



Life in a Great Lakes Lighthouse



Vernon J. Schutter

LESSON TWO

Subject/Grade:

Grade 2, Language Arts, Science and Social Studies

Duration:

Three class periods

Materials needed:

Per class:

- DVD: *Shipwreck: The Mystery of the Edmund Fitzgerald* by the Great Lakes Historical Society (https://www.shipwreckmuseum.com/retail_shop/)
- DVD player and TV
- CD: *Summer Time Dream: "Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald."* Album by Gordon Lightfoot.
- CD player
- Map of the Great Lakes
- Meter stick

Per student:

- student copies of Collins Writing Focus Correction Areas writing assignments
- student copies of the Readers' Theater* play scripts: "The Christmas Surprise," "Another Harsh Winter," and "The Maps."

*The plays are based on true stories in Bertha Endress Rollo's book which describes her experiences at the Whitefish Point Lighthouse. Anyone can write a play for Readers' Theater. Readers' Theater plays are read aloud by the actors, rather than memorized and performed. If a teacher doesn't have the time or desire to write Readers' Theater plays, there are many available. Some collections have been published and others can be found online.

Lesson Overview

Students engage in watching a video, listening to a song, reading stories, and discussing the role of lighthouses on the Great Lakes. Students then participate in one or more plays that describe Bertha Endress Rollo's childhood and young adult years spent at the Whitefish Point Lighthouse near Paradise, Michigan between 1910 and 1931 while her grandfather, Captain Robert Carlson, was the lighthouse keeper. The activities combine Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies in order for students to gain an appreciation of the dangers and difficulties faced by the crews of Great Lakes freighters. Students also will begin to understand the isolation and challenges faced by the families who lived at lighthouses on the Great Lakes.

Elementary students often have difficulty understanding history due to their lack of prior knowledge of historical events and what life was like before they were born. To give children a better understanding of the dangers faced by the crews aboard Great Lakes freighters, the lesson begins with an introduction to the wreck of the S.S. Edmund Fitzgerald which took place in 1975 during the lifetime of students' parents and grandparents. Since students are able to discuss this part of the lesson with relatives and family friends who were living when the Fitzgerald went down, they are better able to realize that such events are real and could happen again in the future. With this background information, it is easier for students to understand the plays which flashback to a period when their great- and great-great-grandparents were alive. Through this lesson, students are able to connect history to current events, and gain a deeper and more complete appreciation of past events.

STANDARDS



Michigan Grade Level Content Expectations (GLCEs) Addressed

Grade 2 Language Arts

R.WS.02.05

automatically recognize frequently encountered words in print whether encountered in connected text or in isolation with the number of words that can be read fluently, increasing steadily across the school year.

R.WS.02.11

in context, determine the meaning of words and phrases including objects, actions, concepts, content vocabulary, and literary terms using strategies and resources including context clues, mental pictures, and questioning.

R.NT.02.03

identify and describe characters' actions and motivations, setting (time and place), problems/solutions, and sequence of events.

R.NT.02.04

identify and explain how authors/illustrators use literary devices including illustrations and titles to depict major story events, and comparisons including metaphors or similes to reveal characters' thoughts and actions.

R.NT.02.05

respond to individual and multiple texts by finding evidence, discussing, illustrating, and/or writing to reflect, make connections, take a position, and/or show understanding.

R.CM.02.01

make text-to-self and text-to-text connections and comparisons by activating prior knowledge, connecting personal knowledge, experience, and understanding of others to ideas in text through oral and written responses.

Learning Objectives

After this lesson, students will be able to

1. Identify the location of Whitefish Point on a map of Lake Superior.
2. List the dangers for Great Lakes freighters during the early 1900s. How do these compare to dangers for ships on the Great Lakes today?
3. Describe the difficulties faced by the families who lived at Great Lakes lighthouses.
4. Read and perform plays about shipping on the Great Lakes and life at the Whitefish Point Lighthouse for their classmates and parents.
5. Compare the environment and weather of their community to that of Whitefish Point Lighthouse.

Possible student responses: high winds, fog, blizzards, sleet, thunderstorms, freezing temperatures, shoals. (The same dangers exist today as during earlier times, but freighters now have better equipment such as life jackets, weather instruments, radar, depth sonar, and radio communications.)

Possible student responses: isolation, hard work, inclement weather

Physical characteristics: land, lakes, rivers, bogs, etc.

