

Lighthouse Christmas Reader's Theater Script

*Adapted from the book Lighthouse Christmas by
Toni Buzzeo, illustrated by Nancy Carpenter. Dial, 2011.*

Read the book aloud to children first, so that they can enjoy the illustrations and become familiar with the story. Then, hand out a set of photocopied scripts to seven students. Ask the remaining children to be the audience. If you have plenty of time set aside, allow students to practice their parts individually or as a group until they are reading fluently. If time is limited, have performers face the audience and simply read their parts on the first run-through. Once all readers are comfortable with their parts, have a second reading with the opportunity to use props while reading.

Roles

Frances

Peter

Papa

Mr. Dunlap

Narrator One

Narrator Two

Narrator Three

Lighthouse Christmas Script

Narrator One: Morning light drifted down the curving lighthouse stairs.

Narrator Two: Peter appeared on the floor below Frances, hugging the one-eared cat.

Frances: He stood smack in the pile of dirt I had just swept down from the top of Ledge Light tower.

Peter: How many days 'til Christmas?

Narrator Three: Frances waved the broom to scoot him aside.

Frances: One less than yesterday.

Peter: Two?

Narrator One: Frances nodded.

Peter: Will Christmas come to this Maine island too?

Frances: I s'pose it will.

Peter: Good. I want Christmas.

Narrator Two: Frances thought, we both want Christmas. So why did people have to live in lonely places like Ledge Light?

Narrator Three: Frances hung the broom behind the kitchen door.

Frances: I could hear Papa chopping firewood outside.

Peter: Christmas, Frances. Cookies and singing and presents.

Narrator One: Peter sat in the rocker stroking the cat.

Peter: And Santa.

Frances: Yes.

Narrator Two: But Frances wasn't sure that Santa even knew where Ledge Light was, here in the middle of the ocean!

Narrator Three: When Mama died in spring, Papa had taken the transfer from the

mainland lighthouse. Frances wondered if Santa had noticed.

Frances: Later, I found Peter in the parlor with crayons and paper scraps all around.

Peter: I'm planning Christmas, and you can help, Frances.

Narrator One: Frances picked up one of the scraps.

Frances: What's *this* plan?

Peter: Cookie shapes.

Narrator Two: Frances's mouth watered at the memory of butter cookies, sweet with sugar.

Narrator Three: Then she remembered the empty larder.

Frances: Maybe not cookies this year.

Narrator One: She picked up another scrap.

Peter: (*sing*) *Ho ho ho, the piano.*

Narrator Two: Her ears rang with the memory of Aunt Martha's beautiful playing.

Peter: Presents for everyone. Even the one-eared cat.

Narrator Three: Frances had to smile.

Frances: That old cat doesn't even know it's Christmas.

Peter: But we do.

Narrator One: Peter grabbed her hand.

Peter: We can *start* making Christmas and Santa can finish up.

Narrator Two: The sound of Papa's chopping stopped outside.

Frances: Best hurry that cat outdoors, Peter.

Narrator Three: Too late. Snow followed Papa into the kitchen.

Peter: Papa!

Narrator One: Peter rushed to him.

Narrator Two: Papa reached out an arm, then spotted the cat.

Papa: That cat doesn't belong inside.

Peter: But Papa, he's the Ledge Light cat—and we're the Ledge Light family now.

Narrator Three: Without another word, Papa opened the door and shooed the cat outside.

Frances: I set three bowls of oatmeal on the table.

Narrator One: Peter tasted a spoonful.

Peter: It's not sweet today.

Frances: No, not today.

Narrator Two: The sugar was gone, Frances thought, like most everything else.

Frances: Sooner or later the weather will let up and the supply boat will arrive. But probably too late for Christmas.

Narrator Three: Papa cleared his throat.

Papa: Aunt Martha radioed offering to send a dory out to fetch you children for Christmas.

Frances: Peter bounced in his seat.

Peter: Cookies and singing and presents and Santa for sure.

