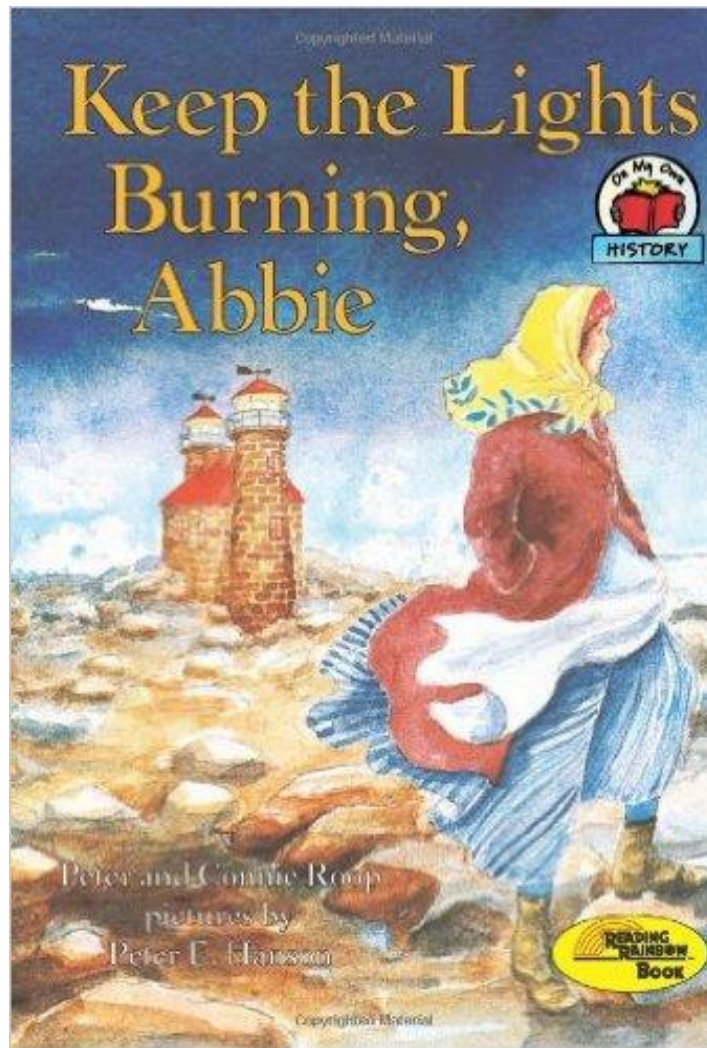


Teachers' Guide

Keep the Lights Burning, Abbie



prepared by

Elinor DeWire, U.S. Lighthouse Society

This teaching guide is designed to be used with *Keep the Lights Burning, Abbie* (Roop, Peter & Connie. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publishing Group, 1985). This is a Reading Rainbow book suitable for grades 2-3 students to read on their own, but also is enjoyed by grades 4-6 and as a read-aloud for younger children.



(Photo Courtesy of Tim Harrison)

Abbie Burgess Grant

Background Information—

Abbie Burgess Grant (August 1, 1839 – June 16, 1892) is a legendary figure in lighthouse history and lore. The true story of her heroic “keeping of the lights” in her father’s absence from Matinicus Rock Light Station, Maine during a severe and persistent storm in 1856 has prompted several popular books, many articles, and a movie. The following italicized material is from an article by Chief Warrant Officer Al Prim of the U.S. Coast Guard.

Matinicus Rock sits six miles offshore from Matinicus Island, one of the many rocky, desolate islands that dot the coast of Maine. Matinicus is all the more desolate because it is 15 miles to the nearest landfall, and 26 miles to the nearest significant human habitation, Rockland, Maine.

It takes someone with a special kind of strength to endure the lonely life of tending lamps in a lighthouse, and Abbie Burgess was that special kind of person. There is not much material available concerning Abbie and the rest of the Burgess family, but what there is tells us that Abbie in particular, and her family, were very special. In the mid 1800's, appointments to light keeper were a part of the political process, and with the election of a Democratic president, Captain Burgess was tendered the position at Matinicus Rock Light.

With Captain Burgess' appointment in 1853, his wife Thankful, Abbie, her older brother Benjy and three younger sisters, Esther, Lydia and Mahala, moved out to the isolated and rocky island known as Matinicus Rock. Having grown up in nearby Rockland, the move presented a major change in their lives.

Her brother Benjy was frequently off on fishing trips, so it fell to Abbie to learn how to tend and operate the lights. Soon she became proficient enough to act as her father's assistant keeper.

Once a month, Captain Burgess had to go to Matinicus Island for supplies -- medicines for his sick wife, food for the family, consumable stores for the lights and feed for the chickens, an important

part of their diet. Captain Burgess was comfortable leaving Abbie behind to handle the lights during the night or two while he was gone. She was a strong girl, and as capable as any man at filling the lanterns, trimming the wicks, and cleaning the lamps and windows of the lights in the two separate towers. And she didn't mind the responsibility.

In 1856, the first of two of the largest storms of the 19th century hit Matinicus Rock Light. About January 19, Captain Burgess had to make a trip for supplies. Soon after he set sail in the small boat, the wind picked up. With each passing hour, it gained force, and soon huge waves, the tallest Abbie had seen in her two years at Matinicus Light, were thundering against the towers and buildings. The days stretched into a week and still the storm raged. Hurricane force winds drove sleet, rain and snow before them. For Abbie, the one long work week became two ... three ... then four weeks. And every day of that terrible month, the wind and waves battered the stone structures without relief. In addition to attending to her three sisters, and her sick mother, Abbie made the long climb up the steep tower stairs to light the lights.



Several events during the January 1856 storm often have been recounted in books and articles about Abbie Burgess. There is some evidence that a few of them are true; however, the many stories and images of Abbie show how writers and artists sometimes took license and exaggerated facts—



- A story often repeated about Abbie is that she was proficient at tending the lights. This is true. As the oldest of the lighthouse children at Matinicus Rock, Abbie would have been taught to keep the lights and do all of the functions her father did. This was necessary for the safety of the family but also commonplace at lighthouses. While women at this time were not usually given tasks that were considered “man’s work,” in the lighthouse service many women did the same tasks as men, all the while wearing skirts! Wives and daughters were expected to work at lighthouses, though they usually were not official keepers, and they were not paid. Abbie was fourteen when she moved to the lighthouse with her family, not too young to take on great responsibilities. Her mother, Thankful Phinney Burgess, was a sick woman and could not have helped her husband, Captain Samuel Burgess, with the lighthouse work. Readers are often surprised to learn that Abbie was one of ten children, but only five of the ten moved to the light station in 1853. The others were grown and gone, except for Benjamin who often went off to work on a fishing boat. Abbie was strong of mind, body, and heart, but by all reports she was a slightly built, willowy girl—not the type expected to do hard physical work. She had great commonsense and was educated by her family. She could read and write well. Her letters and journals reflect her learning and skill as a writer.

