



*The lighthouse*

## Grace Darling

It was just before dawn on a wild September morning in 1838. All night a gale had been blowing. A few miles off the coast of Northumberland the rocky Farne Islands were battered by huge waves.



*The lighthouse keeper's daughter, Grace Darling*

Grace Darling had been up for some time. Her father, the keeper of the Longstone Lighthouse, had kept watch for most of the night. Now that he had gone to bed Grace was on watch. Somebody always had to be near the great light in case it went out.

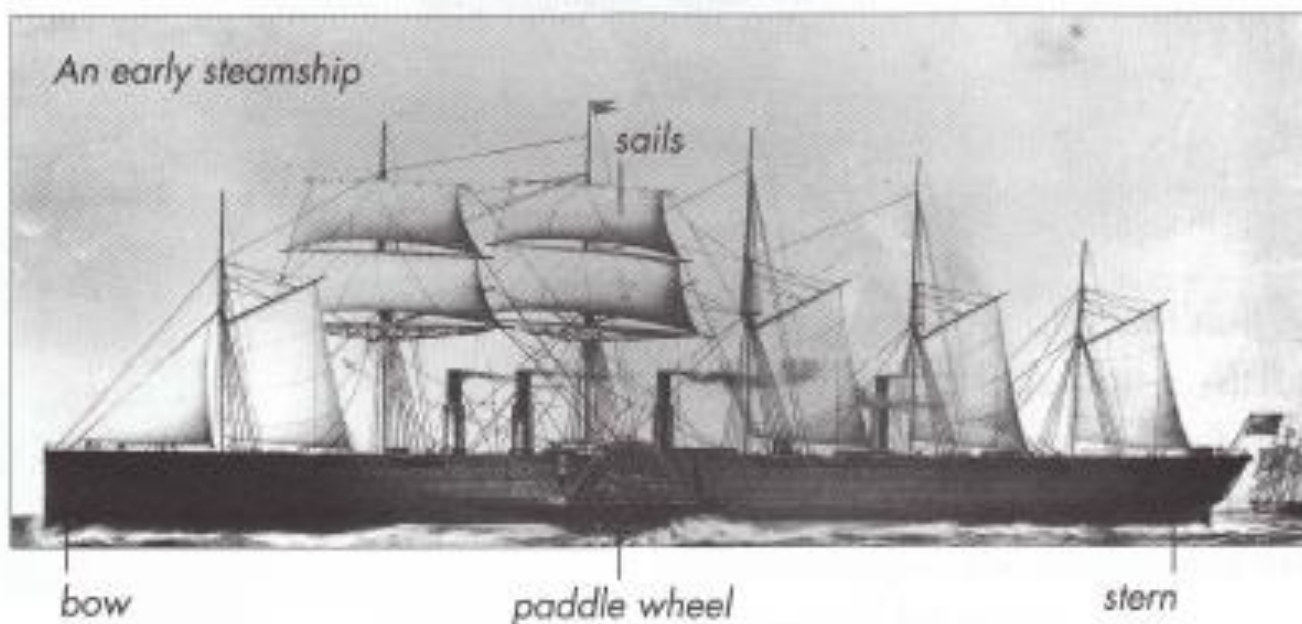
Grace peered out in the grey light across the wildly-tossed sea. Suddenly she saw a strange shape on the rocks a mile away. It was a wrecked ship!

She ran to tell her father.



The ship Grace had seen was called the *Forfarshire*. It carried about 60 people.

*Lighthouse keeper, William Darling*



The *Forfarshire* was one of the earliest steamships. It had a huge paddle wheel on each side and sails for emergencies, because steamships were not very reliable. On this voyage, the boilers had sprung a leak so the engines were useless.

That night the sea was very rough. The captain of the *Forfarshire* had tried to reach shelter but the boat had been driven onto the sharp rocks of the island.



When the ship was flung upon the rocks, it had split in two across the middle. Most of the passengers and crew had been in the stern of the ship and were swept away.

The ship's bow was stuck on the rocks and 12 people clung to the wreck. They were praying for daylight and for the tide to fall. Three of those who waited died.

William Darling, Grace's father, realised that he would have to try to rescue the survivors before they were washed away. He knew he could not row the rescue boat alone.

Grace persuaded him to let her row with him and help him, even though the sea was very dangerous. She removed her petticoats to make rowing easier. Grace was very slim and could only manage one oar. Her father took two.

The journey was terrible and they had to row for nearly a mile without stopping. The journey back would be much more difficult against the tide and gales, and would be impossible for the two of them alone. They just had to hope the survivors would help them to row.



When the Darlings reached the island they found nine survivors. They looked terrified. Their clothes were soaked. The wreck of the *Forfarshire* could still be seen.

It was breaking up on the rocks. The mast hung broken, and the sails were being torn to ribbons in the howling gale.



*Grace and her father struggle through the storm to rescue the survivors*

William Darling leapt onto the rocks. Grace was left alone in the boat trying to keep it steady. They took five survivors on board – a woman called Sarah Dawson, who was cradling her two dead babies, and four men.

The journey back was much easier with the others to help with the rowing, but they still had to battle through the cold, raging seas and against the tide.



Grace and her mother looked after the survivors in the lighthouse, while her father and two of the *Forfarshire's* crew went back to rescue those left on the rocks.

The rescue of nine people by Grace Darling and her father was reported in many newspapers.



Grace and her father were given many awards for their bravery. One of these was a silver medal from the National Institution for the Preservation of Life from Shipwreck. This later became the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI).

*The RNLI Silver Medal*

# English Homework

1. Where was the lighthouse Grace Darling lived in?

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2. Why did someone have to stay on watch all night?

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3. What did Grace see on the rocks in the distance?

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4. Why did Grace go with her father to rescue the survivors?

To help her father row.

She wanted to go to the island.

It was her turn to be on watch.

She was lonely.

5. *When the Darlings reached the island, they found the survivors. They looked terrified. Their clothes were soaked. The wreck of the Forfarshire could still be seen.*

**Find** and **copy** the word that the writer has used to show that the survivors clinging to the rocks were wet.

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6. Who helped Grace and her father row back?

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7. Why do you think Grace and her father could not rescue all the survivors at once?

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8. Match these up to show the events of the story.

Grace and her mother

was given as a reward for bravery.

William and 2 of the survivors

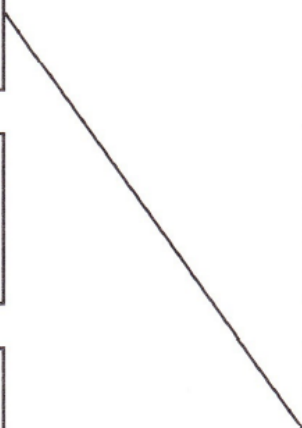
was reported in many newspapers.

The rescue

looked after the survivors in the lighthouse.

A silver medal

went back to rescue more people.



9. (a) How many people did the Forfarshire carry?

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(b) How many people did Grace and her father rescue?

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