



**All Aboard!**  
**The Belle of Louisville**  
 by Marie Bradby  
 Illustrated by Annette Cable

**Before Reading**

Ask students what they know about past and present transportation. Ask them if they have heard of the *Belle of Louisville* and what they might know about this historic steamboat. Ask them what they know about the Ohio River. Do they know where it begins and ends?

**While Reading**

What do the pictures tell you about the characters, the steamboat, and the river environment?

**After Reading**

- Why do Leonard and the other characters stop what they are doing?
- What do they hear?
- What's so special about the *Belle of Louisville*?
- Can you name the crew members and what they do to operate the steamboat?
- What is the *Belle's* whistle signal?
- How does a steamboat work?
- How is the *Belle* different from other boats?
- Are there many steamboats left?
- What kind of work did the *Belle* do?
- After many years, what happened to the *Belle*?
- What types of wildlife are along the way?
- What are passengers celebrating?
- What might have happened if the *Belle* hadn't been rescued from the scrap heap?
- Does Leonard get his hat back?

**Synopsis:** Passengers and crew take a trip up the Ohio River on the historic steamboat, the *Belle of Louisville*.

**Themes:** Work, change, adaptation, journey, celebrating, self esteem.

**Connections:** Transportation, science, engineering, steam power, math, geography, river ecology, history, the Industrial Revolution, and language arts.

**Recommended Grades:** K - 4.

**Activities**

**Going Places!** Ask students how they get to and from school: walk, bike, bus, car, etc. Make a graph. Have them list and compare and contrast the types of water, rail, land, and air vehicles that they know and what they transport. Ask how coal, mail, corn, animals, toys, and TVs are transported. How has transportation changed over time? How is transportation vital to our community?

**Talk about a Revolution!** Ask students what they know about the Industrial Revolution. Help them discover the major inventions that were created then. The steam engine, which led to the development of steamboats, played a big role in the Industrial Revolution. How does a steam engine work? How does a combustion engine work? Why does a boat float? How has modern technology changed people's lives?

*About the authors*

**Marie Bradby**, an award-winning freelance journalist and author, has written six children's books, including the picture book, *More Than Anything Else*, an ALA Notable Book and winner of the International Reading Association Award; the Golden Kite Honor Award winner, *Momma, Where Are You From?*; and the middle-grade novel, *Some Friend*. [www.mariebradby.com](http://www.mariebradby.com)

**Annette Cable**, a freelance illustrator, has illustrated thirteen children's picture books, including *How to Be Full with Beauty* by John Hay, *Me on the Map* by Joan Sweeney, *The Ice Cream Hotel* by Jack Johnston, and *My Hometown*, a 200th Birthday Celebration Coloring Book for New Albany, Indiana. Annette teaches children's fine art classes for the Louisville Visual Art Association. [Annettecable@att.net](mailto:Annettecable@att.net)

## **Industrial Revolution**

The **Industrial Revolution**, which began in Great Britain around 1760, was a period when many new machines and advancements in technology were developed, such as the steam engine, electricity, the light bulb, and the telegraph.

- Before the Industrial Revolution, goods were made by hand in small, rural farming communities. Afterward, people moved to cities to work in factories, where products were mass-produced.
- With steam-powered engines, factories no longer needed to be located by rivers and be powered by water wheels.
- After the steamboat was perfected, boats no longer needed to be powered by sails, or pulled by horses along canals. Steamboats became the rulers of transportation.
- The telegraph was an electrical system of transmitting messages in Morse Code. Messages could be sent and received in minutes, including across the ocean. Sending a letter overseas could take weeks.
- The Industrial Revolution was detrimental to the earth, however. Industries released huge amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, and waste and chemicals into the waterways and soil. **Pollution** of our air, water, and soil is still a problem today.

(Sources: [www.kidsconnect.com](http://www.kidsconnect.com), [www.history.com](http://www.history.com), and [www.howstuffworks.com](http://www.howstuffworks.com) )

## **Ohio River**

The **Ohio River**, a major waterway in the U.S, is 981 miles long. It provides **drinking water** for more than five million people.

- It is formed by the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and ends in Cairo, Illinois where it meets up with the Mississippi River.
- It flows through or along the border of Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois.
- **American Indians** had communities along the Ohio River Valley before European contact. They used the river as a transportation and **trading route**.
- In the late 1700s, **pioneers** traveled down the Ohio River during the **westward expansion**, seeking more land to farm and hunt. Settlers were forced to disembark and carry their belongings around the Falls of the Ohio. This stopping point grew into the city of Louisville, which George Rogers Clark founded in 1778.
- Crossing the Ohio was the way to freedom for thousands of slaves escaping to the North.
- Every year, 230 million tons of goods—coal, grain, steel, sand, and fuel—are transported on the Ohio by tugboats and towboats pushing barges.
- Unfortunately, the Ohio River, as a whole, is ranked as the most polluted river in the U.S.

(Sources: Wikipedia, “Louisville’s Official Visitor’s Guide,” Ohio River Foundation)

## **Activities, continued**

**Students of Invention!** Have students invent a new **technology**, machine, or device that they think is important. Have students make their own riverboat from found objects and recyclables. Have students make paper boats and race them in a kiddie pool. Working with modeling clay, have students experiment with shapes until they get the clay to float.

**Rolling on the River.** Ask students, How is a river formed? Explore the **Ohio River**, where it begins and ends, its usage, habitat, and geography through maps. Have students identify the Ohio River on maps, and the states that it touches. Take field trips to the *Belle of Louisville*, the Louisville Water Company, and the marine companies along the waterfront. (See resource: “*River Life—A Journey From Headwaters to the Sea*” by Marianne D. Wallace, also from [butlerbooks.com](http://butlerbooks.com).)

**Be an Explorer.** The Ohio River is home to many types of plants, animals, birds, and 150 species of fish. Take a field trip to a park along the Ohio River. Have students document the types of fish, birds, invertebrates, and plants they see in the habitat. Or take a virtual trip with the “Ohio River Foundation.” [http://www.ohioriverfdn.org/education/school\\_programs/river\\_explorer\\_program/index.html](http://www.ohioriverfdn.org/education/school_programs/river_explorer_program/index.html) This educational organization also has a traveling exhibit they will bring to schools.

**Be a scientist.** Collect samples of river water and look at them through a microscope and compare that with a tap water sample. Talk about water quality and ways we can all conserve water, and protect the river from pollutants and erosion.

**A River of Stories.** Have students write their own adventure story about a journey on a riverboat. Where would they go, who would they meet, what would they see? Create a class display of the adventures.

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