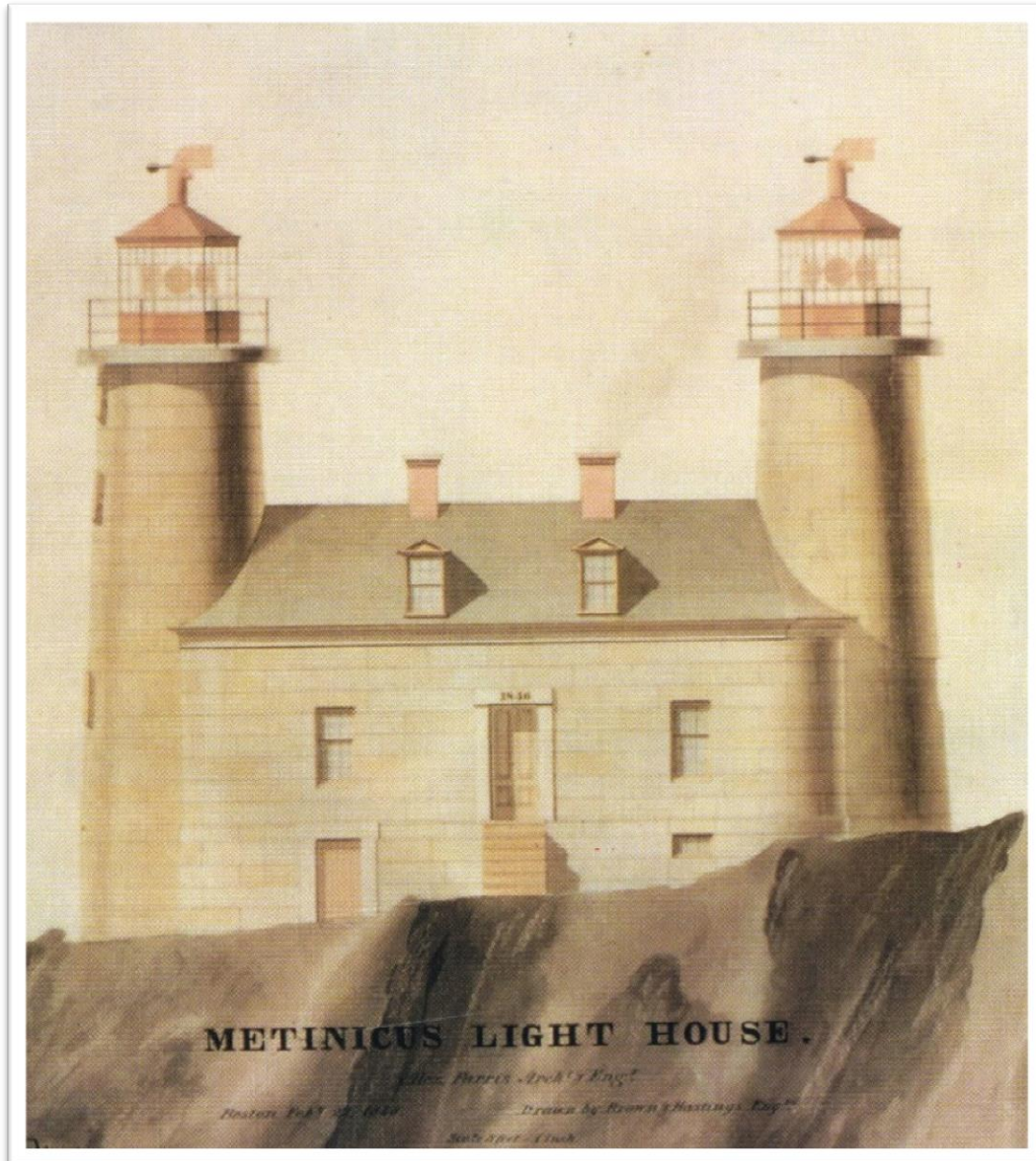
- Another event often mentioned in stories about Abbie Burgess is that she moved her entire family into the upper light tower when waves breached the light station and flooded the base of the lower tower and parts of the house. It's true that waves could wash over the entire light station during severe storms. Certain harsh New England weather systems were called *nor'easters*, for the direction from which the winds came from the counter-clockwise circulation of the low pressure system that carried the storm. Nor'easters storms actually arrived from the southwest or the south and moved north or northeast, but because the wheeling circulation pattern often brought winds from the northeast, sailors called them nor'easters. Penobscot Bay, where Matinicus Rock was situated, was prone to these fierce storms in winter and spring. Lightkeepers at Matinicus Rock had reported waves breaching the island from the very start. The first lighthouses on the site were built of wood. They were heavily damaged by storm waves and eventually torn down by the sea. They were replaced with granite towers connected to a granite dwelling in 1846. This was the light station where Abbie's family lived during the January 1856 storm. So, it is quite likely that Abbie would have moved the family to higher ground during the storm. The towers were connected to the dwelling at this time. Abbie and her family could move through the towers and house without going outside. This was a popular design for lighthouses in Maine. The "covered way" or connection between the dwelling and towers permitted, even encouraged, keepers to tend the lights, even when it was windy, foggy, or cold.

Abbie had this to say about the storm:

(Quoted from <http://www.newenglandlighthouses.net/matinicus-rock-light-history.html>)

The new dwelling was flooded and the windows had to be secured to prevent the violence of the spray from breaking them in. As the tide came, the sea rose higher and higher, till the only endurable places were the light-towers. If they stood we were saved, otherwise our fate was only too certain. But for some reason, I know not why, I had no misgivings, and went on with my work as usual. For four weeks, owing to rough weather, no landing could be effected on the Rock. During this time we were without the assistance of any male member of our family. Though at times greatly exhausted with my labors, not once did the lights fail. Under God I was able to perform all my accustomed duties as well as my father's.

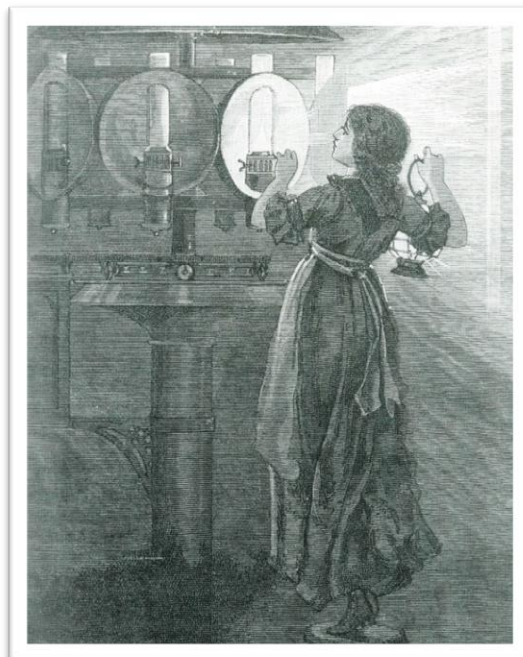
The following image, from the National Archives, shows how the Matinicus Twin Lights looked in 1848, shortly before Abbie Burgess came to live on the station. Notice the misspelling of Matinicus. The name is pronounced [muh-TIN-ih-kuss]. It means “far off island” in Abnaki, a combination of *metin*, meaning “cut off,” and *nic* meaning “island.”



