



Lightship

Brian Floca

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You may never have heard of a lightship. Once, lightships anchored on waters across America, on the oceans and in the Great Lakes, floating where lighthouses could not be built. Smaller than most ships, but more steadfast, too, they held their spots, through calm and storm, to guide sailors toward safe waters. In these pages one lightship and her crew (and cat) again hold their place. The crew goes again from bow to stern, from keel to mast, to run their engines, shine their lights, and sound their horns. They run the small ship that guides the large ships. They are the crew (and cat) that work to make the ocean safe, that hold their place, so other ships can sail. Come aboard!

Lightship Details

Date : Published March 6th 2007 by Atheneum/Richard Jackson Books

ISBN : 9781416924364

Author : Brian Floca

Format : Hardcover 48 pages

Genre : Childrens, Picture Books, Nonfiction

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From Reader Review Lightship for online ebook

Benjamin Elliott says

clean attractive illustrations, and the factual text is given a flow and lightness that makes it easy to read.

Mary says

I love finding quality non-fiction picture books for my boys. So many of the fact-based non-fiction books are super short and uninspiring. LIGHTSHIP has engaging illustrations with a central narrative that unfolds as the reader learns about the ship and her crew.

Brenda says

A Lightship was used to mark navigational where it wasn't possible to build a lighthouse. They no longer exist.

This book is well illustrated with friendly colors. The text was simple but interesting. Also, the author's note at the beginning and end inform the reader (parent or teacher) so that the child can learn even more background about these historic ships. My husband loved the book and we both wished we had owned it when our kids were little.

Even with the simplicity of the book - this might be a nice visual history to accompany units about the ocean or ships. As I read it, I kept thinking about the little lightships as symbols of hope and light - perhaps the book could represent such a theme to older students.

Jim says

Terrific book about a vessel i'd not heard of - lightships. Floating lighthouses required to wait in place no matter the weather. Floca's writing builds suspense.

Why do they wait?

Becky B says

Before machines were built that could float in places that needed a lighthouse but where a lighthouse couldn't be built, there were lightships. Floca tells what life was like for a crew on a lightship and the important role they played on the seas.

There's a group of young readers absolutely fascinated by any kind of transportation. This is a good nonfiction pick for those readers who think they've read about all the cars, planes, and boats out there. The book also serves to record for modern memory a historic service that has faded from common knowledge.

Justine says

Title: Lightship

Author: Brian Floca

Genre: Sibert Medal

Theme(s): Loyalty, companionship, teamwork

Opening line/sentence: "Here is a ship that holds her place."

Brief Book Summary: Lightship is an informational book that takes readers on a journey. Ambrose is a ship that holds her place. She is a lightship that keeps the night sea lit up. The book is about the crew and the hardships that come and go when floating in the sea.

Professional Recommendation/Review #1:

The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books (Starred Review):

What could possibly be the *raison d'être* of a ship that puts out to sea and then, well, stays put ("She holds to one sure spot as other ships sail by. She waits")? As Floca guides his audience on a tour of the Ambrose, viewers begin to understand just what she's waiting for—the need to warn passing vessels that danger is imminent. Most of her time is spent in patience, keeping the engines and crew in working order, keeping the anchor in position, and dodging (with the occasional salvo of salty verbiage: "#@*%&!") the huge cargo ships that barrel down upon her closer than they should. But "when the fog comes creeping in, the crew knows what to do. They sound their horn so loud the whole ship SHAKES" ("BEEOOH," says the sound bubble for the horn in huge letters) so the other ships at sea will navigate past underwater perils and safely into port. While the prose unreels in graceful simplicity, line-and-watercolor paintings capture the inner working of the Ambrose and the changeable environment in which she stands guard. Even the endpapers are worth close inspection, featuring a labeled cutaway view of the Ambrose, from the deck hoist fore to the gin rummy game aft. Listeners are bound to be so caught up in the immediacy of the present-tense narration that Floca's revelation in a concluding note may come as a bit of a disappointment—the last lightship station was closed down in 1983. Still, there's always room in the picture-book collection for books about heroes past or present, and these guys will stand up (okay, float) with the best of them. EB

Professional Recommendation/Review #2:

The Horn Book:

Unlike many ships, which set sail and go interesting places, the job a lightship is to hold its place at sea. When other ships might try to avoid bad weather, it's the job of a lightship to stay put and "sound their horn so loud the whole ship SHAKES." Without running aground on the shoals of too much or too little information, Floca skillfully details the crew, equipment, and routine for all aboard. He's especially good at working in extra information through pictures with a minimum of words—a dinghy approaches, with a speech balloon saying "Mail's here!" (Speech balloons also catch the authentic flavor of seaboard dialogue, as when a larger ship comes too close and a sailor on the lightship shakes his fist and lets fly with "#@*%&!") The watercolor-and-ink illustrations gracefully depict the beauty of the ocean on both calm and turbulent days as well as the massive vessels the lightship protects, all seen from many perspectives. Endpapers include a cross-section diagram labeling everything from the gin rummy game taking place in the stern to the anchor at the bow, and an author's note at the end explains (in letters too tiny for most child readers) that the last U.S. lightship was retired in 1983, making the present tense of the main text a decidedly odd choice. Susan Dove Lempke.

