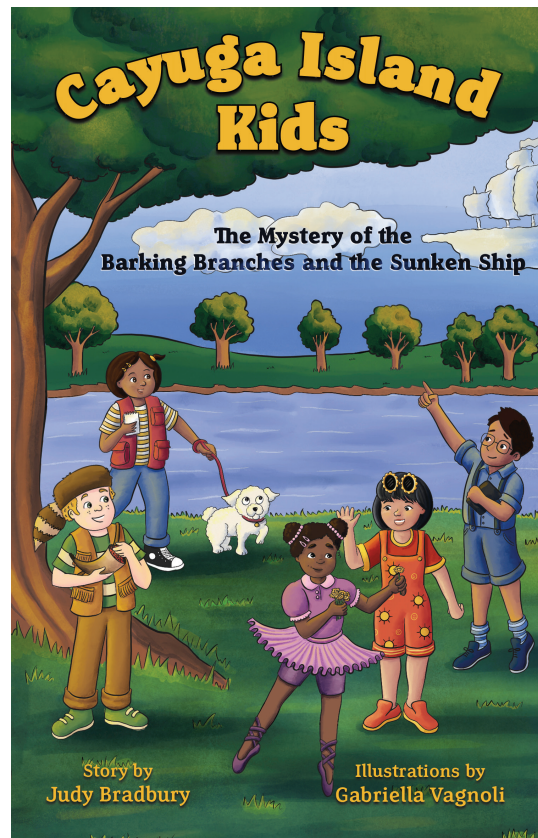


# Cayuga Island Kids

## Book One

### The Mystery of the Barking Branches and the Sunken Ship

## Parent Guide



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## About the Cayuga Island Kids series

The Cayuga Island Kids is a lively chapter book series intended for ages 7-9; Grades 1-3. The stories center on five kids who live on a residential island a few miles upstream of Niagara Falls. The friends embark on adventures and solve mysteries. They learn and grow as a result of their experiences. Though the stories are fictional, the Cayuga Island Kids series touches on history, science, research skills, and friendship. Each of the Cayuga Island Kids has a distinct personality and personal interests, but they are all big-hearted, curious, adventurous, kind, and funny.

### Book One: *The Mystery of the Barking Branches and the Sunken Ship*

In the first book in the Cayuga Island Kids series, readers meet five resourceful friends who live on a residential island. Although the story is fictional, *The Mystery of the Barking Branches and the Sunken Ship* is loosely based on one of the most intriguing unsolved mysteries of the Great Lakes: the sinking in 1679 of the never-recovered sailing vessel, the Griffon. Young readers encounter history, science, mystery, research skills, humor, friendship, and a really cute dog.

#### Praise for the book:

*“The Mystery of the Barking Branches and the Sunken Ship is a delight! I read it with my sons, ages 7 and 11. We enjoyed the illustrations and depictions of the characters in the beginning of the book, as well as getting to know them throughout the story. The biggest feature of this fun story: there is SO MUCH packed into this amazing chapter book! We loved the rich information woven throughout the story. The characters learn about nature, history, science, math, geography, explorers, rhyming words, vocabulary (i.e., archives, primary sources), etc. Bradbury certainly put together a tome that encourages curiosity, learning, and fun!”*

—Kirsten Burke Smith, M.S. Ed.  
President-Elect, New York State Reading Association  
2019 NYSRA Literacy Educator of the Year  
Past President, Niagara Frontier Reading Council

*“Any book that begins with a map of an island is my kind of story. Enliven that setting with a diverse group of characters who are consistently kind—and bursting with curiosity—and you’ve got all the elements of a series that is alive with adventure, friendship, and mystery.”*

—James Preller, author of the *Jigsaw Jones* mystery series

*“Likeable kids use their distinctive personalities and particular interests to solve mysteries. Good fun and gentle humor abound. Author Judy Bradbury subtly guides readers in how to research a subject of interest. Gabriella Vagnoli’s lively illustrations show that the children are as diverse as their interests.”*

—Vivian Vande Velde, Edgar Award-winner and author of *Twitch the Squirrel* books

# Discussion Questions

## Before Reading

**Build curiosity before you begin reading. Choose from the following suggested questions:**

- What do you notice on the book cover? Note the *characters*, *setting*, season, the *author* and *illustrator*.
- What does **Cayuga Island Kids** tell readers about the setting, or where the story takes place?
- Book title: What is a *mystery*? What is a *sunken ship*? What do you think *barking branches* might refer to? Why might there be a ship in the clouds? What do you think this book is about?
- Note character details on the cover. What do we know about the characters from the illustration? What would you like to find out about each character? Turn to the illustration of the characters at the front of the book to find the Cayuga Island Kids' names.
- Read the introduction, "Cayuga Island." Explore the map. Where would the front cover illustration be? The bridge? Find the streets named after explorers and the ship. Note the labeled homes. What questions do you hope will be answered in the story?

## While Reading

**Here are suggested discussion questions for each chapter:**

### Chapter 1 "The Cayuga Island Kids"

The Cayuga Island Kids are introduced. Review what the reader finds out.