- Another popular tale tells how Abbie saved the family's hens during the storm. Lightkeeping families at this time kept livestock on Matinicus Rock, but they had to construct safe housing for them to protect the animals from the wind and storms. Visitors to the island in the nineteenth century reported seeing a cow. She had a small enclosure on the leeward side of the rock in which she could take refuge during storms. Abbie made no mention of a cow in her diary. She did tell about the family's chickens. They were housed in a small coop built into the rocks on the leeward side of Matinicus Rock. Animals, it is known, can sense when a storm is coming, and they will take refuge from it. The hens would have stowed away inside their rock-walled coop protected from the wind and rain and snow, but not from the waves. Abbie did, indeed, brave the fierce weather to go outside and rescue the hens. They were not only pets, but also they supplied eggs for the family. In yet another storm in 1857, Abbie again kept the lights while her father was away. Toward the end of the ordeal, the family's food stores were nearly gone. They had only one egg and a cup of cornmeal when Keeper Burgess returned. The image that follows is from a magazine article of the nineteenth century showing Abbie scooping up the hens into her apron. Part of the makeshift chicken coop is seen behind her. The scene is probably accurate, since the writer visited Matinicus Rock. (Image from "Heroism in the Lighthouse Service" by Gustav Kobbe for *Century Magazine*, 1894.)

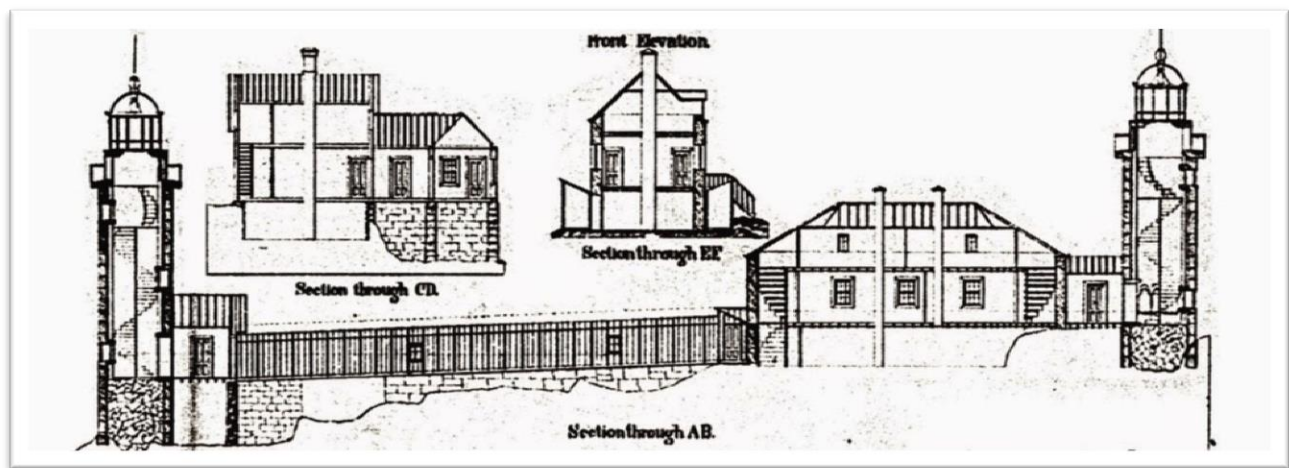


- A good example of the misleading way artists portrayed Abbie Burgess are the engravings done of her for nineteenth century magazines and newspapers. Abbie was seventeen when she kept the lights during the storm of January 1856. Many biographies and articles show her much younger or very small for her age. This diminutive portrait of a child keeping the lights added to the allure of her story. In some versions of the story, she is portrayed only thirteen or fourteen. Here are two examples of images of Abbie:



Later Life of Abbie Burgess Grant

Later in 1857, the light station was again rebuilt. It had been damaged by the storm earlier in the year, but also mariners complained that from a distance the two lights in the twin towers merged into a single light. This caused confusion, so it was decided the station would be rebuilt with the light towers situated farther apart. The drawing below shows a cross section of the new configuration. Notice the long covered way leading to the tower on the left. This was important on very windy days, as a person could actually be blown off the rock if the wind was strong. The following image is courtesy of the U.S. Coast Guard.



As mentioned earlier, Captain Samuel Burgess lost his job as keeper of the Matinicus Twin Lights due to politics. Captain Burgess was, by all reports, an excellent lighthouse keeper, but in 1861 with the election of Abraham Lincoln as President of the United States, Burgess was removed from the lighthouse because he did not support Lincoln. A new party was in charge in Washington. Republican John Grant was appointed to replace Burgess as keeper of the Matinicus Twin Lights.

When Grant arrived with his family to take over, he asked if Abbie would remain behind and help acquaint him with the workings of the light station. Matinicus Rock, with its two towers and fogbell, plus recently installed state-of-the-art third-order Fresnel lenses, was a complex station. Grant lacked experience with the lenses, amazing optics that intensified the light of the reflector and oil lamp arrangement by means of reflection and refraction. They were far superior to the old system Abbie had first learned at the age of fourteen. In 1861, at the age of 22, she was an expert at cleaning, maintaining, and operating the lenses.



Serving as Assistant Keeper to his father was Isaac Grant, just four years older than Abbie Burgess. The two became inseparable friends and quickly fell in love. They were married a few months later on September 7, 1861. Abbie was then appointed Second Assistant Keeper at Matinicus Twin Lights at an annual salary of \$440. The couple had four children at Matinicus Rock before they transferred in 1875 to Whitehead Island Lighthouse at the southern entrance to Penobscot Bay, guarding muscle Ridge Channel. They remained there until 1890 when Abbie's health forced Keeper Isaac Grant to take a job in Portland, Maine at the district Lighthouse Depot. It is believed Abbie suffered from tuberculosis, also called consumption. She died June 16, 1892 in Portland. Isaac Grant (pictured above near the end of his tenure at Whitehead Lighthouse (courtesy of *Lighthouse Digest*) outlived Abbie by many years, passing on May 2, 1918 in Portland.

In her final years as a lighthouse keeper at Whitehead Island, Abbie Burgess Grant shared a letter with a friend. It poignantly describes her devotion, her “calling,” as a lighthouse keeper:

Sometimes I think the time is not far distant when I shall climb these lighthouse stairs no more. It has almost seemed to me that the light was a part of myself. When we had care of the old lard oil lamps on Matinicus Rock, they were more difficult to tend than these lamps are, and sometimes they would not burn so well when first lighted, especially in cold weather when the oil got cool. Then, some nights I could not sleep a wink all night, though I knew the keeper himself was watching. And many nights I have watched the lights my part of the night, and then could not sleep the rest of the night, thinking nervously what might happen should the light fail.

