



TEACHERS' NOTES

The Lighthouse at Pelican Rock

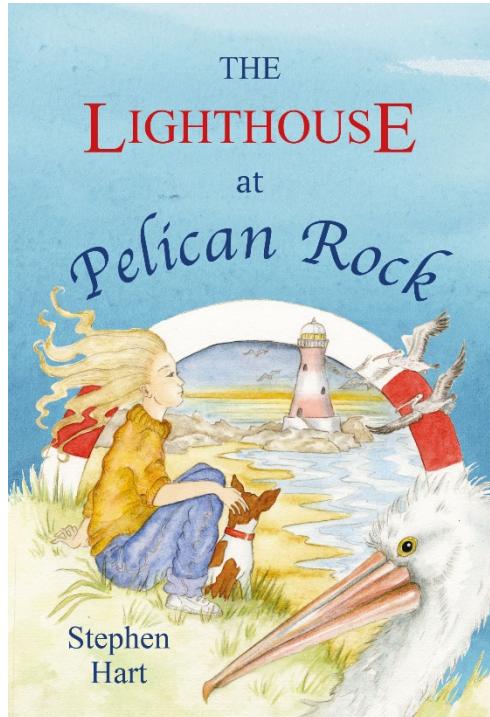
By Stephen Hart

Cover and internal illustrations by Kathy Creamer

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About the story:

After 12-year-old Megan Evans almost dies, she is packed off to the tiny, remote coastal village of Pelican Rock to recover. Sure she is going to be bored in a place which doesn't even have the internet, she discovers there is much more to Pelican Rock that she expected. Are the pelicans really magic? What is the secret of the ruined lighthouse? Has she found the place where she belongs? And, perhaps, not just a place...

This first novel by talented new writer Stephen Hart is a magical, moving, memorable story that will grip readers from the start.

A joy to read: the kind of story that made me want to be a writer. (Cassandra Golds)



About the author:

Stephen Hart was born in Singapore to English parents, and emigrated from England with his family when he was seven.

At one stage, Stephen was an archaeologist and travelled the world to investigate its past – a strange place that we can never really know but can visit in our imaginations. He no longer works in archaeology but his fascination with the unknowable remains.

He loves lighthouses and other magical places and thinks reality is something that happens to other people. He likes all wombats, most dogs, some cats, and thinks pelicans are very special.

Stephen lives with his family in a magical part of Sydney but won't tell anyone where that is. They have to find it for themselves!

About the illustrator:



Kathy Creamer is a children's illustrator and writer who has been published by Oxford University Press, Reed International, Christmas Press and Second Look. Kathy has been illustrating children's books for a number of years. She has a Master of Arts degree in Children's Book Illustration from the Cambridge School of Art at Anglia Ruskin University in England, where she attended lectures given by many prominent illustrators, such as Quentin Blake, James Mayhew, John Lawrence and Martin Salisbury. Kathy especially enjoys writing and creating her own picturebooks, and illustrating other children's books aimed at the 4 to 10 year-old age group. She works mainly with watercolour, colour pencil, ink and wash. She has a varied style, and enjoys creating humour and movement in her images. Kathy has a list of favourite illustrators, but if asked to choose, then Shirley Hughes would be at the top, along with Graeme Base, Jackie Morris, Julie Vivas, Chris Riddell, Anne Spudvilas, Raymond Briggs, and Maurice Sendak. Her website is at www.kathycramer.com Her work can also be seen at www.scbwi.org

Something from the author:

Many years ago, in the days before Photoshop was born, a friend and I were playing with developing our own black-and-white prints in a darkroom, superimposing images to achieve different effects. Among other efforts, she came up with a photograph of a lighthouse with a flight of pelicans and a child's face in the foreground. I loved it and she gave it to me - I have it still.

At the time, I didn't know there was a story there, just waiting to escape, but years later, when I found the photo in the bottom of a drawer, the story came to me. I had just come back from a trip to the south coast of New South Wales, which contains many magical places you can just stumble across. One of them, the little seaside village of Pelican Rock, I never found it but I'm sure it is there somewhere and that is where the story is set.

