

THE LITTLE RED LIGHTHOUSE AND THE GREAT GREY BRIDGE

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Themes: American History, Communities, Feelings, Growth and Change, Self-Esteem

Grade Level: K-6 (ages 5-12)

Running Time:

SUMMARY

Buildings, bridges and boats come alive in this appealing tale of a little red lighthouse that guards the shoreline of New York City. Nature comes alive as well, speaking to the lighthouse and the boats through the river and the fog. With the help of the man who comes every night, the lighthouse stands proud as it speaks with flashes and foghorns. Then a huge change takes place. Workers come and built a great gray bridge that towers over the lighthouse. After a flashing light is mounted at the very top of the bridge, the lighthouse feels very, very small. It takes a series of accidents – a boat smashing on the rocks, the lighthouse keeper arriving late – to teach the lighthouse that its light still has to keep shining.

OBJECTIVES

- Children will watch and listen to a fictional story about New York City.
- Children will appreciate how people work together to protect each other.
- Children will understand that their own contributions are important.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Introduce the title of the program and ask children what a lighthouse is. Encourage them to reason from the word itself to its definition. Ask children to think of a place in nature where there might be both a bridge and a lighthouse. After someone

thinks of a river, explain that this story takes place in a famous big city that is located on a river. Have them guess the city, then watch the program to see if their guesses were right.

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Ask children to recall and discuss how the lighthouse felt at different points in the story. Use the feelings of the lighthouse as a way to discuss their own feelings when big changes happen and they don't understand what's going around them. Share your own feelings about being in situations when you suddenly feel very, very small, such as driving on a huge, choked expressway. Encourage children to state the lesson the lighthouse had learned by the end – that its light was still important. Share and discuss ways in which every person's "light" is important. If you used the expressway example, discuss the need for every driver to stay alert for the safety of all.

Because the lighthouse, boats and bridge talk in flashes, hoots, and other sound effects, this story lends itself especially well to re-enactment. Children will enjoy playing these unusual parts. Use a "story theater" approach and follow the words exactly to increase appreciation for the story's literary qualities. Challenge dramatic skills with sentences such as, "A thick fog crept over the river and tried to clutch the boats one by one."

Connect the story to geography by having students locate the places mentioned in the story: Hudson River, New York City, Lake Tear-in-the-Woods, and Albany. Study a map of Manhattan to locate Riverside Drive. Then find the place where Riverside Drive meets a bridge that crosses the Hudson River. Locate the lighthouse at the foot of the [TAPPAN ZEE or GEORGE WASHINGTON] Bridge.

Connect the story to history, science, and technology by focusing on the art in the program. Encourage students to do research on steamboats, especially along the Hudson and other American rivers. Discuss the changes in transportation that made the great grey bridge necessary. Ask students to prepare timetables or time lines showing important dates in transportation technology.

Connect the story to social studies by focusing on the "lighthouses" in your own community. This is a good opportunity to examine your local transportation, water supplies, fire and police departments and other community institutions. Older students can research the local history of these institutions and look for buildings that, like the lighthouse, are left over from earlier eras.

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