In all these years I always put the lamps in order in the morning and I lit them at sunset. These old lamps—as they were when my father lived on Matinicus Rock—are so thoroughly impressed in my memory that even now I often dream of them. There were fourteen lamps and fourteen reflectors. When I dream of them it always seems to me that I have been away a long while, and that I am trying to get back in time to light the lamps. Then I am half-way between Matinicus and White Head, and hurrying toward the rock to light the lamps there before sunset. Sometimes I walk on the water, sometimes I am in a boat, and sometimes I seem going in the air—I must always see the lights burning in both places before I wake. I always go through the same scenes in cleaning the lamps and lighting them, and I feel a great deal more worried in my dreams than when I am awake.

I wonder if the care of the lighthouse will follow my soul after it has left this worn out body! If I ever have a gravestone, I would like it in the form of a lighthouse or beacon."

Many years later, in 1945, author and lighthouse historian, Edward Rowe Snow, made Abbie's wish come true. Over her grave in Spruce Head Cemetery, he and others placed a memorial in the form of an aluminum scale replica lighthouse like the first towers she helped tend on Matinicus Rock.



Matinicus Rock Lighthouse Then & Now

After Abbie and Isaac Grant departed from Matinicus Rock, many changes took place. Fog signals were upgraded, as were the lamps in the towers. Isaac's father continued as head keeper of the station until 1890 when he was replaced by his son William Grant, who served until 1900. By this time there were four keepers assigned to Matinicus Rock Twin Lights.

The image below is from *All among the Lighthouses* by Mary Crowninshield. Her book, published in 1886, chronicled a trip on the tender *Goldenrod* (a supply boat) to lighthouses in Maine. This was the illustration for Matinicus Rock. To the right was the new steam fog signal, a whistle much like a locomotive whistle. It required its own building. The chimney was for the coal-fired boilers inside the building. They provided steam to make the air that sounded the whistle. Notice the fogbell on the left, mounted in a wooden frame. It was the original fog signal, but by this time it was a backup fog signal, in case the steam whistle failed. It had an automatic striker that operated similar to the mechanism for a cuckoo clock. The keepers kept weights wound up during periods of fog to power the striker. The tower on the right was the south tower. The door to the lantern gallery was open, probably for fresh air. Blinds were drawn in the lanterns of the towers to protect the prism lenses from sunlight, which could discolor them and dry out the cement that held the prisms in place.

This is a wonderful picture to give students to describe and discuss. Have them tell what they see and what they think was happening that day. A girl is sitting on the rocks. Is she waiting for someone? Posing for the person who sketched the picture? Students might notice the small child sitting on the roof of the fog whistle building! How did he/she get up there? Would parents allow children to climb on the roof of a building today?



The photo below, courtesy of the Coast Guard Historian, shows the light station about 1890. Note the expansion of the site with new dwellings for the assistant keepers and their families. Three adult men—the principal keeper and his two assistants—can be seen in front of the north tower with several women and children. The fog whistle building is gone in this photo. It was destroyed in a storm a few years earlier, lifted off its foundation by waves and shattered. One of the boilers was rolled some 300-feet across the rocks! Large boulders were moved about. This same storm also sent waves up to the dwellings and broke windows. *Century Magazine* writer Gustav Kobbe visited Matinicus Rock about the time this photo was taken. He wrote that the keepers had a cow named Daisy that was shipped out from the mainland. She supplied milk for the family. Kobbe's description of Daisy follows, written with typical Victorian flair:

Like the chickens and ducks, Daisy is sensibly affected by her environment. The very method of her landing upon the rocks was enough to cause her to lose faith in human nature during the rest of her existence. She was brought over from Matinicus Island in a small boat, and when within a short distance of the rock, the boat was tipped over so far to one side that Daisy lost her balance and fell into the water, where she was left to swim ashore. Although she is an object of affectionate regard to the little community on Matinicus Rock, she does not seem to have forgotten her involuntary plunge. Often, I have seen her standing upon that mass of barren granite, the only living thing in view, the wind furrowing up her hide. She would gaze out upon the wild waste of waters with a driven, lonely look, the pathos of which was almost human. The patches of soil on the rock yield about grass enough to last her during the summer. In winter the sear aspect of these patches adds to the desolate appearance of this treeless, shrubless ocean home. Often the cow looks across the reach in the direction of Matinicus Island and moos pathetically, as if longing to wander over the distant pastures.



The Lighthouse Board tried on several occasions in the 1860s and 1870s to decommission one of the towers and reduce Matinicus Rock to a single beacon. By this time technology existed to make lights flash and occult, differentiating them from each other. Twin light technology was expensive, and it was no longer needed. But sailors objected, as did the people of Maine. Matinicus Rock had exhibited twin lights for many years, and nostalgia for the beacons was strong.

Practicality and economics won over for a time. On July 1, 1883 the light in the north tower was discontinued, and the south tower was given a fixed red beacon. Apparently this arrangement wasn't acceptable, for on July 1, 1888 both towers were back in service with fixed white beacons. The twin beacons remained active until August 15, 1923, when the north tower lost its light for good, and the south tower was reactivated with a revolving third-order beacon. The lighthouse service began discontinuing all multiple lights in the 1920s. Besides Matinicus Rock, there were twin lights at Navesink, New Jersey, four sets of twins in Massachusetts at Chatham, Plymouth, Cape Ann, and Bakers Island, and one set of triple lights at Nauset Beach, Cape Cod. Only the twin towers at Matinicus Rock and Cape Ann remain. The others have been demolished. The triple lights of Nauset Beach were sold in the 1920s for private use. In the 1980s they were purchased by the National Park Service, restored, and are now on display at Cape Cod National Seashore. (Image of Nauset Triple Lights is a 1907 postcard from the collection of Elinor DeWire.)



Many other changes occurred at Matinicus Rock after it was reduced to a single beacon. By the 1940s the U.S. Lighthouse Service had been dissolved and all navigational aids, including lighthouses, had been transferred to the U.S. Coast Guard. The Matinicus Rock Light Station was changed to a “stag station,” a slang Coast Guard term meaning no women and children were permitted to live there. It was considered too isolated and dangerous for them. By the 1940s the station also had a telephone connected to the mainland by a submarine cable. The light and fog signal were similarly electrified, with a generator for backup.

A Coast Guard initiative called LAMP (Lighthouse Automation & Modernization Program) was begun in the mid-1960s with the goal of making lighthouses and other navigational aids self-sufficient. By installing light and fog sensors at lighthouses, a human presence was no longer needed on a daily basis. Among the first lighthouses to be thus automated were those in remote, offshore locations. Matinicus Rock Light Station was automated in 1983 with a new self-sufficient plastic lens in the south tower and a foghorn with a fog sensor. Coast Guard lightkeepers were removed and the buildings were closed up. Since then, the light and foghorn have operated on their own. Coast Guard maintenance teams check the station periodically to make sure everything is working right. In the 1990s the beacon was refitted to operate on solar power and linked to a monitoring facility in Rockland.