Narrator One: Frances gave him a tiny kick under the table.

Frances: What about you, Papa?

Narrator Two: Papa shook his head.

Papa: Storms threatening boats at sea don't consider holidays.

Narrator Three: Frances felt like a boat moored to a dock.

Peter: But can *we* go have Christmas, Frances?

Papa: You think on that a while, Frances, and let me know.

Narrator One: *Creak, crack. Creak, crack.* The rockers squeaked out a waiting rhythm on the parlor floor as the sky darkened with storm clouds.

Frances: No supply boat again today.

Narrator Three: Already, the larder echoed like a yawning beast with only a canister of oatmeal and a fifty-pound sack of beans in its stomach.

Narrator One: *Beans for Christmas dinner?*

Narrator Two: Frances whirled around to Peter.

Frances: Okay, we'll go!

Narrator Three: Peter flew across the floor and threw his arms around Frances's waist.

Frances: Go tell Papa.

Narrator One: Frances headed for her room.

Narrator Two: Ten minutes later, Peter appeared in the doorway.

Peter: What are you doing?

Frances: Making a present to leave for Papa.

Peter: Santa brings presents for everyone everywhere—even lighthouse cats.

Narrator Three: The cat and Papa--alone at Christmas with the boats on the sea, Frances thought.

Narrator One: She tried not to think about that as she trimmed sheets of paper evenly and bound them together with ribbon.

Frances: I labeled the cardboard cover LIGHTHOUSE KEEPER'S JOURNAL.

Narrator Two: Just then, an enormous gust of wind drove snow against the rattling the window.

Frances: Oh no! How will we get to the mainland for Christmas?

Narrator Three: She rushed up the tower stairs and pushed into the lamp room where Papa was hurrying into his slicker.

Papa: (*holler*) Frances, look there, just past the ledge. Do you see it?

Narrator One: The wind howled.

Narrator Two: Frances peered through the telescope and spotted an upturned fishing boat.

Narrator Three: Papa shoved his sou'wester on his head.

Papa: I'll try to reach him in my dory.

Frances: (*cry*) No, Papa!

Papa: Frances, I must. And you must keep the light burning.

Frances: My heart thudded.

Narrator One: She'd never lit the wick herself.

Narrator Two: Too soon after he'd left, a blast of wind blew out the light.

Frances: My hands shook.

Narrator Three: A gust blew out her match.

Narrator One: Once.

Narrator Two: Twice.

Narrator Three: A third time she lit the match and held it to the wick.

Narrator One: The flame wavered.

Frances: I held my breath.

Narrator Two: When she let it out, the flame was burning.

Narrator Three: Frances peered down to the water below where Papa was dragging something over the gunnels of his dory.

Frances: It seemed like hours later when I finally saw Papa below, dragging a

dripping man toward the kitchen door.

Narrator One: The nor'easter raged all night long.

Narrator Two: Frances hovered over the mariner.

Frances: I rubbed his hands and feet trying to chase off the bone chill of the sea.

Narrator Three: In the morning, Peter slid into the kitchen in his pajamas.

Frances: He eyed the stranger.

Peter: Are you here to take us to the mainland?

Mr. Dunlap: No Sir. I'm Mr. Dunlap, the fella your Papa dragged out of the sea last night--thanks to your sister keeping the light burning.

Narrator One: Peter turned his wide eyes on Frances.

Peter: You did?

Narrator Two: Frances poured tea for Mr. Dunlap.

Frances: We're the lighthouse family. I had to.

Peter: But we're going ashore today, right Frances?

Narrator Three: Frances glanced away.

Frances: (*whisper*) Maybe not, Peter.

Narrator One: Peter's smile crumpled, and he ran from the room.

Narrator Two: Frances and the cat followed.

Frances: Peter lay curled into a tight ball on the bed.

Narrator Three: He reached out to pet the cat but refused to look at Frances.

Frances: I'm sorry. But remember what you told Papa the other day?

Narrator One: He lay still.

Peter: What?

