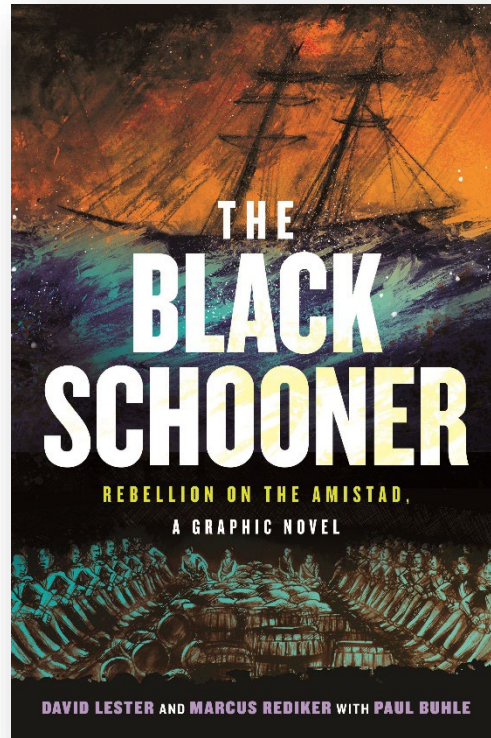


*The Black Schooner: Rebellion on the Amistad, A Graphic Novel*  
By David Lester and Marcus Rediker with Paul Buhle

Readers' Guide Discussion Questions



1. *The Black Schooner* is an example of Atlantic history. What is Atlantic history, and how does that perspective shape the telling of the story?
2. What can be learned from the book about how the Atlantic slave trade worked in southern Sierra Leone? Who organized it? How were people enslaved, controlled, and shipped from Lomboko to Havana? What was the experience of the “Middle Passage” on the *Teçora*? Why did the enslaved rise up?
3. Compare and contrast how Cinqué, Margru, and James Covery were enslaved. Can we imagine why Margru’s father never returned for her? Could he too have been captured by enslavers?

4. What were John C. Calhoun's arguments in favor of slavery? How did abolitionists such as Dwight Janes, Roger S. Baldwin, Lydia Marie Child, and Lewis Tappan argue against it?
5. How should we interpret the Broadway play *The Long, Low Black Schooner*, about the *Amistad* uprising? Was it helpful to the cause or was it exploitative? How could it have benefitted or harmed both the *Amistad* Africans and the abolitionists?
6. Why did Lewis Tappan detest the "circus atmosphere" created as the *Amistad* Africans performed acrobatics on New Haven Green? Why did he consider the acrobatics "a degradation of our cause"?
7. What role did artists John Warner Barber, Sidney Moulthrop, Amasa Hewins, and Nathaniel Jocelyn play in the *Amistad* affair? How did the abolitionists react to their art?
8. How did the *Amistad* Africans and the abolitionists work together to build a successful legal campaign? What kinds of tensions existed between the two groups?
9. What is the significance of the statement "Bondmen who would be free, they must themselves strike the first blow"?
10. What are the narrative techniques used in the book? Who are the "Witnesses to History" and how do they help to tell the story? What is the relationship between the text and the art in the graphic novel?
11. What is history from below, and how does it contrast with history from above? How does the inclusion of the voices of the *Amistad* Africans change the story?
12. *The Black Schooner* describes how a social movement was organized to free the *Amistad* Africans—the building of a community coalition, the use of art to publicize the cause, and the formation of a legal strategy for self-defense. What connections do you see between the *Amistad* story and the present?