Response to Two Professional Reviews:

I agree with the reviews in that the illustrations are very beautiful. I definitely think that the focus of the book is the illustrations because the words that accompany each page are very minimal and simple. Floca did a great job educating readers about what lightships did in a very fun, but touching way. There are a lot of emotions felt on each page about trust and teamwork.

Evaluation of Literary Elements:

One thing I really loved about this book was end pages. As soon as you open the book, there was a beautiful water color illustration of the Ambrose with each part of the ship labeled. Because this book is targeted for students ages 3-7, I think an end page such as this definitely keeps young readers interested. Rather than explaining in long text, having labels makes it easier to learn the parts of the ship. As mentioned in the section above, the text throughout the book is not too difficult. There is minimal text and it is very simple, which allows children more time to look at the pictures on each page.

Consideration of Instructional Application:

I was never aware of the role that lightships played until I came across this book. A great lesson would be to first show children a video of what lightships do such as this: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NOsFL...> and then read the book. Afterwards, students can draw and write about what they learned. Even though this book was targeted for a younger age group, I definitely think this activity would be more appealing for grades 2-4, especially because the video I plan to show with it is a little complex for pre-schoolers.

(NS) - Heather Hayman says

This powerful story, written by Brian Floca, is an actual nonfiction account of a lightship, which was once anchored across America. It travelled to places where lighthouses were impossible to be built in order to guide ships into safer water. The illustrations literally make you feel as though you are one of the crewmen, where life is depicted aboard one of these vessels. Whether they are cooking, sleeping or working, you become a part of their daily operation. This book also brings to life the hazards involved and is fascinating to every child who ever showed interest in the sea.

The illustrations are so gripping in this book that you are simply drawn to it. It is not only filled with wonderful text, but is extremely educational as well. Fabulous nonfiction material for primary grades is not always easy to find, but this is a must on the list for any classroom library. Any kid with any type of interest in maritime topics will be fully engaged in this book time and again.

Ekassel says

1. Genre and Age Level: This is a concept book about lightships. It could also be considered historical fiction, as lightships do not exist anymore. It should be used for upper elementary (2nd-4th), even though it is labeled as ages 4-7.

2. Summary: This book tells the story of lightships, explaining the job of these ships. The life of a sailor on these ships is explained and a tour of the ship is given through illustrations in the book.

3. Curriculum Connection: This book would be appropriate for a lesson on ships, particularly during the 19th and 20th centuries. Technology can also be incorporated, as these ships no longer exist and have been replaced by new technology. This book is also a good introduction to nonfiction literature.

4. Critique

a. Literary Area for comment: Accuracy

b. The factual information is indeed accurate, as it describes the many parts of the lightship. It is appropriate for elementary students because it presents this information in an easy to understand story format that helps them from becoming overwhelmed. The text and the illustrations work together to accurately portray life at sea for a lightship. One negative, however, is that lightships no longer exist, and this is not mentioned in the main text. It is explained in the author's note at the end, but the average elementary reader would probably not come to the conclusion that this is a historical book.

c. The author puts much work into making this story as accurate as possible. To begin, the endpaper contain labeled illustrations of a lightship, showing where everything is on the ship. Actual symbols from navigational charts were used on the first title page. The author based the story and illustrations on a real lightship, Light Vessel 87, found docked at the South Street Seaport Museum in New York City.

Daniela says

Excellent description of the old lightships that used to lead ships safely into harbor without moving. A good narrative nonfiction read aloud with plenty of details to help you understand the subject. Read to K-2 students. Several made the connection with lighthouses.

Rachel Smith says

Brian Floca creates some cool children's lit that show distinct characteristics of ships and other locomotives and mechanical things. Students who fancy mechanics of any kind get to dive into a deeper look at the creations that fascinate them and their purpose. I like this one especially because it's unique and introduces readers to a particular ship they may have not heard of.

Rosemary Szczygiel says

Pre-K - 3 Picture book. Why wouldn't I give this book 5 stars? Only technical correctness remains the one criticism to address, and I cannot address that. If the parts of the ship and the daily life of the crew is described correctly, that's great. Still, it's a great story of a great boat, with a great job (keeping others safe) and the illustrations are fantastic! Floca is a watercolor master.

Sarah says

In the narrative nonfiction style that he wrote Locomotive, Floca teaches us about lightships that were used to warn ships in places where lighthouses could not be built. Love his art style too. Guaranteed to please

gear-heads and boat lovers.

Nonfiction text feature: diagram and labels

Lydiathekicker says

Lighthouses and lightSHIPS. Who knew? The last lightship retired in 1983. Interesting read.

Erin B says

Nonfiction (informational)

Heather says

I was intrigued by Brian Floca's *Lightship* because they are mentioned several times in Arthur Ransome's *Peter Duck* which is part of the *Swallows and Amazons* series. I didn't have a good understanding of what they do until I read Floca's book. And he even slips in some tribute to Edward Ardizzone to the delight of observant fans. He is one of my new favorite authors. Check out his other books like *Locomotive* and *Moonshot*.
