



THE SEA CHEST

by Toni Buzzeo

Introduction

The study of lighthouses is an exciting road through the history of our country and its coastlines.

Launch an in-depth study of the science of lighthouses, American history, the sea, or heroism with the help of this curriculum guide. Engage your elementary and middle school students in an array of content-based Social Studies, Science, and Language Arts activities based on **The Sea Chest**, a heartfelt story about a lonely young girl on an isolated Maine lighthouse island whose only wish comes true the day a leather sea chest washes ashore.

Ten Thematic Strands in Social Studies

The Sea Chest has broad curriculum connections, particularly in the Social Studies content area. It may be used to address five of the Ten Thematic Strands in Social Studies that underlie the NCSS (National Council for the Social Studies) Standards as published in Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies:

- Strand II. Time, Continuity and Change
- Strand III. People, Places and Environments
- Strand IV. Individual Development and Identity
- Strand V. Institutions, Groups and Individuals
- Strand VIII. Science, Technology and Society

Standards for the English Language Arts

The Sea Chest also offers many curriculum connections in the Language Arts. It may be used to address 5 of the 12 standards as published in Standards for the English Language Arts by the NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English) and the IRA (International Reading Association):

- Standard 3—Applying a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts.
- Standard 5—Employing a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
- Standard 6—Applying knowledge of language structure, language conventions, media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.
- Standard 7--Conducting research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems.
- Standard 8--Using a variety of technological and information resources to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

Curriculum Summary

Many of these Social Studies strands and Language Arts content standards can be addressed when working with the lighthouse theme in **The Sea Chest**. In addition, Science content standards may be addressed in the study of the natural environment and the technical aspects of lighthouse operation.

Book Pairing

What is it like to live at a lighthouse? Help to build students' understanding with these nonfiction books: **Beacons of Light: Lighthouses** by Gail Gibbons, **Lighthouse: Living in a Great Lakes Lighthouse, 1910 to 1940** by Megan O'Hara, and **Women of the Lights** by Candace Fleming.

Find Out More

About the Author: Students may wonder what life experiences led Toni Buzzeo to write an adoption story. Read more about her childhood, and view photographs, at her website at www.tonibuzzeo.com/booksseachest.html.

About Teaching about Lighthouses: Explore the topic of lighthouse teaching from the links on the author's webpage at www.tonibuzzeo.com/booksseachestlighthousecurriculum.html.

Hands-on Activities

Mapping the Lighthouse Coast Bulletin Board: Maine, like many Atlantic, Pacific, Gulf, and Great Lakes states, is rich in lighthouses. Have students each choose a lighthouse from your nearest coastal region. Now, order a map from that state (state maps of Maine can be obtained from Maine Office of Tourism, #59 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333-0059, phone 1-888-624-6345) and post it on the bulletin board. Individually or in small groups, have students determine the exact location of their selected lighthouses. Place a push pin at that location, then attach a string that leads to a student drawing and fact card about each lighthouse based on research. A fabulous resource for this research project is the eight volume Chelsea House series by Bruce Roberts, **Lighthouses: The Life and History of America's Waterways**. Purchase the volume for your geographic region from the following titles:

New England Lighthouses (0-7910-5488-8)

MidAtlantic Lighthouses (0-7910-5489-6)

Southeastern Lighthouses (0-7910-5483-7)

Gulf Coast Lighthouses (0-7910-5484-5)

Eastern Great Lakes Lighthouses (0-7910-5487-X)

Western Great Lakes Lighthouses (0-7910-5486-1)

California Lighthouses (0-7910-5485-3)

Pacific Northwest Lighthouses (0-7910-5490-X)

Invite A Speaker (Live or Virtual): If you live in an area of the country where there are lighthouses (Atlantic coast, Gulf coast, Great Lakes, or Pacific coast) contact one of the Lighthouse Associations below (use www.google.com to find contact information) and invite a speaker to come to talk about lighthouse history and lighthouse preservation:

- American Lighthouse Foundation
- Chesapeake Chapter of the United States Lighthouse Society
- Delaware River and Bay Lighthouse Foundation
- The Florida Lighthouse Association
- The Great Lakes Lighthouse Keepers Association
- The Lighthouse Preservation Society
- Long Island Chapter, U.S. Lighthouse Society
- New England Lighthouse Lovers
- The New Jersey Lighthouse Society
- Oregon Chapter of the United States Lighthouse Society
- Outer Banks Lighthouse Society
- The United States Lighthouse Society

If you live in another part of the country, invite someone from one of the Lighthouse Associations to join you in an online chat using AOL Instant Messenger (download the software for AOL IM at www.aim.com/index.adp).

