



FATAL FORECAST

AN INCREDIBLE TRUE STORY OF COURAGE IN A SAVAGE STORM

BY MICHAEL J. TOUGIAS

TEACHING TIPS

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Readers respond in many ways to what they read including: making connections to themselves, their communities, and experiences; pursuing their curiosity through discussion, inquiry, and self-expression; and changing attitudes and behaviors. This guide provides suggestions and resources for supporting and extending students' understanding and authentic reading responses to *Fatal Forecast: An Incredible True Story of Courage In a Savage Storm* by Michael J. Tougias. Select activities and resources that best meet your instructional needs and students' interests.

READ AND DISCUSS

Read aloud *Fatal Forecast* or use the text as a book club selection with students. Provide students with audio and print support as needed to access the book. Students will use a dedicated space such as a notebook, digital document, or other note-taking tool to complete the discussion and writing activities described.

As you read *Fatal Forecast*, direct students' observations and guide discussions toward characters' motivations and actions, the cause and effect chain of events, and the book's greater themes. Because this book is based on true events, there are numerous opportunities to: discuss the credibility of sources, examine multiple perspectives on an issue, and evaluate the use of scientific information in narrative storytelling.

DISCUSSION AND WRITING PROMPTS

1. Offshore lobster fishing is dangerous and difficult. The crew works long hours and spends days away from their families. Why did the people in *Fatal Forecast* choose this way of life? List the members of each boat's crew and their motivations for lobster fishing. How does the author reveal each character's motivations? Provide text evidence to support your opinions.
2. There are many civilian (nonmilitary) careers that require physical challenges such as police and fire safety, construction, farming, logging, and offshore fishing. Would you choose a career that might be hazardous or physically taxing? Why or why not?
3. The weather buoy, which malfunctioned, might have warned the *Sea Fever*, the *Fairwind*, and other boats in time. This was not the only preventable mistake or failure. List at least two additional examples of mechanical or human error. How could these have been prevented or avoided?

4. Many members of the crew acted heroically. Invite students to list the crew members and describe their heroic actions and decisions. What motivated these men to act with courage in spite of terrible odds?
5. The author, Michael J. Tougias, includes scientific information about geography, weather, the ocean, offshore fishing, and boats in *Fatal Forecast*. What have you learned about these topics that you didn't know before reading this book? What additional questions do you still have?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

6. Nature (the ocean and weather) is the primary antagonist in *Fatal Forecast*. How does the author describe the storm with aggressive, powerful, or angry qualities—such as the word “savage” in the subtitle? Invite students to collect words, phrases, and sentences that bring the ocean and storm to life. Make a quote wall using sentence strips or index cards or create a digital wall using online tools like Padlet. Students can choose one phrase, sentence, or word that they find powerful or interesting from the class word wall. Using their notebooks, students can write about why this word or phrase stood out to them. What do they visualize or feel? As an alternative, students can write a poem using the phrase or word they chose as inspiration, a title, or the first line.
7. Several families of crew members sued the United States for negligence because the weather buoy needed repairs. A lot of information about events before, during, and after the tragic storm was revealed during the trial through the testimony of family members, survivors, community members, and scientific experts. Working in groups, assign students a side in this case—representing survivors and family or the United States government. Who is to blame for the deaths of these crew members? Require students to provide text evidence and details from the book to support their stances. The class can debate the issue in a Socratic seminar or similar discussion forum or write essays defending their stances.

RESOURCES

Educator and researcher, Alfie Kohn, reported on the storm, the tragic loss of life, and the subsequent trial:

<https://www.alfiekohn.org/article/risking-wind/>

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