### Chapter 2 "Mystery or Hunt?"

What is the difference between a mystery, a hunt, and an adventure?

The Cayuga Island Kids disagree at first, but then they bring their ideas and opinions together. Think about ways you can bring together ideas and opinions in your classroom, on the playground, and in the cafeteria.

### Chapter 3 "Clues"

Discuss how the Cayuga Island Kids choose the clues they think will help them find a dogwood.

How does each of the Cayuga Island Kids respond to the idea of a hunt for a dogwood tree? Which character's response is most like what yours would be?

### Chapter 4 "Expert"

Readers meet Mrs. Schieber. What do we find out about the Cayuga Island Kids' neighbor?

Julian mentions that in his research of dogwoods he remembered to check more than one source, just as Mrs. Schieber has taught her students. Why is this important?

### Chapter 5 "Details" Chapter 5 "Details"

The Cayuga Island Kids "think outside the box" to figure out what 20-30 feet looks like. Try something similar in your home or yard.

## Chapter 6 "The Hunt Begins"

The Cayuga Island Kids have a plan as a result of their visit with Mrs. Schieber. Discuss.

Reread the last three sentences of the chapter (pg. 33). Predict what might happen next.

## Chapter 7 "Buddies"

Why did Lacey think Julian was the perfect buddy? Why did Mac think Julian was the perfect buddy? Gradually their thoughts change. Why? Has this ever happened to you?

What do you think Maya and Yoko discovered in the park?

## Chapter 8 "A Bump in the Park"

Discuss how the two teams continue their hunt. How has the hunt changed?

Predict what might happen next.

## Chapter 9 "Buried Treasure"

Trace the events in this chapter. How do clues help the Cayuga Island Kids?

## Chapter 10 "Digging and Digging"

Readers meet Mr. Esposito. At first he is upset. Then he becomes surprised. Gradually, he is as eager as the kids to dig up the ball. How does the author use details to show what Mr. Esposito is thinking and feeling?

## Chapter 11 "Investigation"

Why does Lacey save a flake from the ball? Is she the most likely character to do this? Why?

Readers meet Miss Lynne. What do we learn about this Cayuga Island neighbor?

Vocabulary: Context and illustrations help young readers with the meaning of challenging words. In this chapter, Mac does not know what the word *hefty* means. He figures it out. Readers can too. Encourage your child to use **context clues**.

## Chapter 12 "Primary Sources"

Identify details of the library mentioned in the text. Compare with details in the illustration.

Vocabulary: Discuss *primary sources*. *Artifacts* is defined on pp. 60-61, *biased* on pg. 62.

At the end of this chapter, the Cayuga Island Kids are curious about much more than they were when they arrived at the library. Have you ever intended to find out about one thing and as you learned about it, found that it led to more questions? Share experiences. Discuss.

## Chapter 13 "Narrow the Search"

How do we know that the Cayuga Island Kids are getting tired? Why are they tired? Discuss. Compare to personal experiences.



## Chapter 14 "Is It Important?"

The Cayuga Island Kids sift through facts to determine what is important. Discuss their process. What fact was most interesting to you?

## Chapter 15 "Day Two"

The Cayuga Island Kids have different ideas about the cannonball and the Griffon. Discuss.

## Chapter 16 "Rainy Day, Bright Ideas"

The Cayuga Island Kids work together to determine what will help them solve the mystery of the maybe-cannonball. Why is teamwork helpful? Is the Cayuga Island Kids' teamwork successful?

## Chapter 17 "Teamwork"

How do the Cayuga Island Kids "narrow the search"?

How does Mr. Esposito help? Do you think Dr. Sylvia Spina will be able to help?

Vocabulary: Review the definition in context of *archaeology* and *archaeologist* (page 99).

What do you think will happen next?

## Chapter 18 "Questions"

How do the details the author provides help us know the characters better?

## Chapter 19 "An Afternoon of Answers"

What do we find out about Dr. Spina?

How does the author show the Cayuga Island Kids' eagerness to find out what Dr. Spina thinks?

Discuss the kids' reactions to what they learn from Dr. Spina. How would you feel?

## Chapter 20 "Mystery Solved"

Discuss the ending of the story.

How do the Cayuga Island Kids feel? How do you know?

Were you surprised by the final scene? Do you think the title fits the story? Discuss.



## Vocabulary

Note unfamiliar words. These may include:

scampered (pg. 7)	archives (pg. 55)
tiara (pg. 11)	artifacts (pg. 60)
caption (pg. 13)	inaccurate (pg. 62)
bracts (pg. 13)	biased (pg. 62)
poisonous (pg. 17)	plaque (pg. 63)
investigate (pg. 19)	prow (pg. 64)
trowel (pg. 28)	credible (pg. 76)
sustenance (pg. 32)	archaeology, archaeologist (pg. 99)
doomed (pg. 36)	hieroglyphics (pg. 106)
hefty (pg. 51)	

Context and illustrations help young readers figure out the meaning of challenging words. Encourage your child to use **context clues**. Examples:

- In Chapter 11 Mac does not know what *hefty* means. He figures it out. Readers can too, from the context.
- *Artifacts* is directly defined on pages 60–61, *biased* on page 62, and *archaeology* on page 99.

