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Booklover-Summer Vacation

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Booklover — Summer Vacation

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Summer is synonymous with vacations of all sorts, traveling to fun destinations, nestling in a library reading novels that run the gamut, and touring museums of art, history, or science. Being a book lover I have fond memories of summers spent in the local libraries where I've visited, but you are probably wondering how I am going to connect the rest of these summer synonyms to Nobel Literature.

Think **Rudyard Kipling** and *The Jungle Book* comes to mind. This is easy to connect with a popular vacation destination, **Disney World**. I read *The Jungle Book* with the idea to write about it. Who hasn't enjoyed the 1967 animated **Disney** film with Mowgli and the talking animals. This animation was **Disney's** last before he died, and the movie takes great creative license with **Kipling's** tales. But instead I picked up a little gem entitled *Captains Courageous*, and with this book I will connect the rest of the synonymous dots.

Kipling published this novel in 1897. The title is extracted from the ballad "Mary Ambree," which starts, "When captains courageous, whom death could not daunt." It began as a serial story in the November 1896 edition of *McClure*, an illustrated monthly periodical popular at the turn of the century in America. One focus of the periodical was to publish "novels in progress." It is easy to imagine how this action-packed story was popular as a serial. My version is a paperback of the kind that is almost too small to hold in your hand, and the story takes only 157 pages. But what a wonderful 157 pages they are. **Kipling** quickly moves from the

moral lesson bestowed upon **Harvey Cheyne**, the main character, to an immersion in the life of the Gloucester fishermen. The slime on the fish, the taste of the air, the claustrophobia, the wind, the waves, the unpredictability of life on the sea, and **Harvey's** transformation are vivid. If prone to motion sickness, be careful — **Kipling** delivers.

"And while **Harvey** was taking in knowledge of new things at each pore and hard health with every gulp of good air, the *We're Here* went her ways and did her business on the Bank, and the silvery-gray kenches of well-pressed fish mounted higher and higher in the hold. No one day's work was out of common, but the average days were many and close together."

It is this use of words to create amazing detail that always fascinates me, much in the same way I am fascinated with an artist who makes me want to touch the painting just to make sure it is not real. **Mary Whyte** is such an artist. Her current exhibit "Working South" is hanging in the **Gibbes Art Museum** in Charleston, S.C. My husband and I recently spent a warm Sunday afternoon enjoying the chill of the museum and the detail of her work. Even after watching her painting instruction on the video that is part of the exhibit, I am still agog with the detail given to us by her strokes of watercolor. She set out to honor the dying industries of the South and therefore many of the paintings portray fishermen or related businesses, i.e. oyster shuckers. Her journey began in Greenville, SC while painting the portrait of a prominent banker. One discussion centered around the closing of a local textile mill.

This opened **Whyte's** interest in representing to the future the importance of these local industries. Her paintings seemed to parallel the growing "local first" phenomena. Now the connections to the summer synonyms is complete.

Rudyard Kipling was the first English language recipient of the **Nobel Prize in Literature** and may still be the youngest author to receive the prestigious prize. His writings cover several genres: short story, poetry, children's literature, travel, and science fiction. Born in Bombay to English parents, he is named for the location where his parents met in courtship, Rudyard Lake located in Rudyard, Staffordshire, England. As was popular during the day, he was shipped back to England for education while his parents remained in India. He and his sister lived for six years with **Captain and Mrs. Holloway**. His autobiography examines this time for its horror and cruelty, and he developed the technique of lying to survive. **Kipling** suggests this may have been the foundation of his literary career. He spent the rest of his life traveling and writing, becoming one of the most popular writers in England in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In 1907 the **Nobel Prize in Literature** was awarded to **Kipling** "in consideration of the power of observation, originality of imagination, virility of ideas, and remarkable talent for narration which characterize the creations of this world-famous author." *Captains Courageous* captures these adjectives perfectly.

To recap: I have read the books, gone to **Disney World**, and toured a museum. Wow, I am on vacation. 🐼