

**Michael Tougias**

***Quabbin: A History and Explorers Guide***

**Educational Guide, Grades 1-12**



### About the Performance

Imagine you lived in a town in Central Massachusetts and the state suddenly told you that you had to move - your town would be flooded. That is what happened when Boston and surrounding towns needed more water: a reservoir would be built in the valley that would cover four towns. Michael Tougias talks about the writing process and tells the story of Quabbin Reservoir with slides (before, during, and after the construction). Join him on this amazing journey that combines history, science, politics, and nature.



### About the Artist

Michael Tougias, a *New York Times* Bestselling Author, is a lecturer and award-winning author/co-author of 24 books. His book *Fatal Forecast: An Incredible Tale of Disaster and Survival at Sea* was praised by the *Los Angeles Times* as “a breathtaking book – Tougias spins a marvelous and terrifying yarn.” He also co-authored the bestseller, *The Finest Hours: The True Story of the Coast Guard’s Most Daring Rescue*, now a major motion picture from Walt Disney Pictures. On a lighter note, Tougias chronicled his misadventures at his remote cabin in Vermont in his award-winning book, *There’s A Porcupine In My Outhouse: Misadventures of a Mountain Man Wanna-be*. This book won the Independent Publishers Association Award for the “The Best Nature Book of the Year.” Tougias uses humor, candor and edge-of-your-seat storytelling to inspire students to make sound decisions and to excel in their writing projects.

### Program Learning Goals

1. To become familiarized with storytelling as a way to pass on history.
2. To understand the water supply system of Greater Boston.
3. To explore and appreciate an important natural resource in Massachusetts.

### Essential Questions

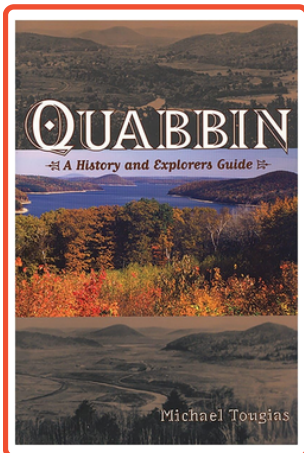
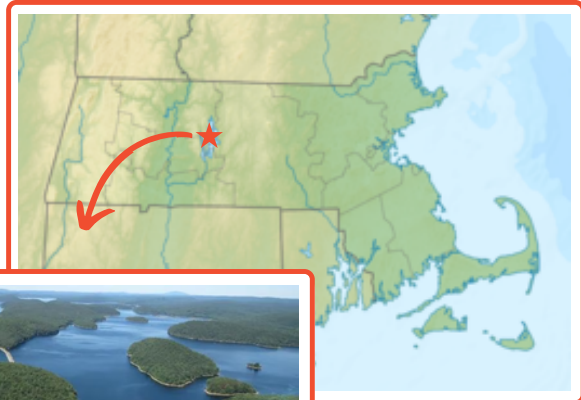
1. Why is it important to tell stories about the past and historical events?
2. What makes storytelling engaging and exciting?
3. How can we use our distinct voices to tell stories?

### Vocabulary

- **Storytelling:** the art of telling a story about real or imagined events using gestures and words to bring the events and characters of the story to life in the minds of those listening
- **Author:** a person who writes a story, novel, poem, or other written work
- **Fiction:** a story that is created from the imagination
- **Non-fiction:** a piece of writing that consists of facts and information about actual events or topics
- **Reservoir:** a place where water is collected and stored
- **Watershed:** an area of land where all of the water drains to the same place

### Key Facts and Context for Students

**Quabbin Reservoir** is among the largest unfiltered water supplies in the USA. It supplies 3 million people in the Greater Boston area with clean drinking water. The reservoir contains 412 billion gallons of water and covers 39 square miles with 181 miles of shoreline. While it is open to visitors year-round, recreational activities are limited to protect the water supply.



#### **About *Quabbin: A History and Explorers Guide***

Michael Tougias wrote about the history and wilderness surrounding the Quabbin Reservoir. This book explores topics such as building the Quabbin and how it works; hiking, wildlife viewing, biking, and fishing; visiting the region's best waterfalls; Quabbin rules and regulations; as well as information on accommodations, restaurants, camping, orchards, swimming, golf, general stores, crafts, antiques, history, and more.

### **Pre-Performance Discussion Questions**

- What do you know about where your drinking water comes from? What would you like to know? How could you find out more?
- What is a reservoir? What is a watershed? What is an aqueduct?
- How would you feel if you were told you had to move so that your town could be flooded to create a reservoir? What would you do?

### **Pre-Performance Activity: Exploring the Quabbin Reservoir**

#### **Learning Goals:**

- To understand the location and purpose of the Quabbin Reservoir.
- To explore local municipal water systems.

#### **Materials:**

Maps of Massachusetts and local municipality, “Understanding the Quabbin” YouTube video



**[“Understanding the Quabbin”](#)**  
**[by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation](#)**

#### **Directions:**

1. Discuss public drinking water and local water supplies. What do students know about where their drinking water comes from?
2. Watch the “Understanding the Quabbin” video.
3. On a map of Massachusetts, find the Quabbin Reservoir. How far is it from the municipalities it supplies?
4. Find the source of your municipality’s water supply. Is it the Quabbin Reservoir or somewhere else?
5. Map the route between your local water supply to your school. How far does the water travel? How is the water treated and prepared for drinking?

### Post-Performance Discussion Questions

- What did you learn about the Quabbin Reservoir?
- In what ways did you think about history from a new perspective?
- How did Michael Tougias change the way you think about creative writing?