Frances: We're the lighthouse family now--the Ledge Light family.

Narrator Two: Frances combed her fingers through Peter's hair.

Frances: If it weren't for me, Mr. Dunlap would be dead at the bottom of the sea, Peter. Papa and I saved him. That's what lighthouse keepers do.

Narrator Three: Peter rolled over.

Peter: But can lighthouse keepers have Christmas too?

Frances: Oh, I think they can!

Narrator One: In the kitchen, Mr. Dunlap was asleep by the stove.

Narrator Two: Frances tapped Peter's shoulder.

Frances: (*whisper*) I'm putting you in charge of a gift for Mr. Dunlap. Santa might not be able to find him.

Peter: I'll do it.

Narrator Three: Peter headed for his room.

Frances: (*call*) He's part of the Ledge Light family today.

Peter: Just like the one-eared cat.

Narrator One: By afternoon, the storm slid up the coast.

Narrator Two: Peter and Frances went out to find a green pine bough.

Narrator Three: They dragged it inside to the parlor and laid their gifts beneath.

Peter: No cookies.

Frances: No piano music.

Peter: But we have a little Christmas anyway.

Narrator One: Frances squeezed his hand.

Frances: Yes, we do.

Peter: Let's get Papa and Mr. Dunlap.

Frances: Better give the cat his gift first, then put him out.

Narrator Two: Peter and Frances led Papa and Mr. Dunlap into the parlor.

Frances: Together we sang “Jingle Bells” as best we could without Aunt Martha’s piano music.

Narrator Three: At the end of the song, Frances heard a roaring noise outside.

Frances: Listen!

Mr. Dunlap: We all rushed out.

Papa: A small plane circled low above the lighthouse.

Mr. Dunlap: It circled a second time.

Papa: Then the plane dipped and banked to one side and swooped past.

Frances: A package fell out of the tail and landed at the water’s edge.

Mr. Dunlap: Inside was a thick layer of marsh hay wrapped around a heavy burlap sack.

Papa: Peter hopped from one foot to another as I carried the sack into the house.

Peter: Santa sent a plane!

Frances: Yes, he did.

Papa: Frances pulled treasure after treasure from the bag—tins of coffee, tea, cocoa, and sugar, crayons, jacks, yo-yo’s, books, and a Bible.

Narrator One: Peter clapped.

Peter: Now there’s *more* Christmas—from Santa.

Narrator Two: Papa shook his head in wonderment.

Narrator Three: Frances reached into the bag one last time and removed a note:

Frances: *With thanks for the sacrifices your Ledge Light family makes every day of the year to keep sailors safe upon our waters.*

Season's Greetings From The Flying Santa.

- Mr. Dunlap:** (boom) I'll second that!
- Narrator One:** Papa wrapped his strong arms around Frances and Peter.
- Papa:** My Ledge Light family!
- Narrator Two:** From outside came a yowl and a scratch at the door.
- Narrator Three:** Everyone waited for Papa.
- Frances:** He rubbed his stubbly chin and laughed.
- Papa:** That cat . . .
- Peter:** . . . is part of our Ledge Light family!
- Frances:** Peter flung the door open and let the one-eared cat inside.

Author's Note

On Christmas Day, 1929, Maine floatplane pilot William Wincapaw launched the Flying Santa Service to honor the many lighthouse keepers and their families he'd come to know on the isolated islands in Penobscot Bay. He delivered packages filled with holiday gifts of small necessities and luxuries by dropping them from his plane to the lights in the Rockland area. Over the years, the flights expanded into other states, first in New England and then across the continent. As the tradition grew, expenses were underwritten by businesses, and other Flying Santas followed Bill, including famed maritime historian and author Edward Rowe Snow. With the exception of the war years, 1941-1944, the Flying Santa service has been continually active from 1929 until the present, now visiting Coast Guard families as the tradition continues.

To learn more about the Flying Santa Service, visit www.flyingsanta.com.

PAGE 2

PAGE 1

PAGE 9

PAGE 1

