

Comprehension Workbook 1

# Rescue

## The story of Grace Darling



Find out about the meaning of stories and articles

CurriculumVisions

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The story of Grace Darling



Find out about the meaning of stories and articles

understand • key words • summarise • sequencing • AF2-3 • AF4-5 • AF6-7 • discuss • create



# Rescue

Matches the requirements of the Literacy Strategy and designed to integrate with your normal subject studies. (This material is independent of any specific text book and can be used alongside any publisher's books including our textbook.)

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# Rescue

A young woman and her father lived in almost complete obscurity until one night in 1838...



Grace Darling was just an ordinary daughter of a lighthouse keeper. She was born in 1816, the seventh child of a family of nine children. When she was ten her father, William Darling, and his family moved to the remote lighthouse on the Farne Islands, just off the Northumberland coast of NE England.

The Farne Islands are dangerous because they mostly only just reach above sea level and so are hard for sailors to spot.

On September the 6th there was a violent storm in the North Sea. It caught the SS Forfarshire, a paddle steamer built just four years earlier. The Forfarshire was built to carry passengers and cargo along the coast between Dundee and Hull. She was sailing north with 60 people. But then the pumps to her engines began to fail.

The ship limped on north, and when close to the Farne Islands, her engines failed completely. She had sails, so she hoisted the sails, but they were no good in a storm, so the captain decided to seek shelter behind the Farne Islands. It was then, at 3am with a gale blowing, that she was driven on to Big Harcar, one of the Outer Farne Islands.

Eight sailors and one passenger lowered a lifeboat and escaped. The rest were left on the ship. Then the ship broke in two and one half stayed on the rocks, the other half was lost.

Grace Darling spotted the shipwreck on the neighbouring island of Big Harcar at first light. It was just 500 yards from the Longstone island where they lived. None of Grace's brothers were on the islands to help, so she and her father launched their 21 ft-long rowing boat on their own. But to get to Big Harcar by boat they had to row in a great arc, a distance of almost a mile. On the first journey they got five people off, but that was all the boat could hold. They then rowed back to shore and returned to the wreck for the remaining four survivors. Forty two people had drowned overnight.

William and Grace both received the RNLI silver medal for bravery. Grace even received £50 from Queen Victoria – a huge sum at the time.

It was a heroic achievement, but the newspapers wanted to make even more of it by reporting untrue things like “the cries of the sufferers on the remaining part of the wreck were heard during the night by the female [Grace] who immediately awoke her father” and “One of the old seamen was moved to tears when he saw a young female of slender appearance periling her life for their preservation”.

Soon, Grace received letters requesting locks of her hair and scraps of the dress she wore during the rescue. Then, paintings of Grace shown during the rescue, started to appear on tea-caddies, plates, postcards, and even in girls' magazines.

Grace was horrified by all this, and showed her desire to be left alone when she wrote back to one letter asking if she ever got bored of staying in the same place “I have seven apartments in the house to keep in a state fit to be inspected everyday by Gentlemen”.

She just wanted to be left alone.



# Understanding words

Before we can understand a story we have to know what all of the words mean. Let's try one...

**a** Write the sentence in which you found the word '**remote**'.

**b** From that sentence, suggest what '**remote**' means.

**c** Write a new sentence using the word '**remote**'.

**d** Use a dictionary to find words with a similar meaning (synonyms) to '**remote**'.

**e** Draw a small picture showing what you think '**remote**' means.

Try this for other words, too.



# Finding key words

Next, we need to find the key words that tell us what the story is about...

Read the story and underline the key words. Write the most important of these key words in a list like the one below. Write next to it a word that means a similar thing (a synonym). You don't have to use all the spaces, but you should not use more.

Key word	Synonym (similar word)
Example: spotted	seen

3

# Summarising

(the gist of the story)

To summarise means to rewrite the story in a shorter version using as many of our key words from Task 2 as needed.

**1** Write a heading for your summary.

**2** Now write the main idea in one sentence.  
e.g. "This story tells us..."

**3** Now add some detail to the main idea by writing more sentences after it.

**Finally,  
can you rewrite your  
summary to make it better?**

- 1. Look out for errors such as using the same word too often – use alternatives.**
- 2. Make sure you have summarised the author's purpose in your OWN words.**
- 3. Make sure your summary is in a logical order.**
- 4. Is your summary informative AND interesting to others?**

**There is  
nothing wrong  
with rewriting; even  
the best authors  
rewrite their  
work.**



123  
4

# Sequencing

Sequencing means getting the events in the right order. Write these sentences in the correct order, so they make sense.

Longstone Lighthouse



Despite the rescue, 42 people drowned.

The SS Forfar was steaming north when her engines failed.

They had to make two trips in their small boat.

At first light, Grace Darling saw the wreck from her window in the lighthouse.