### Post-Performance Activity: Creative Timeline

#### Learning Goals:

- To understand the events leading to the building of the Quabbin Reservoir.
- To create a unique way of portraying information.

#### Materials:

Books and vetted websites about the Quabbin Reservoir (see resources on page 6), long paper, art supplies



#### Directions:

1. Discuss the history of the Quabbin Reservoir. What did students learn from Michael Tougias's program?
2. In a large group, create a timeline of the major events leading up to and including the creation of the Quabbin Reservoir on large, long paper. Hang it in the classroom.
3. Divide the class into small groups and assign each an event from the timeline to research.
4. Have each group present their findings in a creative way, such as a report, illustration, short play or recording.
5. Share each group's project in timeline order to create an innovative and interactive representation of history.
6. Discuss how the presentations brought these historical events to life. What do students remember from each event? What were similarities and differences between these events? How did earlier events affect later events?

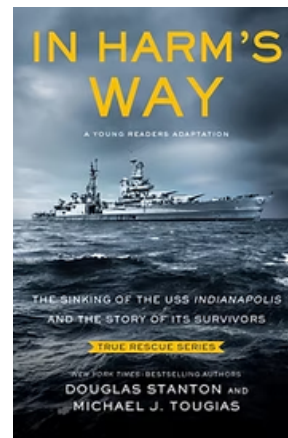
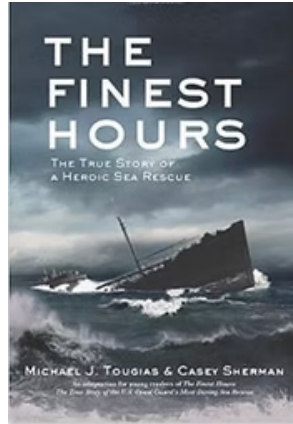
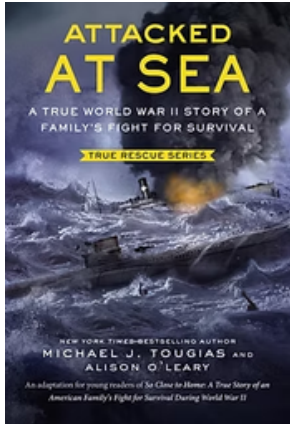
#### Extension:

Plan a visit to the Quabbin Reservoir! Visitor information can be found at:

<https://www.mass.gov/locations/quabbin-reservoir>

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**Michael Tougas Books for Students**



### Further Resources

- [Michael Tougias Website](#)
- [Quabbin Reservoir Information from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation](#)
- [Water System History from the Boston Water and Sewer Commission](#)
- [“Lost Towns of the Quabbin Reservoir” by NewEngland.com](#)
- Palladino, Elena: *Lost Towns of the Swift River Valley: Drowned by the Quabbin*, The History Press (2022)
- Rosenberg, Elisabeth: *Before the Flood: Destruction, Community, and Survival in the Drowned Towns of the Quabbin*, Pegasus Books (2021)
- Tougias, Michael: *Quabbin: A History and Explorer's Guide*, On Cape Publications (2002)



### Curricular Connections

#### Arts Standards: Theatre

##### Creating

- Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work. (T.Cr.01)
- Organize and develop artistic ideas and work. (T.Cr.02)

##### Responding

- Perceive and analyze artistic work. (T.R.07)
- Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work. (T.R.08)
- Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work. (T.R.09)

##### Connecting

- Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art. (T.Co.10)
- Relate artistic ideas and works to societal, cultural and historical contexts to deepen understanding. (T.Co.11)

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## **Curricular Connections, continued**

### **English Language Arts and Literacy Anchor Standards**

#### **Reading**

- Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas. (R.PK-12.2)
- Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone. (R.PK-12.4)

#### **Writing**

- Write narratives to develop experiences or events using effective literary techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured sequences. (W.PK-12.3)

#### **Speaking and Listening**

- Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally. (SL.PK-12.2)
- Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric. (SL.PK-12.3)

#### **Language**

- Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening. (L.PK-12.3)
- Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships and nuances in word meanings. (L.PK-12.5)

### **History and Social Sciences**

#### **Grade 1**

- Topic 1: Civics: communities, elections, and leadership (HSS.1.T1)
- Topic 2: Geography: places to explore (HSS.1.T2)
- Topic 4: Economics: resources and choices (HSS.1.T4)

#### **Grade 2**

- Topic 1: Reading and making maps (HSS.2.T2)
- Topic 2: Geography and its effects on people (HSS.2.T2)
- Topic 5a: Resources (HSS.2.T5a)

#### **Grade 3**

- Topic 1: Massachusetts cities and towns today and in history (HSS.3.T1)

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### **Curricular Connections, continued**

#### **History and Social Sciences, continued**

##### **Grade 4**

- Topic 1: North America: geography and map skills (HSS.4.T1)
- Topic 4a: The expansion of the United States over time and its regions today: The Northeast (HSS.4.T4a)

##### **Grade 8**

- Topic 6: The structure of Massachusetts state and local government (HSS.8.T6)
- Topic 7: Freedom of the Press and News/Media Literacy (HSS.8.T7)

##### **Grades 9-12**

- US History II Topic 1a: The role of economics in modern United States history: Scarcity and Economic Reasoning (HSS.USII.T1a)
- US History II Topic 1g: The role of economics in modern United States history: The Role of Government (HSS.USII.T1g)
- US History II Topic 2: Modernity in the United States: ideologies and economies (HSS.USII.T2)