Matinicus Rock now belongs to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The National Audubon Society uses the dwelling to conduct research on birds, particularly Atlantic puffins. At one time, puffins were numerous on Matinicus Rock, but their numbers plummeted until they disappeared. Ornithologists at Cornell University were able to draw the comical seabirds back to Matinicus. Today there are a number of nesting pairs that return each year to raise their young. Photo below taken in recent years by Kraig Anderson. Notice the covered way to the north tower is gone, as is the lantern on that tower. It was removed and taken to a lighthouse in Michigan. The third-order lens from the north tower is now on display in the Maine Lighthouse Museum, Rockland, Maine. The propped up object on the far right is the solar panel array that provides power to the beacon in the south tower. At the bottom left is the boathouse, still used by the Coast Guard and the Puffin Project.



The image below, courtesy of Bob Trapani, Jr., is very recent. It shows the solar panel array in front of the south tower. Note that the north tower has a cap. To the left of it is the boathouse. On either end of the dwelling are the rounded remains of the 1848 twin towers that were connected to either end of the house. These were the towers Abbie Burgess kept during the storm in *Keep the Lights Burning, Abbie*.



Today, Abbie is remembered in the naming of a Keeper Class Coast Guard buoy tender. The *Abbie Burgess* WLM-553 is homeported in Rockland, Maine. Its job is to maintain the navigational aids in the Rockland area, including lighthouses and buoys. (Photo by Bob Trapani, Jr. American Lighthouse Foundation)



Discussion/Investigation Topics

- Abbie helps her younger sisters with homework. How did kids get their schooling at a remote lighthouse like the one on Matinicus Rock? Ask students to come up with ideas. Talk about home-schooling today and how it works. Many lighthouse keepers home-schooled their children. Maine was somewhat unique in that it had a traveling school teacher for remote light stations. Always a single woman, the teacher would spend about three weeks at each lighthouse teaching the children, then she would instruct the parents on what to teach in her absence. Lighthouses also had portable libraries that were exchanged every



few months. Children's books were included, and children could request a specific book if they had an interest in a special topic. The libraries were made of oak and folded shut, like a suitcase. They could be opened and set on a table or on the floor. (Photos of replica libraries are from www.milwaukeehistory.net)



Abbie grew up, however, before these libraries came into use. Any books she had would have belonged to her family. How far do you think Abbie and her sisters had to travel to find a library? (The nearest one was in Rockland, Maine on the mainland.)

- The name of Abbie's father's boat is the *Puffin*. There were Atlantic puffins living on Matinicus Rock during Abbie's time there. These birds have beautiful plumage and clown-like faces. They appear on the opening page of *Keep the Lights Burning, Abbie*. Site-tenacity is what brings them back to the rock to make nests (burrows) and mate each spring. They were hunted years ago for their feathers, back when feathered hats were popular. Puffins disappeared from Matinicus Rock in the late 1800s because of over-hunting and human activity. Today, they are back, thanks to a re-introduction program called The Puffin Project. Have students find out more about these special birds. <http://projectpuffin.audubon.org>



- Abbie seemed dauntless! But she had many fears. What were some of them? She worried about her father in his small boat on the sea. She worried about her mother's illness. She worries about keeping the lighthouses illuminated and working properly. She worried about the big storm waves and the family's chickens. Ask students to think about their own fears and share some of them. Then ask what might be scary at a lighthouse. They might offer answers like being afraid of heights, having to go outdoors in the dark, big waves and storms hitting the rock, loneliness and boredom, or running out of food.
- Living far away from civilization on a small rock ledge was difficult in many ways. Boredom was a part of the lifestyle. Ask students to brainstorm ideas for activities Abbie and her sisters could do to pass the time. Historic records tell us lighthouse children read a lot, wrote in journals and diaries, and girls sewed and embroidered. Boys fished and whittled and made models. Beachcombing was popular too. There were lots of rocks on Matinicus on which to play, and crevices and tide-pools to sail toy boats and find small marine organisms. Most families had a dog or cat and other livestock.

Spin-Off Topics to Explore

Learn more about some of the topics in *Keep the Lights Burning, Abbie*.

- **Twin Lighthouses:** The United States originally had seven twin light stations, one triple light station, and one piggyback light. These were built before technology existed to make lights flash. All lights at this time were white and fixed (steady). In some places many lights were in view at once from sea, which confused the mariner. The lighthouse service decided putting double or triple lights in some places would help ease the confusion. Other twin lights still in existence can be found at Navesink, New Jersey and Thachers Island, Massachusetts. A set of triple lights is on display at Cape Cod National Seashore. Have students research other multiple light stations.
- **Lamps & Reflectors:** The lighting system in use when Abbie kept the lights burning through the storm were lamps set in front of silvered reflectors. They are seen above in both images of Abbie as a child and in the book. Explore how they worked by having students experiment with aluminum foil covered bowls and flashlights. Darken the classroom and compare a plain bowl's ability to intensify the light with a foil covered bowl. (Or use a shiny metal bowl and dull bowl.) Use a mirror too. The reflectors in a lighthouse were coated with silver and highly polished; you could see yourself in them almost as well as in a mirror. Why were the reflectors bowl shaped? A bowl captures more light and directs it.

