

DESIGN

YOUR OWN LIGHTHOUSE



Haceta Head
Lighthouse,
Yachats, Oregon

Carol M. Highsmith
Archive
Library of
Congress Prints
and Photographs
Division

Imagine a lighthouse. You may picture a tall, thin building on a coast, with a powerful light that shines out far across the water. What else do you know about them and how they work?

In this activity, you'll explore lighthouses of all shapes and sizes that are featured in the online collections of the Library of Congress, then design and create your own!

GET READY

For this activity, you'll need:

- ~ Your imagination
- ~ Examples of other lighthouses
- ~ Paper or tablet
- ~ Pen, pencil, or paintbrush
- ~ Paper, paper rolls, newspaper, plastic bottles, bubble wrap, or anything you have, to build your lighthouse
- ~ Colored pencils, crayons, markers, paint, fabric, or anything you have, to decorate your lighthouse
- ~ Tape or glue

GET INSPIRED

Explore hundreds of images of [lighthouses in the digital collections](#) of the Library of Congress.



One of Maine's most-visited, and most-photographed, sites: the Portland Head Light, is a historic lighthouse in Cape Elizabeth. Photographer Carol Highsmith, 2017. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

Discover why a lighthouse's light is visible from far away in [this Everyday Mysteries post](#) by the Library's Science, Technology and Business Division.

Question: How is the light of a lighthouse magnified so that it can be seen many miles out at sea?

Answer: A lighthouse light is a concentrated beam, focused by special lenses. Because of its highly increased intensity, this beam of light can travel a very long distance.



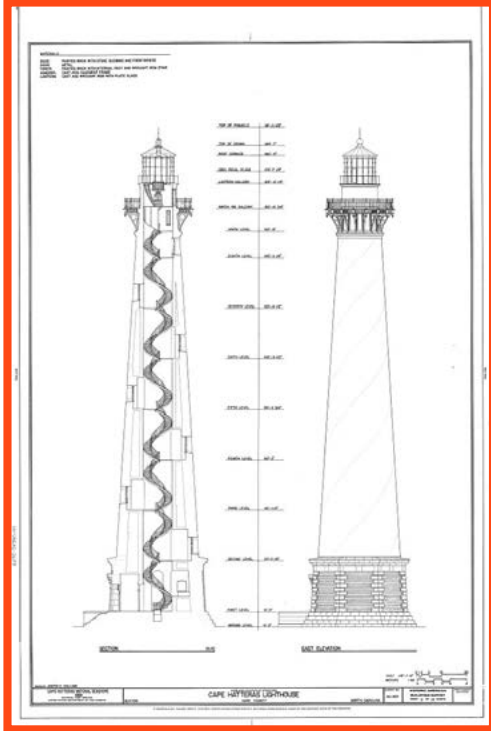
Interior view of Fresnel lens in lantern of Split Rock Lighthouse, Lake County, MN. Jet Lowe, 1990. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

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Look Closely

Below are a photograph and a design of the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse in Buxton, North Carolina. Click on each link to zoom in and get a closer look.



Cape Hatteras Lighthouse.
Library of Congress Prints
and Photographs Division.

Left Image:
<https://www.loc.gov/resource/hhh.nc0432.sheet>

Right Image: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/hhh.nc0432.photos>



What details do you notice?

Anything surprising?

What do you wonder about the building?

Now, **compare** and **contrast** the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse with the Mobile Bay (or Middle Bay) Lighthouse in Alabama.

What is similar, and what's different?:

Middle Bay or Mobile Bay Lighthouse, Mobile Bay, Alabama. Highsmith, Carol M.,. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.
<https://www.loc.gov/item/2010637364>. To view the design of the lighthouse's interior, visit <https://www.loc.gov/item/al0514>.



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CREATE!

Sketch the exterior (outside) and interior (inside) of your lighthouse on a sheet of paper:

Exterior: Think about the purpose of a lighthouse. How will it be seen by ships? Where is it located?

Interior: Think about where you will place the lenses and the light. How does the lighthouse keeper enter and get to the light? Where will the lighthouse keeper live?

Build it using supplies you have at home!



Fiona (age 6) and Weston (age 9) show their creations based on the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse.

EXPLORE MORE

Uncover the lives of lighthouse keepers, in the Library's collections - try researching [Katherine Walker](#) or [Ida Lewis](#):



New-York tribune. [volume] (New York [N.Y.]), 23 Feb. 1919. [Chronicling America](#): Historic American Newspapers. Library of Congress.



Miss Ida Lewis, the heroine of Newport / photo by Manchester Bros., Providence, R.I. Print and Photographs. Library of Congress.

Learn about the transition of the lighthouse from manual to automatic operation, in the Library's online database of historical newspapers, [Chronicling America](#) - search with keywords "automatic lighthouses".

Read the Caldecott award-winning picture book *Hello Lighthouse* by Sophie Blackall, and listen to the author's [presentation](#) about her book, at the 2019 National Book Festival.