The ship was thrown against the rocks during the gale and broke in two. Only one lifeboat got clear.

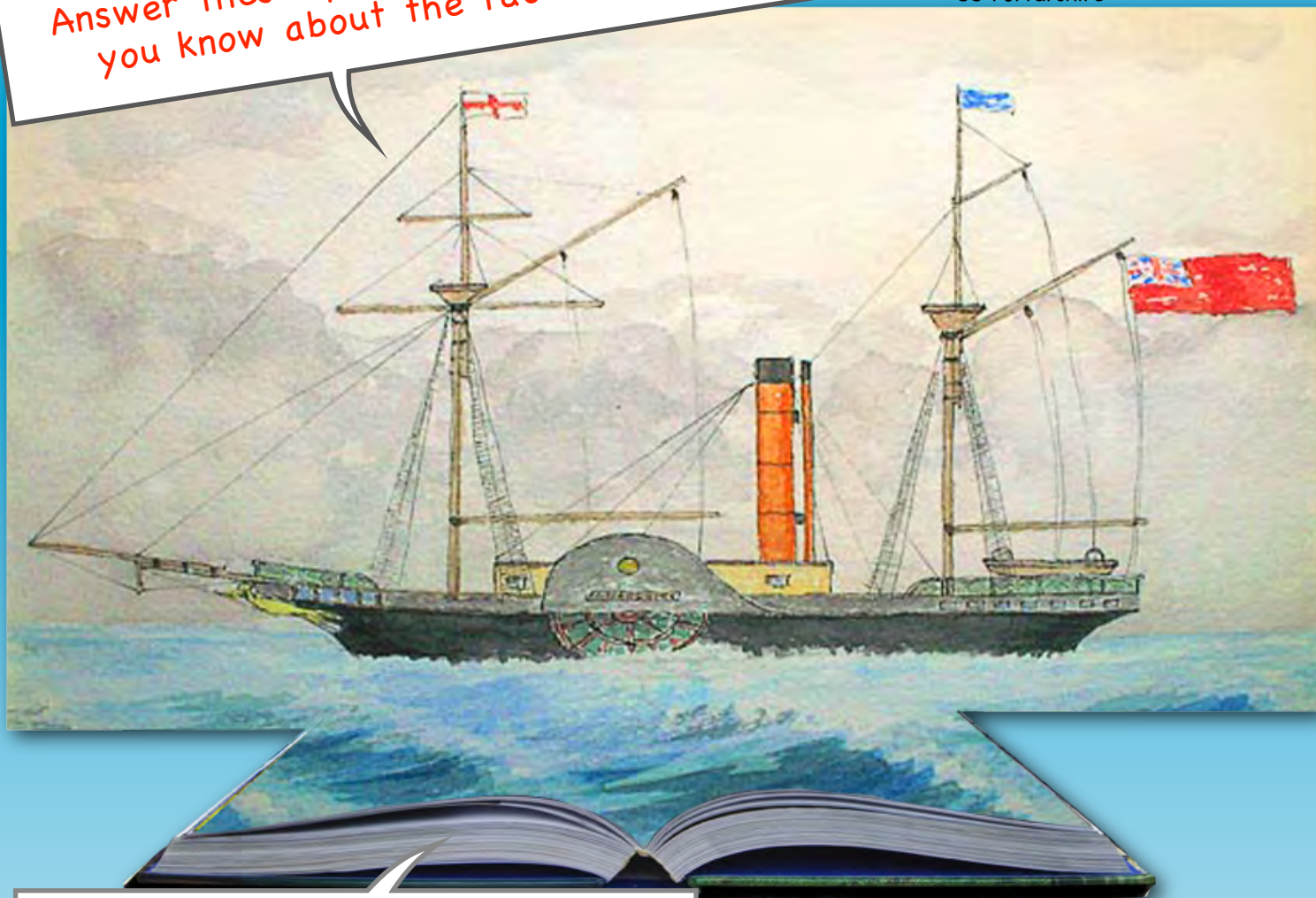
Grace and her father managed to row to the rocks.



# Get to the facts

Answer these questions to see how much you know about the facts of the story.