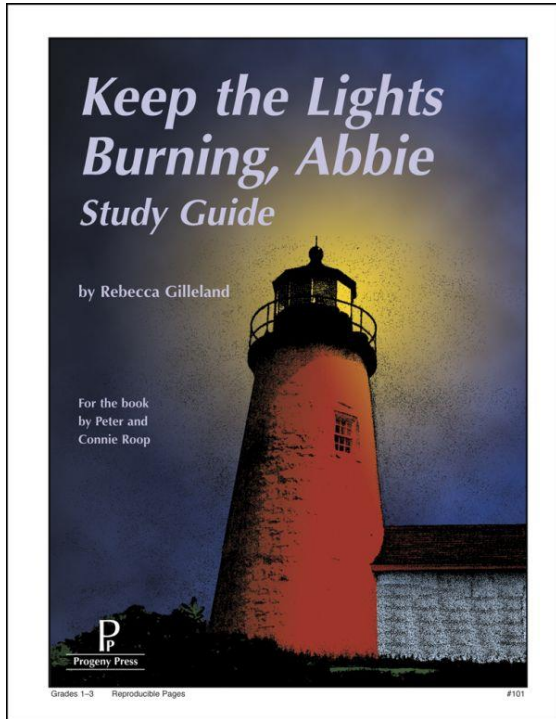
- **Poultry:** Abbie and her family raised chickens on Matinicus Rock Light Station. Chickens are easy to house, hardy livestock, and they produce eggs (even without a rooster). They can also be butchered for meat. Almost every lighthouse built in the United States included a chicken coop. Eggs are mainstay of the diet. Students might enjoy brainstorming the many dishes made from eggs, such as pudding, custard, cake, bread, and more. Invite into the classroom someone who raises chickens and let students meet Abbie's wonderful, beloved pets! This person will have answers to many questions about raising chickens and using their eggs and meat.
- **Puffins:** Atlantic puffins nested on Matinicus Rock for many years, then disappeared after they were over-hunted for their elaborate feathers. Puffins possess a unique ability to almost fly underwater. They are excellent swimmers and fliers. They return to the same place each spring to mate and raise their young. They live in burrows at this time. When the young are old enough to be on their own, the parent puffins live on the sea throughout the fall and winter months. Have student learn more about puffins and the Puffin Project on Matinicus Rock. Here's a link to the Puffin Project: <http://projectpuffin.audubon.org/>
- **Storms:** They were of great concern to lighthouse keepers and ships. Matinicus Rock was located in Penobscot Bay in the track of serious storms. The top of each light tower was fitted with a wind vane to show wind direction. Summer thunderstorms worried the keepers because lightning might hit the light towers. How were they protected? Discuss lightning rods and why tall objects attract lightning strikes. The worst storms were nor-easters, named for the direction from which their winds came. What causes big storms in Maine? Here's a link to find out more about nor'easters: <http://science.howstuffworks.com/nature/climate-weather/storms/noreaster.htm>.
- **Fog:** Find out about fog. It was often a big problem in Penobscot Bay, especially in summer when the land was much warmer than the sea. Matinicus Rock had a fogbell when Abbie lived there as a girl. Later, the station had a fog trumpet. Still later, it had an electric foghorn. Have students draw Matinicus Rock Light Station on piece of good paper. Cut a piece of waxed paper and tape it to the top edge of the drawing. It will make the picture look foggy. It can be lifted up and down to see the picture in clear weather and foggy weather.
- **The Old Days:** Abbie and her family lived long ago, before electricity, plumbing, and modern conveniences. Ask student to discuss how the family lighted their house after dark, how they cooked, how they did laundry, what they did for bathroom needs, and more. Have students look for clues in the illustrations in the book.

Story Starters

Use these topics to get students started writing their own stories about Abbie and Matinicus Rock Light.

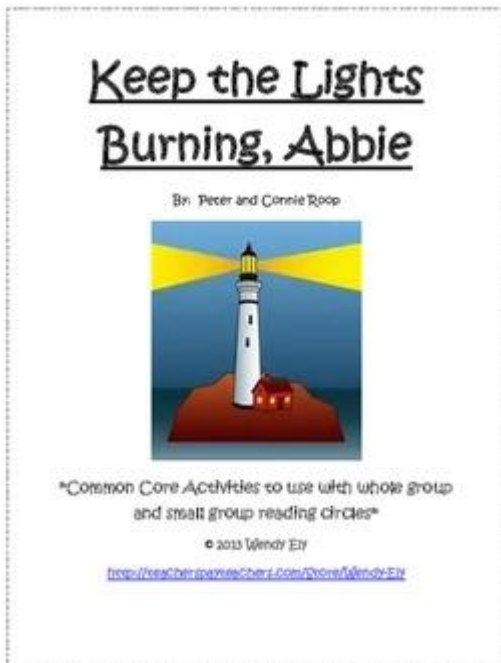
- The storm became worse and worse at Matinicus Rock. The wind howled like a wolf outside and the sea crashed against the island with a loud thud. Abbie's little sisters were afraid and could not go to sleep. To help ease her sisters fears, Abbie...
- Abbie loved to write. She wrote in the logbook for the light station and in her diary. She also loved to write letters. She wrote to several friends and family members who lived on the mainland. What would Abbie have told them about the big storm and her long days tending the lights while her father was away? Dear Friend...
- After Abbie rescued the hens, she brought them inside. What was it like to have chickens in the house? Might there have been other pets—a dog or cat? What would they think of the hens? After Abbie brought the hens in the house, here's what happened...
- Imagine the hens are telling the story of Abbie, the storm, and keeping the lights. What would they tell? "One day we hens saw Keeper Burgess row away in his boat..."
- When Keeper Burgess returned, finally, he was very pleased with how well Abbie had kept the lights burning. He brought food for the family and corn for the chickens. He brought medicine for his wife and small gifts for Abbie's sisters. He brought Abbie a very special gift...

We recommend—



Available from:

<http://www.rainbowresource.com/proddtl.php?id=009290>

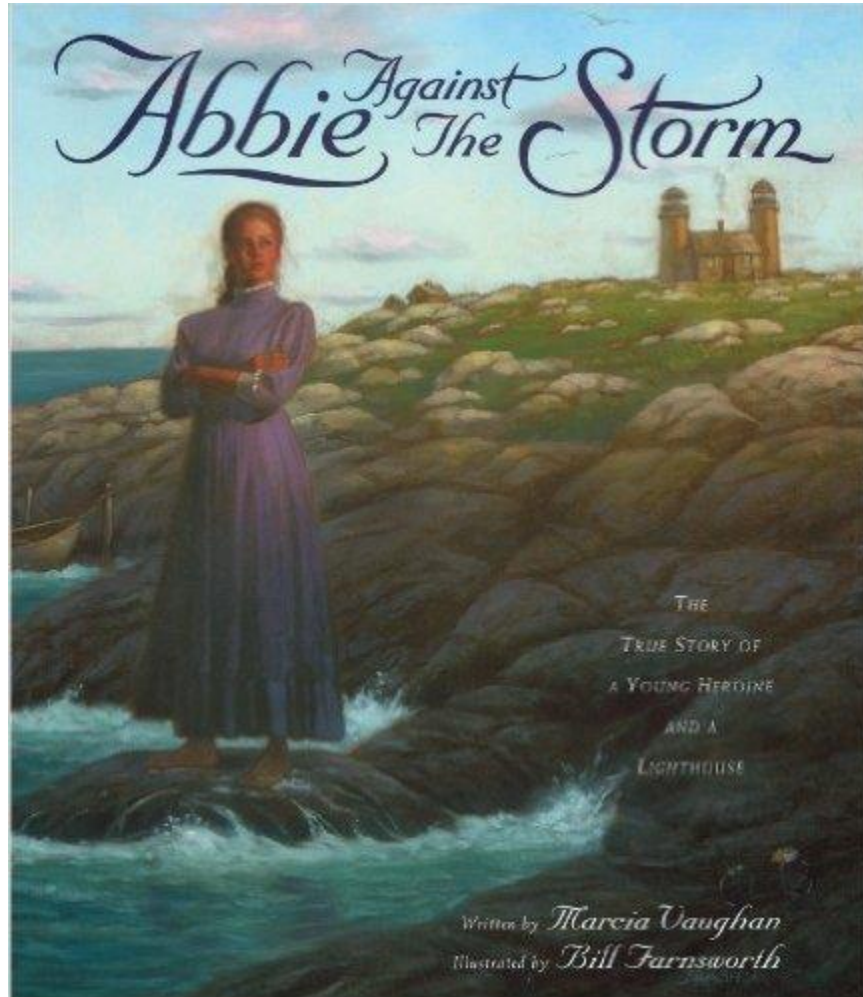


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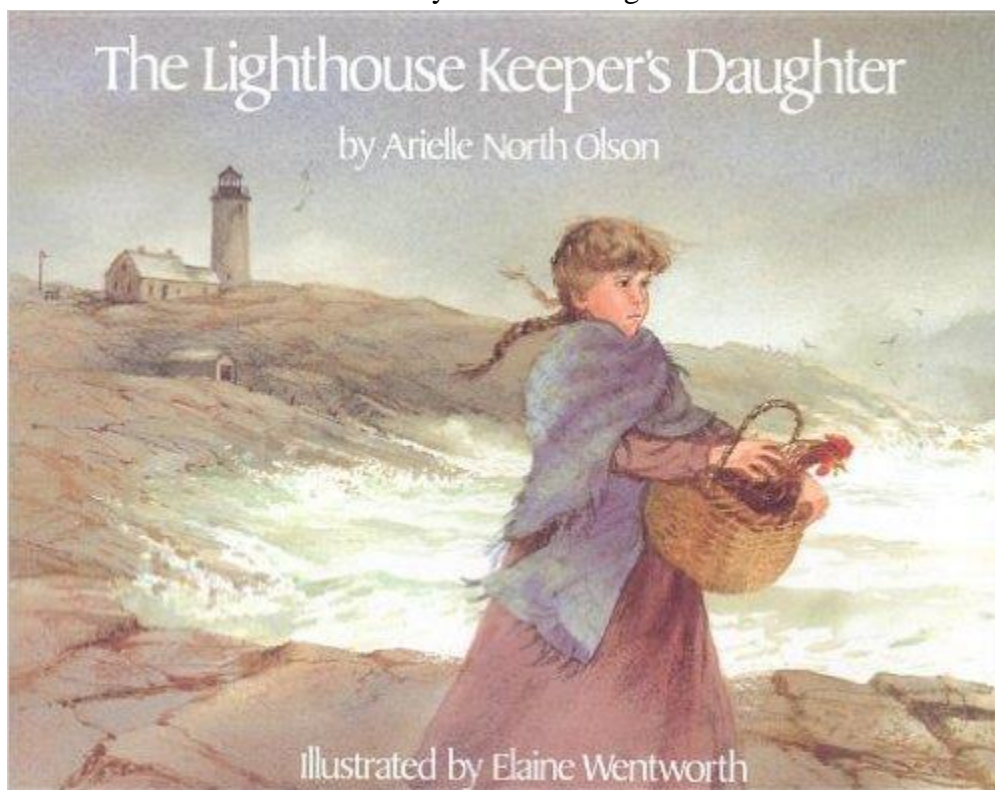
<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Guided-Reading-Keep-the-Lights-Burning-Abbie-Literacy-Activities-736100>

Other Stories & Famous Lighthouse Girls—

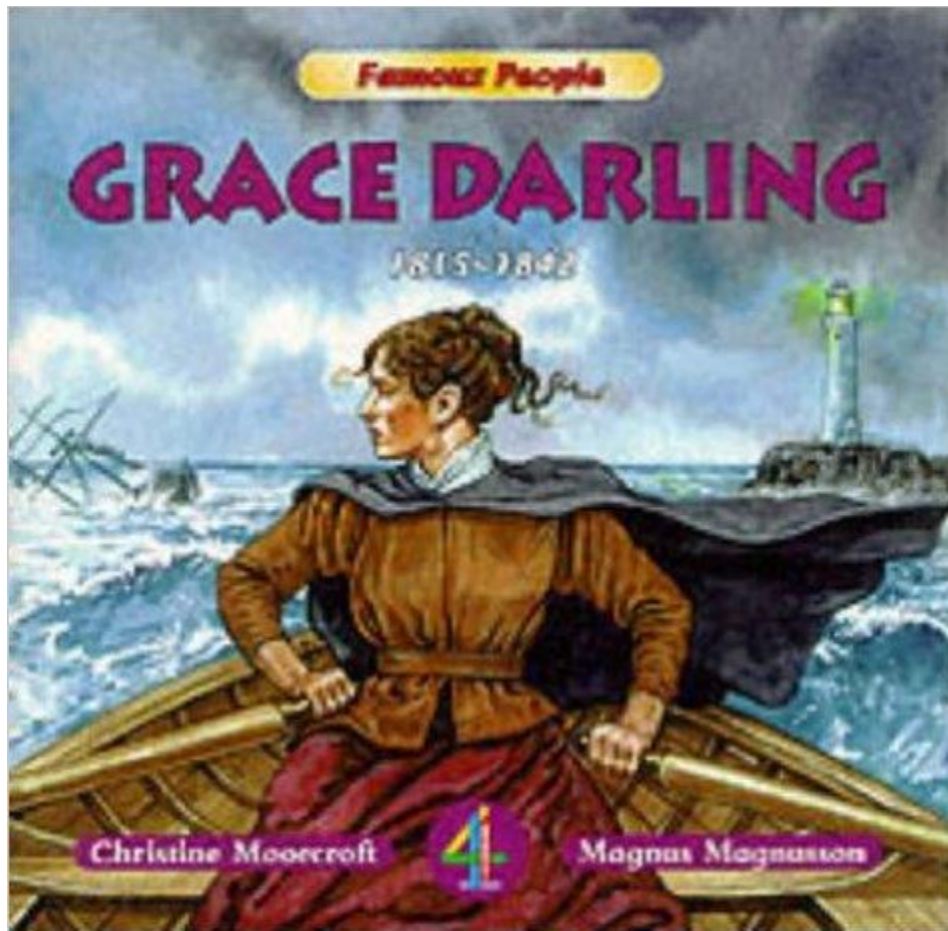
Here's another book about Abbie Burgess. Find it on Amazon.



