

FLEYDO ENGLISH SCHOOL

Story Material

The Lighthouse Keeper's Secret

A gripping mystery about a teenager who uncovers a decades-old secret hidden inside an abandoned lighthouse.

Level: B1 (Intermediate)**Age Group:** Teens (11-16)**Skill:** Reading**Topic:** History & Mystery**Duration:** ~45 minutes**Pages:** 22 story pages

Learning Objectives

- ✓ Read and understand a B1-level mystery story
- ✓ Learn 18 new vocabulary words in context
- ✓ Practise reading comprehension with multiple-choice questions
- ✓ Understand narrative structure and character development
- ✓ Discuss themes of friendship, courage, and heritage preservation

Part 1 — The Story

Chapter 1: The New Town

Liam pressed his forehead against the cold car window and watched the grey sky stretch over an endless coastline. His mother was driving carefully along a narrow road that curved between steep green hills and the sea. They had been driving for almost four hours, and Liam had not said a single word since they had left their old flat in Manchester. He did not want to move. He did not want to leave his friends, his school, or the city where he had grown up. But his mother had got a new job as a marine biologist at a research station in Crestmouth, a small fishing village on the Welsh coast, and there was nothing he could do about it.

"You are going to love it here," his mother said for the hundredth time, glancing at him in the rear-view mirror. "Fresh air, the ocean right outside our door, and the most incredible wildlife. Did you know there are dolphins in the bay?" Liam shrugged. He did not care about dolphins. He cared about his best friend Omar, who was probably playing football in the park right now without him. He cared about the corner shop where Mr. Patel always saved him the last chocolate croissant. He cared about everything he had just lost. The car turned a final corner, and suddenly the village appeared below them: a cluster of stone cottages, a small harbour with colourful fishing boats, and beyond it all, standing alone on a rocky headland, a tall white lighthouse.

"There it is," his mother said quietly, almost to herself. "Crestmouth." Their new house was a narrow stone cottage on the high street, squeezed between a bakery and a bookshop. It smelled of old wood and sea salt. Liam's bedroom was on the top floor, with a small window that looked out over the rooftops towards the harbour. If he leaned far enough to the right, he could see the lighthouse on the headland, its white tower catching the last light of the afternoon sun. He dropped his bag on the bare mattress, sat on the floor, and texted Omar: "Arrived. It is basically the end of the world." Omar replied with a sad face emoji and the words: "RIP mate."

Chapter 2: The Girl at the Harbour

The next morning, Liam woke up to the sound of seagulls screaming outside his window. It took him a few seconds to remember where he was. He pulled on a hoodie and walked down to the harbour, partly because he was bored and partly because there was no Wi-Fi yet and his phone was useless. The harbour was quiet. A few fishermen were mending nets near their boats, and an old man was painting the hull of a small vessel called 'The Mermaid's Tail'. Liam sat on a stone wall and watched the waves roll in. It was peaceful, he had to admit, even if he was not ready to admit it out loud.

"You must be the new one," said a voice to his left. Liam turned and saw a girl about his age standing on the harbour wall. She had short brown hair, a yellow raincoat tied around her waist, and a pair of binoculars hanging from her neck. "News travels fast in a village this size," she added with a grin. "I am Ava." "Liam," he replied, not sure what else to say. "Are you always this chatty?" Ava asked, sitting down next to him without being invited. "I am

watching the puffins on Crag Island. Want to look?" She held out the binoculars. Liam hesitated, then took them. Through the lenses, he could see a small rocky island about half a mile offshore, covered with hundreds of colourful little birds with bright orange beaks. Despite himself, he smiled. "They look ridiculous," he said. Ava laughed. "They are brilliant. Come on, I will show you around the village."

Chapter 3: The Abandoned Lighthouse

Ava turned out to be an excellent tour guide. She showed Liam the fish and chip shop, the tiny library, the cliff path that led to a hidden beach, and finally, the lighthouse on the headland. Up close, it was bigger than Liam had expected. The white paint was peeling, and several windows were cracked or boarded up. A rusty chain hung across the doorway with a faded sign that read: DANGER — KEEP OUT. "Nobody has been inside for thirty years," Ava said, her voice dropping to almost a whisper. "Not since the last keeper left."

"What happened to the keeper?" Liam asked. Ava looked out at the sea, as if choosing her words carefully. "His name was Thomas Crane. He was the lighthouse keeper for over twenty years. One night in 1995, during a terrible storm, he simply vanished. The coast guard found the lighthouse door open, the lamp still burning, and his dinner half-eaten on the table. But Thomas was gone. They searched for weeks — the cliffs, the sea, the caves along the coast. They never found him." A cold breeze blew in from the ocean, and Liam shivered. "Do people think he drowned?" "Some do," Ava said. "But my grandmother says that Thomas knew the sea better than anyone. She does not believe he would have gone out in a storm like that. She thinks there is more to the story." Liam looked at the old building. Something about the broken windows and the silence felt like an invitation.