Pelican Rock has a lighthouse. There is something about lighthouses which is hard to define but contains a sense of adventure. I remember once walking on an off-the-beaten-track beach and discovering a lighthouse I didn't know existed. The lock on the door was broken so I went in. I seem to remember some sort of small sign saying keep out but you can't live your life listening to signs all the time. I climbed the spiral stairs up to the light. It was only a small lighthouse, automated and with nothing much to see but I was thrilled.

Pelicans. What a ridiculous design for a bird. Yet up close those enormous eyes seem to look at you from a great distance and pelicans are incredibly graceful in flight (although their take-off and landing skills leave a lot to be desired). There is something special about them and that made them part of the story.

I have never owned a dog but a close friend of mine had a Jack Russell terrier, with whom I also became a good friend and Cyrano is modelled on her. I recommend being friends with other people's dogs. You get to play with them and then give them back when they need feeding or a trip to the vet.

People connect to special places. Something about a place calls them. It may be miles from where they live and work but, in some indefinable sense, it is their home. Dogs understand homes and sometimes they can feel it too.

In *The Lighthouse at Pelican Rock*, all these elements came together. It is the story of how Megan found her real home and the journey that took her there. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed discovering it.

Something from the illustrator:



Being a person who loves dogs, I wanted to show the close relationship and affection that Megan Evans had for Cyrano, her aunt Rachel's little Jack Russell terrier, and also to reveal the connection that Cyrano had with Megan when he immediately recognized her from another life and time, which is an important and central part of the story.

I imagined Megan as being a browbeaten but determined young girl, and although approaching her teenage years, was still dressing herself in baggy worn-out jeans, t-shirts and trainers. So I drew her as an unsophisticated child-teenager, to represent that challenging, in-between phase of growing up. I tried to reveal Megan's sense of solitude and isolation by concentrating on just showing her interactions with Cyrano or the pelicans. Her facial expression and body language also had to reveal her sad and lonely personality.

I deliberately avoided illustrating Alexander Evans, the lighthouse keeper, as each time Megan met him she was going back in time, either by falling through a mysterious portal, or in a dream-like episode, and I felt that this should be left entirely to the readers' own imagination.

I began to research pelicans on the Internet, even though I had seen many in real life, I really needed a close-up photo reference for drawing the correct beak to body proportions, and also that very peculiar shaped beak itself!

A wonderful bird is the pelican. His bill can hold more than his belican. (Dixon Lanier Merritt)

I used a watercolour wash and ink to create the inside illustrations, and colour pencil, with a light touch of watercolour paint for the front cover.

Post-reading discussion questions:

What do you think would have happened if Megan's parents had taken her back to the city?

Animals—Cyrano the terrier, and the pelican—play a big part in the story. Discuss the ways in which they influence what happens.

Megan ended up living in the past. Things were very different to what she was used to. What things do you think she would have had most trouble adapting to?

Sometimes in the novel people speak about real places like Sydney and Melbourne. But Pelican Rock is imaginary. Why do you think the author chose to do that?

Classroom research activities

In his afterword, the author reveals that the ruined lighthouse in the book was partly based on the ruins of the Cape St George Lighthouse in Jervis Bay, NSW. Find out about that lighthouse, and why it was abandoned.

At one point, Dylan tells Megan about a mythical story about pelicans. See what other myths and legends you can find about pelicans.

Aunt Rachel tells Megan that Cyrano is named after a famous character from history, Cyrano de Bergerac. See what else—apart from the fact he had a big nose—that you can discover about the original Cyrano.

Classroom creative activities

Draw a map of the village of Pelican Rock.

Imagine you could go back into the past of the place where you live. Write a journal entry about what it feels like.

Design the sort of poster Rhys might have created.

Write the final rescue attempt from Cyrano's point of view.