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Activity Guide

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The Little Red Lighthouse and the Great Gray Bridge

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ABOUT THE STORY

Based on the story of a real lighthouse along the Hudson River in New York, this book tells the tale of how a little red lighthouse feels threatened by the large bridge that is built around him. It is not until a stormy night when the bridge calls him brother and tells him that he's still needed, that the little lighthouse once again feels useful and proud.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hildegard H. Swift was born in 1890 in New York. Ten years after the completion of the George Washington Bridge and the closing of the actual little red lighthouse, Swift was inspired to write this Reading Rainbow book. Before she passed away in 1977, Ms. Swift wrote several other children's books, including the Newbery Honor Book *The Railroad to Freedom*.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Born in 1905 in Chicago, Lynd Ward was the author and illustrator of over 200 works for children and adults. He received his B.S. from Columbia University Teacher's College, and also studied at the National Academy for Graphic Arts in Germany. Well known for his art with a woodcut medium, his children's books included *Nic of the Woods*, *The Silver Pony*, and *The Biggest Bear*. Mr. Ward passed away in 1985.

INTRODUCING THE STORY

Explain what lighthouses are and how they are used. Tell students that this is the story of a real little red lighthouse that can still be seen standing today next to the George Washington Bridge near New York City.

READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

1. How did the little red lighthouse feel about its job? (very proud)
2. What river is the lighthouse located in? (Hudson River)
3. What did the big steamer with the throaty whistle say to the lighthouse? (Hoot, hoot, hoot! How are you?)
4. What did the canoe say to it? (SSSSSSSalute!)
5. What two ways did the lighthouse warn boats on the river of danger? (light and bell)

6. What were the workmen planning to build when they started digging? (bridge)
7. What did the bridge have that made the lighthouse think it was no longer needed? (flashing lights on top to warn airplanes)
8. Why was the man so late in coming to light the lighthouse's lamp on the night of the big storm? (boys stole his keys)

Vocabulary

Be sure students have an understanding of the following terms. Depending on age, simply discuss the terms, or have children look them up in a dictionary.

Shore, Hudson River, Lake Tear-in-the-Clouds, salute, black tug, important, channel, grateful, wound, steel girders, barge, reels, slender, cables, swept, shore, glum, anxious, beacon

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Language Arts/Creative Writing: Animate the Inanimate

Remind students how this story gives "life" and feelings to an inanimate object. Brainstorm a list of other inanimate objects and have each child select one to animate. Write short stories giving "life" to these objects. Combine into a class book and keep in classroom library.

Language Arts: Counting on Consonants

Divide group into pairs and challenge them to go through the story and locate all of the words containing double consonants. (i.e. little, jolly, rolled, all, passed, called, etc.) Note: This activity could also be completed using words with double vowels.

Geography/Mapping: Locating Lighthouses

Visit your library and gather information on various lighthouses in a particular region (the northeastern United States for example). Give children a basic map of the selected region, and have them label the highlighted lighthouses. Combine this with an Internet researching activity and locate additional information on each lighthouse. Compile into a class bulletin board.

History: What's in a Name?

Have children visit the library and research the George Washington Bridge. Why was it given that name? Who named it? Why was it built? What two pieces of land does it connect? Is it still in use today? Use gathered information to write reports. (Students could also utilize the Internet for this activity.)

INTERNET ACTIVITY

Before you send children to do research using any of the keywords listed below, you may wish to try them yourself to be sure the sites are suitable.

Lighthouses: See Geography/Mapping: Locating Lighthouses activity above.

George Washington Bridge: See History: What's in a Name activity above.

Harrison J. Goldin: Have children locate biographical information about this New York City Comptroller who helped restore the lighthouse. Gordon J. Davis: Have students research this Parks Commissioner who helped contribute \$1.4 million to the lighthouse restoration and creation of the Fort Washington Park.