Chapter 4: Breaking the Rules

For the next two days, Liam could not stop thinking about Thomas Crane and the lighthouse. He tried to focus on unpacking his room and exploring the village, but the image of the abandoned tower kept pulling at his mind. On the third evening, just before sunset, he walked back to the headland alone. The chain across the door was old and loose. One strong pull and it came away from the wall with a shower of rust and dust. Liam looked around — the path was empty, and the village was far behind him. He pushed the heavy wooden door. It groaned loudly, but it opened.

Inside, the lighthouse smelled of damp stone and something else — old paper, perhaps, or candle wax. The ground floor was a circular room with a stone floor. A wooden staircase spiralled upward, disappearing into the darkness above. Against one wall stood a desk, a chair, and a row of shelves. Everything was covered in a thick layer of dust, but it was all still there, exactly as Thomas Crane must have left it: a mug on the desk, a coat hanging on a hook, a pair of boots by the door. It felt less like an abandoned building and more like a room that was waiting for someone to come back. Liam ran his fingers along the dusty shelf. His hand touched something solid — a leather-bound notebook, small and thick, hidden behind a row of weather reports. He pulled it out and opened it. The pages were covered in handwriting, but the words made no sense. They were not in English, or any language Liam

recognised. They were in some kind of code.

Chapter 5: The Coded Journal

The next morning, Liam showed the journal to Ava. They sat on the harbour wall, the notebook open between them, squinting at the tiny, careful handwriting. "It is definitely a substitution cipher," Ava said, pulling out her own notebook and a pencil. "Each letter has been replaced by a different letter or symbol. We just need to find the pattern." Liam stared at her. "How do you know about ciphers?" "I want to study cryptography at university," she said matter-of-factly. "I have been practising code-breaking since I was nine. This is basically my dream come true." She pointed at a string of symbols on the first page. "Look — this three-letter group appears more often than any other. In English, the most common three-letter word is 'the'. If we assume these symbols mean T, H, and E, we can start mapping the rest."

It took them two full afternoons, three bags of crisps, and a lot of frustrated sighing, but by Thursday evening they had cracked the first five entries. The journal belonged to Thomas Crane, and the entries were dated from the last six months before he disappeared. The decoded text revealed that Thomas had been worried about something. He wrote about strange boats arriving at night, about lights in the caves below the cliffs, and about people he did not recognise walking on the headland after dark. He had tried to report his concerns to the local police, but they had told him he was imagining things. "He was not imagining things," Ava said quietly, her eyes wide. "He was documenting something real. And someone did not want him to talk about it."

Chapter 6: The Cave

The journal mentioned a specific cave — Thomas called it "the Cathedral" because of its high, arched ceiling. According to his notes, the cave was accessible only at low tide through a narrow passage in the cliffs below the lighthouse. Liam and Ava checked the tide tables and planned their visit for Saturday morning, when the tide would be at its lowest point. They brought torches, waterproof boots, and a camera. The passage was exactly where Thomas had described it: a gap in the rock face, barely wide enough for one person to squeeze through. Inside, the cave opened up dramatically into a vast space with walls of dark grey stone that glistened with moisture.

"Wow," Liam breathed, shining his torch across the ceiling. The cave was enormous, at least thirty metres wide and twenty metres high. But what caught their attention was not the size of the cave. It was what was inside it. Along one wall, stacked neatly in rows, were dozens of old wooden crates. Most of them had rotted and collapsed over the years, but some were still intact. Ava knelt beside the nearest one and carefully lifted the lid. Inside, wrapped in oilcloth, were objects that made both of them gasp: pottery, small bronze figures, coins, and fragments of decorated metal that looked incredibly old. "These are artefacts," Ava whispered. "Archaeological artefacts. Really old ones." She carefully turned a small bronze figure in her hands. "This could be Iron Age. Maybe even older."

Chapter 7: Putting the Pieces Together

Back at Ava's house, they spread everything out on the kitchen table: the decoded journal entries, photographs from the cave, and notes from their research at the village library. A picture was beginning to form. In the early 1990s, a construction company had been planning to build a large holiday resort on the headland near the lighthouse. However, local regulations stated that if important archaeological remains were found on the site, the construction could not go ahead. Thomas Crane, during his walks along the cliffs, had stumbled upon the cave and its incredible collection of ancient artefacts. He had been about to report his discovery to the heritage authorities when the boats started coming at night.

