



## *Bloody Jack* by L. A. Meyer

**Subjects:** Orphans—Juvenile fiction; Seafaring life—Juvenile fiction; Sea stories—Juvenile fiction; Pirates—Juvenile fiction

**Awards:** Best Books for Young Adults

**Book Lists:** Europe, Gifted, Middle School, Reluctant Readers

**Props:** Old cap



*(Speak with broken English accent)* It's 1797, me name is Jacky Faber and in London I was born, but, no, I wasn't born with that name. Well, the Faber part, yes, the Jacky part, no, but they call me Jacky now and it's fine with me. They also call me Jack-o and Jock and the Jackeroe, too, and aye, it's true I've been called Bloody Jack a few times, but that wasn't all my fault. Mostly, though, they just call me Jacky. Though that wasn't my name back when me poor dad and mum died of the pestilence. Then my name was Mary.

You see, my family died when I was just eight and that was it for me. I was left to die on the streets, I was. I remember runnin' and runnin', just out of me head with terror, and I keeps on runnin' till I starts heavin' and gaspin' and chokin' (*heave and gasp*) and I can't run no more and I falls down in an alley. But thank the Gods, then I meets Charlie. He's just an orphan like me and the leader of our gang. He's small, but he's smart and quick. He keeps us safe, he does. There is only six of us right now 'cause Emily died last winter. I woke up next to her stiff body in the morning. I took her shift, which is too big, but which I wears over me other shift, that givin' me two things I owns besides me immortal soul. We tried takin' poor naked Emily down to the river and floatin' her off with the proper word and all, but she's stiff and hard to move and a big man caught us at it and he stole her away.

I'm thinkin' I'm maybe twelve-years-old now and I've been with Charlie and the gang for four, maybe five years since that Dark Day when me world was changed forever. But I can't be sure, the seasons, run into each other so—we shivers and dies of the cold in the winter and sweats and dies of the pestilence in the summer, so it's all one. It's been close a couple of times for me, but I ain't dead yet. We gets by, just. We begs mostly, please Mum please Mum please Mum over and over and we steals a bit.

But then it happens. I's walkin' through a dark alley and I trips over something. It's Charlie, and he's dead. I lifts up Charlie's head, but the back of it is a bloody mush in me fingers and I know he's gone and the tears well up and I starts makin' high keenin' wails. I hugs him to me and rocks back and forth and say, Ah, Charlie, Charlie, over and over and over. But after a bit, I stops and starts to think. I seen how the boys is treated and how it's easier bein' a boy than a girl. It seems like when someone needs something' done like holdin' a horse, they'll always pick a boy 'cause they think the dumbest boy will be better at it than the brightest girl, which is stupid, but there you are. So, I takes Charlie's clothes, clean um up and puts um on. Then I takes his shiv, hacks off me hair, and tucks it in me waist. Goodbye, Charlie, I says. I close his dead eyes and kiss his dead cheek. Then I goes. That was the end of Mary. She died that day. (*Put on old cap*)

I decide my name will be Jack. I figures to follow the Thames down towards the seas as I hears that's where the navy ships are and maybe I'll find a way to make meself useful and so get to keep body and immortal soul together for a bit longer. Maybe I can be a schoolteacher's boy on a ship. I hears they needs one on a ship called *The Dolphin*. A fine name for a fine ship. (*Stop accent*)

Jackie's story is just beginning. Join her on her adventure on the high seas where she must hide the fact that she's a girl and where she is given the nickname—*Bloody Jack*. (*Hold up book*) by L. A. Meyer.

