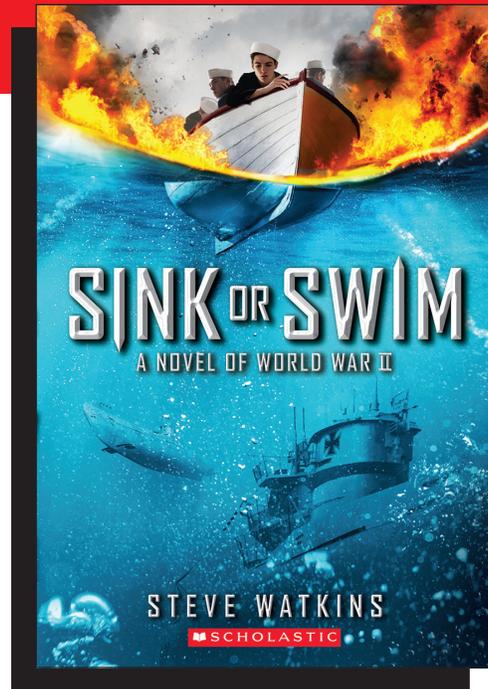


Booktalk!

Sink or Swim Script

For this Book Talk you will need

- 4 actors (1 commanding officer, Colton, Woody & Seaman #1)
- Lieutenant Commander Eugene McDaniel: wire-rim glasses, handkerchief
- Colton, Woody & Naval seaman: khaki or beige work shirt, pants & boots, black leather belt (all should be dressed identically)
- Additional props: 4 chairs, lectern with cup of water on it, copy of *Sink or Swim* (left on 4th chair)



(Colton & fellow seamen walk onstage and sit in vacant chairs that are set up midway across & facing audience; Colton sitting in chair next to the one with the book on it; Lieutenant Commander McDaniel already standing at the lectern, which is off to the side; McDaniel waiting for men to sit down)

McDaniel: *(looking angry & addressing men seriously/slightly gruffly)* I want to be absolutely clear about one thing: I do NOT want to be here. I am only here because I was so ordered. I would rather be at sea fighting those Nazi beasts. Make no mistake about it. They must be hunted down and they must be destroyed.

McDaniel: *(pointing at the group of men in the room)* You will be the ones to do that, and if you're not committed to the cause, then you will be transferred out of this command immediately. *(pausing)* When I came here the navy sent me six officers. I sent three of them back because they did not have sufficient training, experience or, frankly, the guts and determination to get the job done. You may have heard that a civilian merchant unloaded his produce on a Navy pier, and that I had it tossed. That story is true. That was my dock, strictly to be used for training. There's a war going on, and I do not have time or patience for anybody or anything that gets in the way of our winning it.

Seaman #1: *(elbowing Colton in the ribs; speaking in a stage whisper)* Sounds like it's true, what they say about him.

Colton: What's that?

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Seaman #1: Looks like a professor but fights like a pirate.

McDaniel: *(continuing & sounding even more serious)* I have seen the fury of the Nazi submarine onslaught from firsthand encounters with their U-boats. They are highly trained, they are stealthy, and they are murderous. They are going after our cargo ships, and fully intend to cripple our war effort. Without supplies, our allies cannot defend themselves. Without supplies for ourselves, we cannot defeat anybody. Without the weapons we supply, without the oil and food and other material support we ship to them, the war against the Nazis will be lost.

McDaniel: Right now, the Nazis are winning. *(pausing and pounding his hand into his fist for emphasis)* If they continue to sink our supply ships in the North Atlantic, by this summer we will have lost hundreds of ships and thousands of men. These are men who are risking, and losing, their lives for the Allied cause. We will not allow this to continue. *(clenching fists tightly for emphasis)* Once you're adequately trained, you will then take the fight to the Nazis – and we *(gesturing around the room to include everyone there)* will defeat them.

McDaniel: *(pausing, taking off glasses, wiping them with a handkerchief, then putting them back on)* As you leave here today, I want you to look at something I have placed right outside *(pointing behind him for emphasis)* – so you can see it every day of your training. It is, or was, a lifeboat. Two months ago a Navy destroyer went to the aid of a British cargo ship that had been hit by torpedoes. I was on that destroyer. By the time we arrived, the ship was sinking, so we began the search for survivors. All that was found was a lifeboat – *(pointing behind himself, again)* that lifeboat. No one on it was alive. It was riddled with bullet holes, splattered with blood, and littered with dead civilians.

McDaniel: *(pausing, taking a drink of water, then continuing)* What that meant, gentlemen, in case you're unfamiliar with how the Nazi beasts operate, is that after torpedoing the British ship, the U-boat surfaced, approached the lifeboat and gunned down those helpless, defenseless merchant sailors.

(nothing but silence in the room for a moment)

McDaniel: We gave those sailors a proper burial at sea. That lifeboat – bullet holes, blood stains, and all – serves as a constant visual reminder of why you are here. *(staring at the seamen for a moment, then exiting the stage)*

Seaman #1: *(standing as he speaks)* Old Blood and Guts... That's what they call him. *(pausing momentarily)* And I can see why.

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Colton & Woody: *(both standing & nodding in response; Woody walking offstage)*

Seaman #1: *(looking around then speaking quietly to Colton) Hey. It's Colton, right? (Colton nodding) So...just between us... (pausing): you say you're 17, right? (Colton nodding again; Seaman #1 chuckling slightly) But...considering you look young enough to be my little brother, I doubt you're even close to that age (Colton looking a little worried; Seaman #1 holding up his hand to stop Colton from worrying & nodding) But, so you know, your secret is safe with me. (patting Colton on the shoulder then exiting)*

Colton: *(watching Seaman #1 walk offstage, pausing then speaking to audience) That lifeboat out there (gesturing offstage) is personal to the Lieutenant Commander...just like preparing to fight those Nazi U-boats – because of what they did to my brother – is personal for me... (glancing offstage) I may only be 12 years old, but I can do this; I can be strong and fight back. (pausing momentarily) Them or us... Sink or swim... (picking up a copy of Sink or Swim from the chair next to him) – look for it at your Scholastic Book Fair.*