

LIGHTHOUSE INVESTIGATIONS

Lighthouse Christmas

by Toni Buzzeo; illustrated by Nancy Carpenter
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According to The Friends of Flying Santa <http://www.flyingsanta.com/>, Maine pilot William Wincapaw made his first Flying Santa deliveries to the lighthouse families at the lights in the Rockland area of Penobscot Bay.

Initiate a study of the lighthouses of Penobscot Bay by identifying the bay on a map of Maine. (Note that the bay is 40 miles long and 15 miles wide and is dotted with more than 200 islands. Discuss the importance of lighthouses in such a body of water.) Next, turn to a map that will allow you to focus on the lighthouses of the region. You may want to use one of these two resources:

- *Maine Lighthouses Map; Illustrated Guide* by Peter Dow Bachelder; illustrated by Peter M. Mason (Bella Terra Publishing, 2009)
- *Maine Lighthouses Map: Laminated Poster* illustrated by Peter M. Mason (Bella Terra Publishing, 2009)

Encourage older students to choose a lighthouse, individually or in teams, to research. When working with younger students, choose one or more lighthouses to research as a group activity. The most helpful online site for this research is *New England Lighthouses: A Virtual Guide* at <http://lighthouse.cc/me.html>.

Key investigations will include information on:

- Location of the lighthouse
- Date the lighthouse was built
- Height of the tower
- Construction material
- Original "optic" or lens
- History and fascinating facts
- Drawings, photographs, and/or paintings

Once student research is complete, ask them to report their findings. If you are working with younger students as a whole group, you may want to invite another class or a group of parents or community members to serve as your audience as you report your findings.

As a culminating activity, ask students to write and illustrate a short story from their own point of view (written in first person) as if they were living at the time the lighthouse was under construction or as if they were living at the lighthouse when it was in operation as a navigational aid. If you are working with younger students, consider writing a group story with illustrations contributed by individual students.