SS Forfarshire



1 Where are the Farne Islands?

2 What was the name of the ship that was wrecked?

3 When were they spotted by Grace?

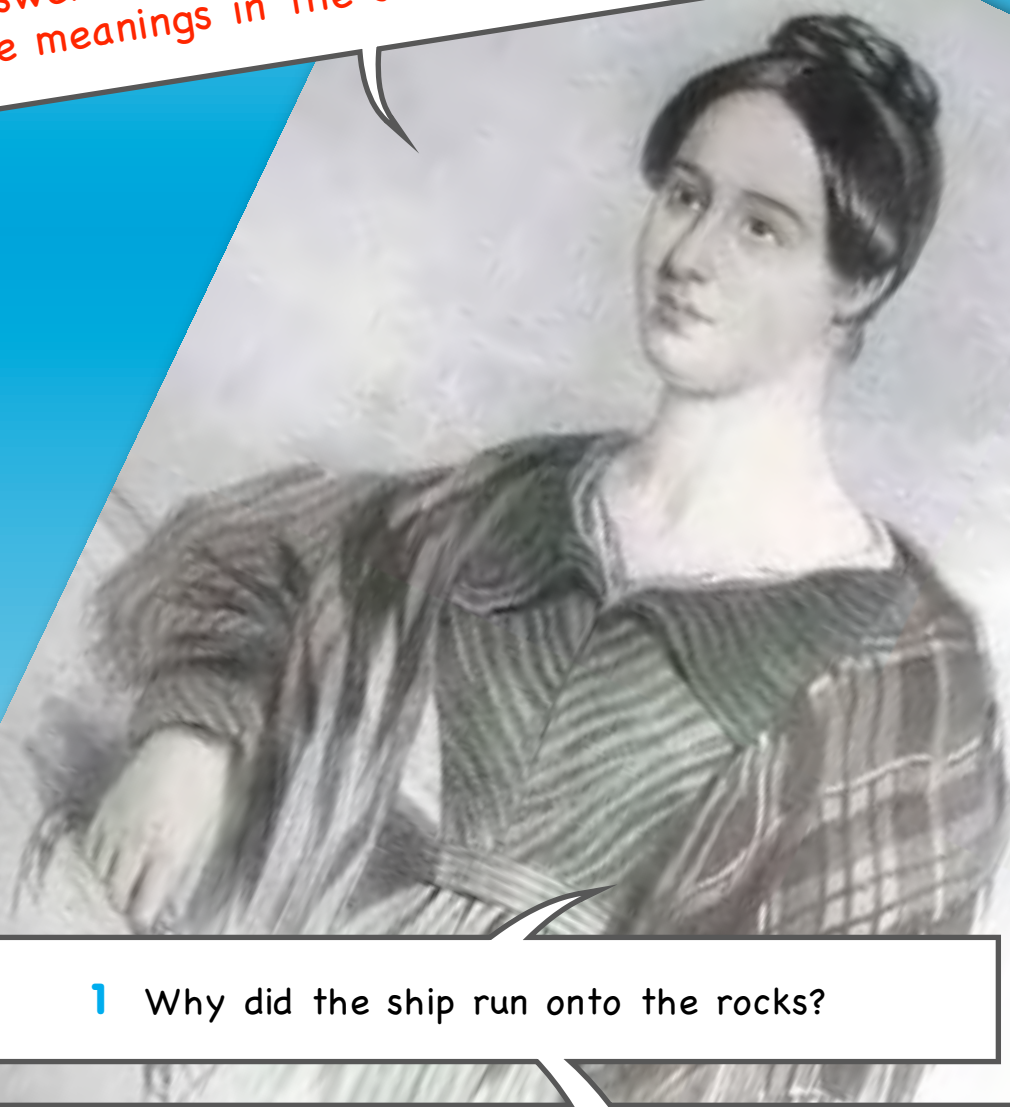
4 How many trips did the rowing boat make?

5 What was the name of the medal?



# Whys and wherefores

Answer these questions to see how much you know about the meanings in the story and how it was written.



1 Why did the ship run onto the rocks?

2 Why did Grace not know about the shipwreck until first light?

3 Why did many newspapers make up stories about Grace?

4 What did Grace really want to do?





# Opinions matter

Answer these questions to give your views and to develop the story.

1 Do you think it was right to make Grace's story even more sensational?

2 Do you think newspapers still do the same thing?

3 Write about whether you were scared by the story.

4 What would you have done in Grace's situation?

5 If you were famous and got lots of letters, what would you do?



Farne Islands lighthouse and rocks.





# Talking it through

It often helps if a group of people get together and discuss a problem.

Grace Darling's memorial.



## Discussion topic: Grace Darling's memorial

Grace Darling's Memorial is at Bamburgh Church, Northumberland, England. This is not her grave. She is buried in a simple grave nearby. The memorial was paid for by the public after her death in 1842. It was placed, so as to be easily seen from the sea. Discuss whether Grace would have approved, or would something else have been more suitable?



# Make a story...

When you read a description it often gives you ideas about how the event might be described differently.

Longstone Lighthouse



## A night on the awful wreck

Imagine you are one of the nine survivors still clinging to the wreck during the long dark hours of night. You are hoping that someone will see you once it is light. Write a story about what goes through your mind in case no one comes.



# Grace Darling

Grace Darling was just an ordinary daughter of a lighthouse keeper. She was born in 1816, the seventh child of a family of nine children. When she was ten her father, William Darling, and his family moved to the remote lighthouse on the Farne Islands, just off the Northumberland coast of NE England.

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