Save the Lights! Lighthouses are in danger on all of our American coasts. Luckily, preservationists are actively involved in saving them before it is too late. Have students research and discuss lighthouse preservation before staging a debate about whether time and money should be spent to save lighthouses. Consult The Lighthouse Preservation Society's web site at www.maine.com/lights/lps.htm. (Perhaps your class might even consider a fundraiser in order to join.) You may want to view The Lighthouse Keepers (Leben Productions, 1996. 56 min. 616-857-4780) to learn more about lighthouse preservation (and history) along Michigan's vast shoreline. Finally, ask students to write a persuasive paragraph or essay in which they develop three supporting reasons for lighthouse preservation.

Lighthouse Keeper's Log: Light keepers were required to keep a daily journal in which they recorded the operations of their lighthouses in a very spare manner. Often, keepers were instructed to write the events of each day in a single line across two pages. If the Inspector came, if the supply boat arrived, if any unusual event occurred, that would be noted. Otherwise, the state of the weather, including the direction of the winds, was the essential information. (For more information and sample log entries, see "The Keeper's Log" at the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore site at www.nps.gov/apis/log/sandloga.htm). Ask students to write the entries for the Hendricks Head keeper's log for several days preceding the night of the big storm. Then include the log for the big storm and the following day when the sea chest washed ashore.

Maita's Diary: In the early pages of Maita's story, we learn a little about her life, which includes storytelling, egg-gathering, homeschool, and visits from the supply boat. Ask students to create a diary that Maita might have written during her lonely years before the sea chest arrived. Then have students imagine that Maita was, instead, living on Sanctuary Island today. Perhaps her parents run the museum on the island (explain that the light itself would have long been automated). How might her life be different? In what ways might it be less isolated? Ask students to create diary entries for a modern day Maita at Sanctuary Island.

Headlines! After students have recorded the information about the storm and the sea chest in a log format, ask them to don their journalism hats. As a class, read several newspaper accounts of disasters from your local papers. Point out the journalistic style and voice employed. Now ask students to write the events of the big storm and the next day as they occur in **The Sea Chest** as a newspaper article, including quotes from the lighthouse keeper and Maita.

A Dictionary of Lighthouse Terms: Invite students to create a dictionary of lighthouse terms using an encyclopedia article such as "Lighthouses" in World Book Encyclopedia, the glossary in *Lighthouse: Living in a Great Lakes Lighthouse, 1910 to 1940* by Megan O'Hara or an online glossary such as "A Glossary of Lighthouse Terms" on the Seeing the Light website at www.terrypepper.com/lights/lists/glossary.htm.

A Field Guide of Sanctuary Island: Support students as they research the flora and fauna of Maine coastal islands in the library media center. Use reference books, field guides to the Atlantic shore, and online resources such as *The Natural Resources of the Valley* www.midcoast.com/~wpl/mvlt/nri/chap_43.html. Encourage them to create a field guide to the fictional rocky island where Seaborne found a home. The field guide might contain a drawing of each animal and plant found on the island along with its physical characteristics, life span, and habitat.

Investigate the Fresnel Lens: In *The Sea Chest*, the light at Halley's Head is generated by a Fresnel lens, a special kind of lens developed by Augustin Fresnel in 1822 and first put into use in the United States in the 1850's. Support students as they learn more about Fresnel lenses at "The Fresnel Lens" page of Pete's Lantern Room site at www.lanternroom.com/misc/fresnel.htm or at the Michigan Lighthouse Conservancy "Fresnel Lenses" web page at www.michiganlights.com/fresnel.htm. You might also want to show them the video, *Lighthouse Illumination* (2000, 12 min. Artworks).

School and Library Visits

Toni Buzzeo is a frequent visitor at schools and libraries. If you would like to host her and learn more about her books, visit her website at www.tonibuzzeo.com/speaking.html.

Find more teaching guides and tips at: <http://us.penguinroup.com/youngreaders>.