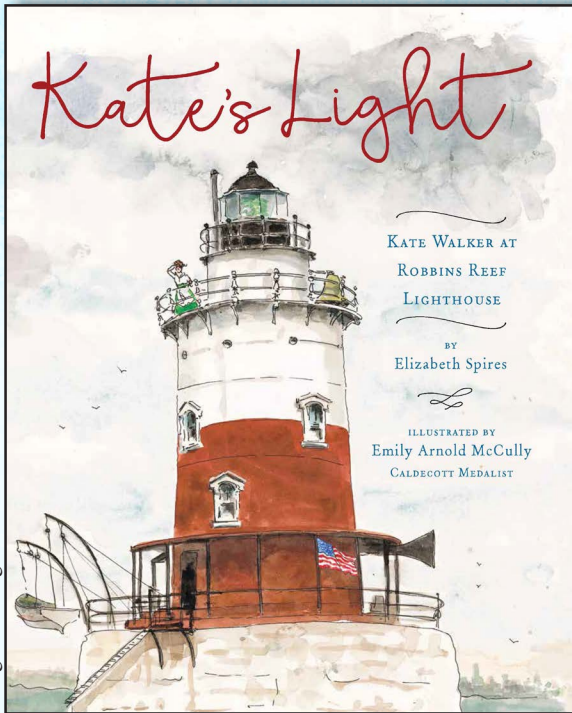


HOLIDAY HOUSE EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



Margaret Ferguson Books · HC: 9780823443482



Kate's Light *Kate Walker at Robbins Reef Lighthouse*

by Elizabeth Spires

illustrated by Emily Arnold McCully

A Junior Library Guild Gold Standard Selection

ABOUT THE BOOK

Illustrated by a Caldecott Medalist, *Kate's Light* shares the exciting true story of Katherine Walker and her long, heroic career as one of the first woman lighthouse keepers on the Eastern Seaboard.

When Kate Kaird immigrated with her young son, Jacob, from Germany to America in 1882, she couldn't have predicted the surprising turn her life would take. She soon met and married John Walker, keeper of the Sandy Hook Lighthouse. They moved to Robbins Reef Lighthouse in New York Harbor in 1885 and she became assistant keeper. After her husband's death, Kate went on to become the sole keeper of the lighthouse performing many daring rescues.

With watercolor and ink illustrations that perfectly capture the salty spray of the sea, *Kate's Light* brings the turn of the century New York Harbor to life, with a focus on one of its little known but most crucial attendants.

The book features extensive additional material including an "About Kate Walker" section, photos of Kate and Robbins Reef Lighthouse, and a list of sources.

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

- A biography is the story of someone's life. This book is about Kate Walker, but it begins when she is thirty-four and immigrates to America from Germany. How is this a "new beginning" for her? Discuss how this biography is about her "new life."
- Study the end pages of the book. The etching is labeled "A Bird's-Eye View of the Port of New York. What is a "bird's-eye view"? Point out Robbins Reef. Why do you think Robbins Reef was such an important lighthouse?
- Identify Kate and her son Jacob in the first illustration (p. 7). What are the people in the illustration anticipating? Look at the man pointing. What is he seeing? How does this illustration show that the first part of Kate and Jacob's journey is almost complete?
- How did Kate meet John Walker, the man she eventually married? What attracted him to Kate? How did he help her adjust to a new land? Describe their life at Sandy Hook. John Walker was promoted to lighthouse keeper at Robbins Reef. How was life different for them at Robbins Reef?



- A simile compares two things using “like” or “as.” Take a hint from the following simile and point out Robbins Reef: “From far off, Robbins Reef looked like a candle on a birthday cake” (p. 11). Kate worried about being lonely. What is it about the lighthouse that looks lonely? After some years at Robbins Reef, friends asked Kate if she was ever lonely. Discuss how she responds.
- Discuss why Kate didn’t unpack for a while after arriving at Robbins Reef. When did she finally decide that this lighthouse felt like home? What is a catwalk? How was walking the catwalk the only way Kate could enjoy the outdoors? How did the Walkers get supplies? What did they do for entertainment? How did Kate grow to love her life at Robbins Reef?
- “Sometimes late in the evening Robbins Reef felt like a ship peacefully at anchor” (p. 24). How do McCully’s illustrations create a peaceful mood? The illustrations are created using watercolors and pen and ink. How is pen and ink used to create detail? When is watercolor used? Take a close look at the waves of the water. How do the colors of the water change with the season? What colors do you see? Kate sometimes had to hammer the bell. Explain how McCully illustrates the hammering motion (p. 20).
- Consider John’s work and describe a day in the life of a lighthouse keeper. What were the dangers that the Walkers faced? Kate became John’s assistant. What was her job?
- When John was taken to the hospital, he told Kate to “Mind the light.” She became the temporary lighthouse keeper when John died and was later promoted to keeper. Why did the Lighthouse Board think they needed a man for the job? Explain how Kate was better prepared to do the job than the men they considered?
- When Kate retired at the age of seventy-one, she spoke of the happy and sad times at Robbins Reef. What were her happy and sad memories?
- Why is Robbins Reef called “Kate’s light”?



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Elizabeth Spires is a poet and has written several books for children, including *The Mouse of Amherst*. She lives in Baltimore, Maryland, where she teaches at Goucher College.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR



Emily Arnold McCully has illustrated many books for children, including *Mirette on the High Wire*, which received a Caldecott Medal, *Caroline’s Comets: A True Story*, and numerous I Like to Read® titles for emerging readers. She lives in Austerlitz, New York.