"Someone was removing the artefacts," Liam said, reading through the journal entries again. "Thomas wrote that the crates were being taken out by boat, a few at a time, so nobody would notice." Ava nodded. "If the artefacts disappeared, there would be no evidence of an archaeological site, and the construction could go ahead." "But the resort was never built," Liam pointed out. "What happened?" Ava pulled out an old newspaper from the library archives. The headline read: DEVELOPER ABANDONS HEADLAND PROJECT. "The company went bankrupt before they could start building," she said. "The money ran out. But by then, Thomas had already disappeared, and whoever was moving the artefacts had stopped because there was no longer any reason to hide them." "So the artefacts are still in the cave," Liam said. "Exactly. And nobody knows they are there except us."

Chapter 8: The Right Thing to Do

That evening, Liam sat in his bedroom and stared out of the window at the lighthouse. The moon was full, and the white tower glowed softly against the dark sky. He thought about Thomas Crane, who had tried to do the right thing and had paid a terrible price for it. He thought about the artefacts in the cave, pieces of history that had been hidden and forgotten. And he thought about what he and Ava should do next. Part of him wanted to keep the secret. It was exciting, and it felt like it belonged to them. But another part of him knew that was selfish. These artefacts were important — they belonged to everyone, to the village, to history. They needed to be protected properly, not left in a damp cave where they would eventually be destroyed by the sea.

The next morning, he called Ava. "We need to tell someone," he said. "I know," she replied. She had been thinking the same thing. They decided to contact Professor Meredith Chen, a well-known archaeologist at Cardiff University whose work Ava had read about online. They wrote a careful email, attaching photographs and a summary of the journal entries. The professor replied within two hours. Her message was short and urgent: "Do not touch anything else. I am coming to Crestmouth tomorrow. If what you have found is genuine, this could be one of the most significant archaeological discoveries in Wales in the last fifty years."

Chapter 9: The Discovery

Professor Chen arrived the next day with a team of three researchers, a van full of equipment, and an energy that reminded Liam of a detective arriving at a crime scene. She was a small woman with silver-streaked hair and sharp, intelligent eyes that missed nothing. When Liam and Ava led her through the narrow passage into the Cathedral cave, she stopped in the entrance and stood completely still for a full minute. "Remarkable," she finally said, her voice barely above a whisper. Her team spent three days carefully documenting every object in the cave. They photographed, measured, and catalogued over two hundred artefacts, ranging from Iron Age tools and pottery to Roman coins and medieval jewellery.

"What you have found here is extraordinary," Professor Chen told Liam and Ava on the third evening, as they sat in the village pub drinking hot chocolate. "This cave has been used continuously for over two thousand years. The artefacts tell the story of every community that has lived on this coastline, from the Iron Age to the Middle Ages. It is an incredibly rare and complete record." She paused and looked at them both with a serious expression. "You should also know that we found something else. In a smaller cave connected to the Cathedral, we found Thomas Crane's emergency supplies: a sleeping bag, tinned food, water containers, and a second journal. He had been hiding in the cave system for several days before he disappeared. The final entry in the second journal says he planned to leave by boat to reach the authorities in Cardiff. He did not trust anyone in the village."

Chapter 10: Answers and New Beginnings

The news of the discovery spread quickly. Television crews arrived in Crestmouth, reporters knocked on doors, and the village was suddenly the centre of national attention. The headland was declared a protected heritage site, which meant it could never be built on. Professor Chen announced plans for a proper archaeological excavation that would take several years. Liam and Ava were interviewed for a BBC documentary about the cave. Local historians began researching Thomas Crane's disappearance with new determination. A retired fisherman came forward and admitted that he had helped Thomas leave by boat that night in 1995. Thomas had made it safely to the mainland and had eventually moved to Scotland, where he had lived quietly under a different name.

"He was alive all along?" Liam asked Ava, hardly able to believe it. "He is eighty-two years old now," Ava said, reading from a news article on her phone. "He says he has been waiting thirty years for someone to find the cave and tell the truth. He said he never came back because he was afraid." Three weeks later, Thomas Crane returned to Crestmouth for the first time in three decades. The whole village turned out to welcome him. He was a thin, quiet man with white hair and kind eyes. He shook hands with Liam and Ava and said, simply, "Thank you for finishing what I started." Liam looked out at the lighthouse, now surrounded by scaffolding as restoration work began. He thought about the day he had arrived in this village, angry and lonely, convinced that his life was over. He had been so wrong.

