

Screenplay

## *Gloucesterboys*

by Garrett A. Hughes  
adapted from Captain R. Barry Fisher's  
"A Wharf Rat's Tale"

*With the help of a fishing-schooner captain, four young Gloucester boys rebuild a Banks dory and endeavor to become dory fishermen.*

Captain R. Barry Fisher's popular story, "A Wharf Rat's Tale," comes to life in this screenplay about four boys with enterprising spirits and a thirst for adventure. Our story opens in Gloucester, Massachusetts, during the summer of 1932. Fortune has just descended on the boys in the form of two dilapidated fishing dories: a gift of an amiable but tight-fisted captain of a fishing schooner. He offers to help the boys make one of the boats seaworthy, if they can come up with the "coin" to effect the necessary repairs.

The boys, ages ten to twelve, see the boats as a means of escaping the drudgery of cleaning smelly fish holds for spending money. There's a market for freshly caught fish in the local restaurants. And lying beneath the wharves ready to be "caught" are literally tons of scrap metal that can be sold to junk yards. But "going fishing" remains the real draw, and would allow the boys to achieve the highest status available in their community: that of dory fishermen.

Their dream presents a number of challenges. They've got to earn enough money to refit one of the cast-off dories, doing most of the repair work themselves. They must learn to handle a boat the size and weight of a dory and simultaneously fish a "tub-o'-trawl." They will have to deal with stiff competition for resources from a group of determined "Portagee" boys bent on a similar quest. They must face those who accuse them, rather harshly, of taking work away from men without jobs in a depression-era economy. And somehow they must still find time for baseball, picture shows, and games of marbles. Their efforts to meet these challenges with tenacity, good humor, and a stoic Gloucester demeanor, provide the bulk of our story.

To complicate matters, our group's de facto leader is attracted to a pretty schoolmate; their mutual love of baseball provides a common bond. He's a tough kid, but can easily be confounded by her presence. His only hope is bravado, but she sees through that easily. Weakening his knees even further is her uncanny knack of injecting a sense of reality into his flights of fancy: including his wish to be a fisherman.

The boys' adventures lead them in and around the city of Gloucester: from the dumps of Dogtown to the art colony on Rocky Neck, from the carnival atmosphere of the feast of Saint Peter to the quiet services at the church of Our Lady of Good Voyage, and from the flat-calm inner harbor to the choppy seas beyond the breakwater.

"Going fishing," especially from a dory, can be a dangerous business. It certainly was for the renown Gloucestermen who plied the seas off the coast of New England, and as this story will reveal, no less so for our Gloucesterboys in waters close to home.