Check definitions in a dictionary. Explore synonyms for new words.

Discuss real-life connections to new words to increase retention.

Download and complete the Word Search ([www.judybradbury.com](http://www.judybradbury.com))

## Activities

- Read and discuss the Author’s Note “Is This Story Fact or Fiction?” at the back of the book.
- Complete the Character Sketch activity available for download on [www.judybradbury.com](http://www.judybradbury.com).
- Draw a scene not illustrated in *The Mystery of the Barking Branches and the Sunken Ship*.
- Create a diorama of Cayuga Island Park.
- Make sock puppets and reenact a favorite scene.
- Compare the map in the book with a real map of Cayuga Island.
- Draw a map of your neighborhood.
- On the map in the book, trace the path the Cayuga Island Kids take in the final chapter.
- Visit a neighborhood park.
- Visit the public library and/or a college library.
- In Chapters 2 and 3 the Cayuga Island Kids learn about dogwood trees. Review Julian’s facts. Find images of dogwoods. Which types of dogwoods can be found on Cayuga Island? What types grow where you live?
- In Chapter 5 the Cayuga Island Kids use measurement, addition, multiplication, and comparison. Reenact this chapter or use nontraditional measurement to determine the size of something in your home or yard.
- Research and draw a griffon, the mythological creature described in Chapter 12.
- Just like the Cayuga Island Kids, you can conduct research in a library and online.
- Remember what Mrs. Schieber recommends. Always check more than one source to make sure facts are accurate. Visit online sources that are safe and reliable. Here are some ideas:
  - Review the facts the Cayuga Island Kids gathered. Which is most interesting? Learn more about it.

- Find out more about the Griffon.
- Which Niagara Frontier explorer would you like to learn more about?
- In Chapter 15 readers learn about “gun puffing,” a process for making puffed cereals. Find out more.

## Writing Ideas

- View the trailer for *The Mystery of the Barking Branches and the Sunken Ship* (<https://youtu.be/E86RjENRG6s>). Discuss what the creators highlight. How does the trailer create interest in the book? What do you learn about the story? Use the trailer to write a short summary of the book.
- Cayuga Island Park is a favorite spot for the characters. Write a description and illustrate your favorite place to hang out with friends. Give details and be specific.
- Using the map in the book, write directions for the best way to get from one of the character’s homes to another character’s home or to Cayuga Island Park.
- Write directions for the path Mac takes in Chapter 1.
- In Chapter 4 Mrs. Schieber explains what looking for something hiding in plain sight means: *“When you are hunting for suspects, pay attention to everything. Be observant. Notice every detail. You never know where you will find a clue.”* Write about a time when you were searching for something. How did you go about looking for it? Was it hiding in plain sight?
- In Chapter 18, Maya makes a thank you card for Dr. Spina. Design a thank you card for someone who has done something special for you. Deliver it or send it!
- Throughout the story, Yoko thinks up poems or rhymes words. Which is your favorite? Why?
- Poems with two voices are meant to be read aloud by two people. Check out the following:
  - *Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices* by Paul Fleishman, illustrated by Eric Beddows
  - *Boom! Bellow! Bleat! Animal Poems for Two or More Voices* by Georgia Heard, illustrated by Aaron DeWitt
  - *You Read to Me, I’ll Read to You* by John Ciardi, illustrated by Edward Gorey

Additional activities at [www.judybradbury.com](http://www.judybradbury.com) and [www.cityofflightpublishing.com](http://www.cityofflightpublishing.com).

## About the Author



**Judy Bradbury** is an author, award-winning literacy advocate and educator, and host of the popular Children’s Book Corner blog. She is also a Cayuga Island kid. Judy grew up on the island, which is located a few miles upstream from the mighty Niagara Falls. In the summers, she rode the bicycle her father built

for her across the island in search of mysteries to solve. Judy loves sharing her books with students and leading writing workshops. Learn more at [www.judybradbury.com](http://www.judybradbury.com). IG: [judy\\_bradbury](https://www.instagram.com/judy_bradbury); Twitter: [@JudyBwrites](https://twitter.com/JudyBwrites)

## About the Illustrator



Although she has always loved to draw, **Gabriella Vagnoli** became an illustrator via a circuitous route that allowed her to explore many other interests including theater, music, teaching, and languages. Her work in these fields all had a common thread: communication. And this is what she loves best about illustrating children’s books—the opportunity to visually communicate a story in a way that will indelibly imprint it on young minds, just as she still has with her the illustrated stories from her childhood in Italy.

*This guide was created by Judy Bradbury, the author of the Cayuga Island Kids series. Judy is permanently certified by New York State in N-6; 7-9 English, and Reading. Judy holds a master’s degree in Reading Specialization and is the author of several professional resources focusing on literacy.*

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