. “He tests himself constantly.”

Because Fuqua is sensitive to the plight of the bullied and discriminated-against, his novels often have an underlying theme of political or social justice.

“If someone is downtrodden,” he says, “I care.”

His first novel, “The Reappearance of Sam Webber” about an 11-year-old boy combating depression, was chosen by the city of Peoria, Ill., in 2003 for its One City, One Book reading program. “Darby,” a story of racism in a small Southern town, earned an approving mention on “The Today Show” in 2002. “The Willoughby Spit Wonder,” which deals with a parent’s fatal illness, was described by a reviewer from the Boston Globe as “the kind of novel, by turns comical, haunting, and thrilling, that comes only once in a blue moon.”

In January, Fuqua visited Craig Whiteford’s fourth-grade class at McDonogh School. He showed the class original illustrations from “Calvert the Raven,” a picture book about a bored kid who gets a bird’s-eye view of the bombardment of Fort McHenry. Fuqua discussed his motivations, his techniques and the obstacles he’d faced when he was in the fourth grade.

“The kids adore him,” Whiteford says.

“They couldn’t get enough of him. He told the kids, ‘I had dyslexia and I hated school and I thought I was stupid.’ Look at me now. I get to play all day long.”

“The kids in my class who were struggling were hanging on every word he said.”

One way or another, most of Fuqua’s novels involve a journey into the past, whether to an earlier historical period or to the author’s childhood.

Several of Fuqua’s main characters are in the fifth grade. That’s when he first began showing signs of mental illness during the stressful period when his parents divorced.

The rupture was difficult for everyone, but especially hard on young Scott, Monet says. He recalls raised voices, unpredictable adult behavior and angry outbursts that left him terrified. It didn’t help that Fuqua’s father was a military man who traveled around the world. Fuqua was born in Germany and moved about a dozen times before his 14th birthday.

It also didn’t help that his only brother, now a microbiologist, was a “phenomenon,” as Fuqua says, or that his only sister, now a nurse-practitioner, was a “genius” while he struggled to read and to perform basic math. It wasn’t until he was a sophomore in college that his dyslexia was diagnosed.

Until then, he just thought he was dumb.

“When I entered first grade, my teachers thought I would be just like my brother,” he says.

“But my grades were terrible. Nobody could figure out what the problem was. It was a great mortification for my father. From a young age, I could pick up a pencil and draw anything I wanted. But my father dismissed that as a secondary feminine characteristic.”

Fuqua had his first breakdown in the seventh grade. For four months, he barely slept. He became convinced that “Star Trek” was putting bad thoughts into his head and making him go crazy. He was so lonely as he wandered through the house at 3 a.m. that he would call the time-of-day recording just to hear a human voice.

He saw a therapist and was placed on tranquilizers, but they didn’t dent his pain. He learned later that standard drugs used to combat depression are ineffective in treating bipolar disorder.

“When I think of those years now,” Fuqua says, “I see them as film strips. The parts that are from the time when I was depressed have melted and burned.”

Monet was beside herself with worry. It hurt her that her sensitive middle child was so sad. And nothing could convince her that he wasn't every bit as smart as his brother and sister.

"My mother trusted in my intelligence completely," Fuqua says, "and she constantly reassured me that there was a smart person in there."

After the family moved to Florida and Fuqua entered his teens, his illness temporarily receded. But when he was a junior at the College of William & Mary, he again became severely depressed. He bought a gun. Two days later, he said, he walked into the school's psychiatric clinic and asked, "Is it normal for a person to want to die and to think about doing it?"

Fuqua was immediately hospitalized. He temporarily dropped out of college, was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and began taking lithium.

"Within a week, I was an absolutely new person," he says. "It was amazing. For the first time in my life, when I went to bed at night, I knew who I was going to be when I woke up."

He'll be the first to admit that he still struggles with depression. But no one ever said that self-creation is for the faint of heart.

Monet thinks that her son chose a career as an author, even though it means struggling daily with his dyslexia, because it allows him to revisit and comfort his younger self.

"Writing for Scott has been cathartic," she says.

"At times it has been difficult for other family members because we have different memories of those times. But I understand that it has been necessary for Scott to make sense of his life by writing."

Bruce Bortz, the founder of the Baltimore-based Bancroft Press, points out that it's rare for any author to both write and illustrate his own work — let alone an author who is dyslexic and color-blind.

"I have no idea how he does it," says Bortz, who has published several of Fuqua's novels. "It would be unusual for anyone without his disabilities to write and illustrate as well as he does. He's brilliant at both."

A perk of Fuqua's workday is that he spends lots of time with his kids: Calla, 17, and Gabe, 10. Both have provided an inspiration for the books and served as models for the illustrations.

For instance, when Fuqua was working on "Calvert the Raven," he asked Gabe to pose by pretending to fly through the sky on a raven's back. The boy perched on a coffee table, thrust out his arms and legs for balance, and tilted back and forth.

Now readers who pick up a copy of "Calvert the Raven" will see a drawing on the cover of a lively boy with curly dark hair witnessing the Battle of Baltimore firsthand. There the boy is, astride the back of a great black bird and soaring high above the shark-filled water.

mary.mccauley@baltsun.com

Contact Information

J. Scott Fuqua, Author/Illustrator
jsfuqua@gmail.com

Bancroft Press
<http://bancroftpress.com/>
410.358.0658

Bruce Bortz, Publisher
bruceb@bancroftpress.com

Jen Herchenroeder, Assistant to the Publisher
jen@bancroftpress.com