The End

That evening, Liam sat on the harbour wall with Ava, watching the sun set over the sea. The sky was painted in shades of orange and gold, and the lighthouse stood tall against the horizon, its fresh white paint catching the last light. "Do you still hate it here?" Ava asked. Liam smiled. "I never said I hated it." "You did not have to," she laughed. "Your face said everything." He looked at the village, the harbour, the boats, and the headland where so much history lay hidden beneath the cliffs. "I think," he said slowly, "this might actually be the best place I have ever lived." Ava grinned. "Obviously. I could have told you that on day one." They sat in comfortable silence as the first stars appeared above Crestmouth, and somewhere on the headland, the old lighthouse began to glow again.

Part 2 — Key Vocabulary

Study these important words from the story. They will help you understand the text and expand your vocabulary.

Word	Type	Definition
marine biologist	<i>noun</i>	a scientist who studies living things in the sea
headland	<i>noun</i>	a narrow piece of land that sticks out into the sea
vanished	<i>verb</i>	disappeared suddenly and completely
abandoned	<i>adjective</i>	left empty; no longer used or cared for
spiral	<i>verb/noun</i>	to move or be shaped in a continuous curve going upward
substitution cipher	<i>noun</i>	a secret code where each letter is replaced by another
cryptography	<i>noun</i>	the study of writing and solving secret codes
documented	<i>verb</i>	recorded facts or events in written form
accessible	<i>adjective</i>	able to be reached or entered
artefacts	<i>noun</i>	objects made by humans in the past, of historical interest
heritage	<i>noun</i>	traditions, buildings, or objects of a country's history
bankrupt	<i>adjective</i>	unable to pay debts; having no money left
excavation	<i>noun</i>	the process of carefully digging up objects from the ground
determination	<i>noun</i>	the quality of continuing to try hard despite difficulties
scaffolding	<i>noun</i>	a temporary metal frame around a building during repairs
restoration	<i>noun</i>	repairing something old to return it to its original condition
catalogued	<i>verb</i>	made an organised list of items with descriptions
significant	<i>adjective</i>	important enough to have an effect or be noticed

Part 3 — Comprehension Quiz

Answer these questions about the story. Circle the correct answer.

Question 1

Why did Liam move to Crestmouth?

- A) He wanted to live by the sea
- B) His mother got a job as a marine biologist
- C) He was sent to a boarding school
- D) His father bought a fishing boat

Question 2

What was Ava doing when she first met Liam?

- A) Swimming in the harbour
- B) Painting a boat
- C) Watching puffins with binoculars
- D) Reading at the library

Question 3

What happened to Thomas Crane in 1995?

- A) He retired and moved away
- B) He vanished during a storm
- C) He sold the lighthouse
- D) He became a fisherman

Question 4

What did Liam find hidden on the shelf in the lighthouse?

- A) A treasure map
- B) A leather-bound coded journal
- C) A set of old keys
- D) A box of gold coins

Question 5

How did Ava manage to break the code?

- A) She used a computer program
- B) She found a key taped to the wall
- C) She identified the most common three-letter word pattern
- D) Thomas told her

Question 6

What was hidden inside the cave called 'the Cathedral'?

- A) Pirate treasure and weapons
- B) Ancient archaeological artefacts in wooden crates
- C) A secret underground laboratory
- D) Paintings by a famous artist

Question 7

Why were the artefacts being removed by boat?

- A) To sell them to a museum
- B) To protect them from flooding
- C) To hide evidence so a resort could be built
- D) To transport them to a university

Question 8**Who did Liam and Ava contact about their discovery?**

- A) The local police
- B) A television reporter
- C) Professor Meredith Chen, an archaeologist
- D) The village mayor

Question 9**What happened to Thomas Crane after he left Crestmouth?**

- A) He drowned at sea
- B) He lived quietly in Scotland under a different name
- C) He moved to France
- D) He was never found

Question 10**How did Liam feel about Crestmouth at the end?**

- A) He still wanted to go back to Manchester
- B) He thought it was boring
- C) He believed it might be the best place he had ever lived
- D) He planned to leave

Answer Key

#	Ans	Question
1	B	Why did Liam move to Crestmouth?
2	C	What was Ava doing when she first met Liam?
3	B	What happened to Thomas Crane in 1995?
4	B	What did Liam find hidden on the shelf in the lighthouse?
5	C	How did Ava manage to break the code?
6	B	What was hidden inside the cave called 'the Cathedral'?
7	C	Why were the artefacts being removed by boat?
8	C	Who did Liam and Ava contact about their discovery?
9	B	What happened to Thomas Crane after he left Crestmouth?
10	C	How did Liam feel about Crestmouth at the end?

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