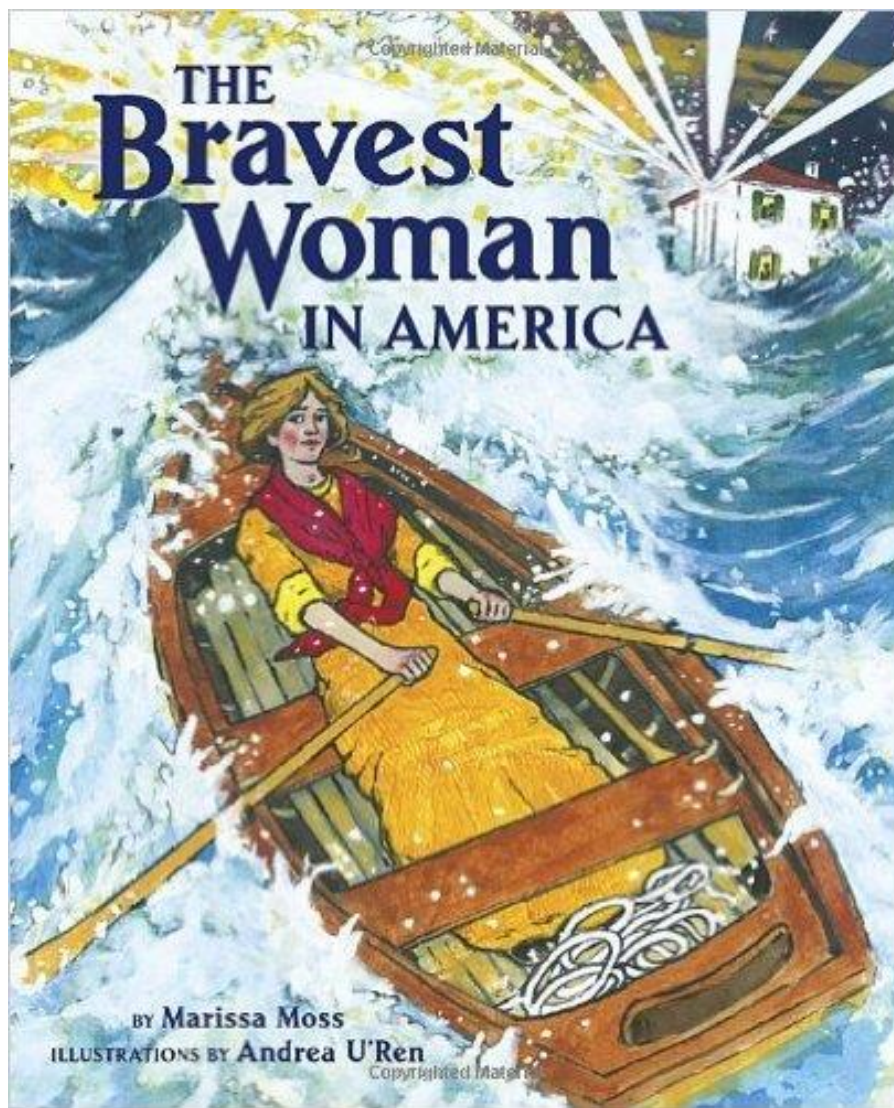
This book is about a young girl named Miranda whose father, the lighthouse keeper, is gone during a storm. It is based on the story of Abbie Burgess. Find it on Amazon.



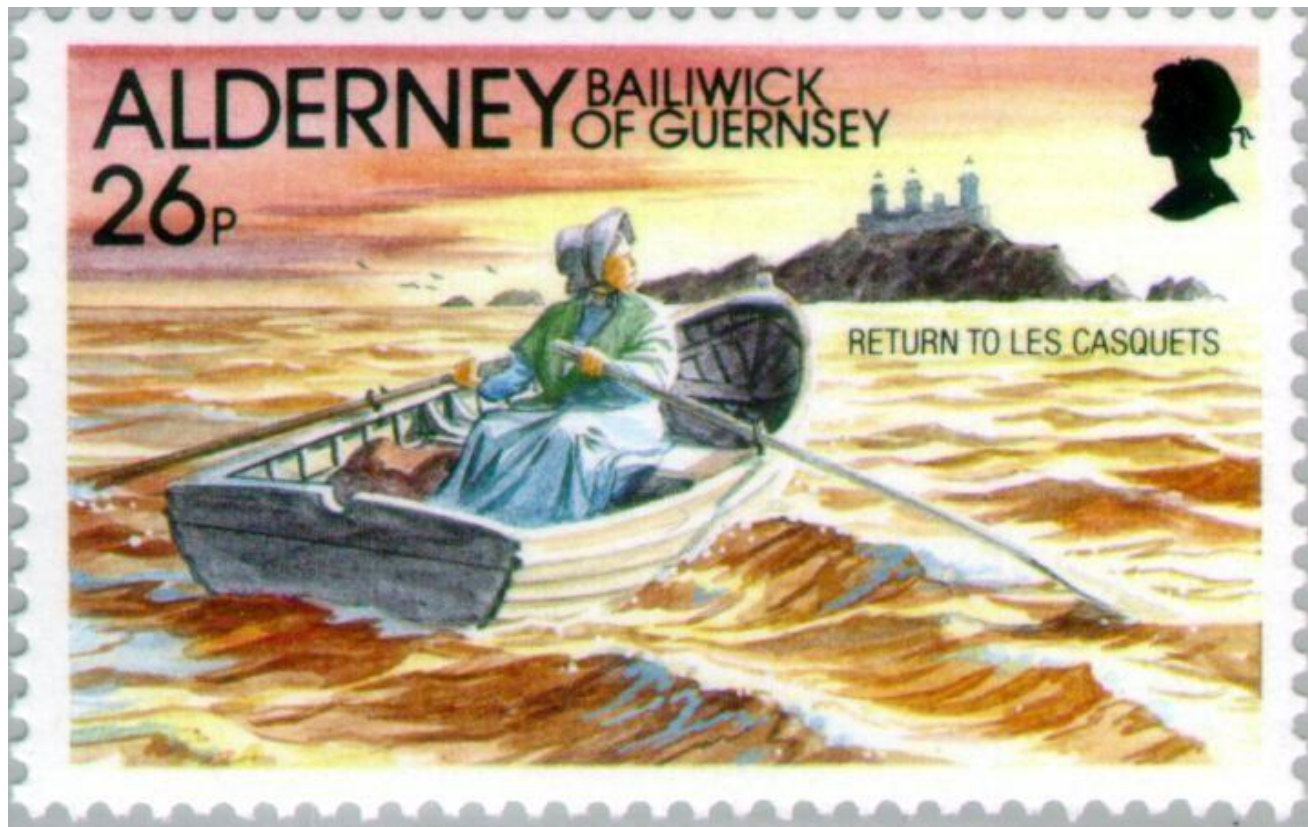
Grace Darling was a famous lighthouse daughter in England at Longstone Lighthouse. She helped her father rescue survivors of a shipwreck in 1838. Here is a bio about her. Find it on Amazon.



Ida Lewis, though older than Abbie Burgess, was a lighthouse daughter in Newport, Rhode Island. She performed many rescues at Lime Rock Lighthouse and became keeper of the lighthouse after her father died. Find this book on Amazon.



There are many songs and stories about lighthouse keepers' daughters. This postage stamp was issued in the United Kingdom to honor the story of a lighthouse keeper's daughter at the Casquets Lighthouses, a set of triple lights in the Channel Islands at the southern end of the English Channel.



For good classroom activities about lighthouses, the U.S. Lighthouse Society recommends these books. *Lighthouses for Kids* is available from Amazon. It is suitable for upper elementary students and has some excellent science activities. *The Lighthouse Activity Book* is suitable for primary and upper elementary students. The pages can be reproduced for classroom use. It is available through the the author and the U.S. Lighthouse Society gift shop. Email lightkeeper0803@gmail.com for information.