Precipitation: rain, snow

Seasonal changes: temperature, landscape

Background

First lit in 1849, the Whitefish Point Lighthouse is located in the treacherous southeastern corner of Lake Superior. It is one of the first lighthouses on Lake Superior, and is also the oldest active light still on the lake today. The current structure was built in 1861 and has shone the way for sailors almost continuously for more than 150 years, except for the night of November 10, 1975 when the S.S. Edmund Fitzgerald sank into the waters of Lake Superior during fierce gales. On that night, storms severed



electricity to the lighthouse, darkening the shoreline of Whitefish Bay.

An eighty-mile stretch of rocky shoreline and hidden shoals, extending from Whitefish Bay's Point Iroquois Lighthouse to the Grand Marais Lighthouse, is known as "The Graveyard of Lake Superior." Seventy of the 550 recorded shipwrecks on Lake Superior have occurred here since the mid-1800s. Ships' crews on freighters heading east around Whitefish Point look for the lighthouse in all types of weather. Rounding the point meant the freighters and their crews had made it safely to Whitefish Bay and a more protected area of refuge. The lighthouse was the beacon guiding them to safety.

Life at the Whitefish Point Lighthouse

From 1910 to 1931, Bertha Endress Rollo lived with her mother, brother, and grandparents at the Whitefish Point Lighthouse where her grandfather, Captain Robert Carlson, was the lighthouse keeper. Bertha's summers were busy with friends from school, visitors, blueberry pickers, fishermen, and radio station workers in the area. As cold weather set in each year, the family became increasingly isolated. The nearby cranberry bogs filled with water, the berries were harvested, and the bogs eventually froze. Icebergs formed along Lake Superior.

Automation has replaced the keepers at Great Lakes lighthouses, but dangers are always present on the big lakes. The geology and weather remain the same—at one moment, beautiful; the next moment, deadly. The Edmund Fitzgerald was a modern victim of the tremendous power of Lake Superior. Even today, men and women work diligently to protect Great Lakes ships and their crews from accidents and to rescue them from tragedy.

In 1980, Bertha Endress Rollo worked with Tom Farnquist, executive director of the Great Lakes Shipwreck Historical Society, during the restoration of the Whitefish Point Lighthouse. Her vivid recollections of her lighthouse years aided in the refurbishing of the living quarters, offices, and

STANDARDS



Michigan Grade Level Content Expectations (GLCEs) Addressed

Grade 2 Language Arts

W.GN.02.01

write a narrative piece such as realistic fiction, fantasy, or personal narrative depicting major story events, using illustrations to match mood, and containing setting, problem/solution, and sequenced events.

S.CN.02.03

speak effectively adopting appropriate tone of voice and intonation patterns in narrative and informational presentations.

L.CN.02.02

ask appropriate questions for clarification and understanding during a presentation or report.

Grade 2 Social Studies

2.H2.0.1

Demonstrate chronological thinking by distinguishing among years and decades using a timeline of local community events.

2.G2.0.1

Compare the physical and human characteristics of the local community with those of another community.

Grade 2 Science

E.ES.02.2

Weather changes from day to day and over the seasons.

E.ES.02.27

Describe and compare weather related to the four seasons in terms of temperature, cloud cover, precipitation, and wind.



STANDARDS



Michigan Grade Level Content Expectations (GLCEs) Addressed

Grade 2 Science

E.ES.02.28

Describe severe weather events.

E.ES.02.29

Describe precautions that should be taken for human safety during severe weather conditions (thunderstorms, lightning, tornadoes, high winds, blizzards, hurricanes).

E.FE.02.01

Water exists on Earth in three states: liquid, solid, gas. It can go back and forth from one form to another.

E.FE.02.33

Describe the properties (visible, flowing, melting, dew) of water as a liquid (lakes, rivers, streams, oceans).

E.FE.02.34

Describe the properties (hard, visible, freezing, ice) of water as a solid (ice, snow, iceberg, sleet, hail).

E.EF.02.35

Describe the properties (invisible) of water as a gas (water vapor).

the museum. She also provided some period furniture, pictures, and artwork. Bertha Endress Rollo passed away on September 28, 2007 in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan at the age of 97.

The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald

Although the weather had been calm when the S.S. Edmund Fitzgerald began its voyage from Superior, Wisconsin to Detroit on November 9, 1975, violent early winter storms soon roared across Lake Superior. Sixty-mile per hour winds and thirty-foot waves battered the freighter during a powerful gale that lasted for many hours. The crew of another ship, the Arthur M. Anderson, was battling the storms a few miles behind the Fitzgerald. The crew of the Anderson maintained radio contact with Captain McSorley who told them his vessel had suffered damage from the storms. At 7:10 p.m. on the night of November 10, McSorley reported, "We are holding our own." Moments later, despite the valiant efforts of the captain and crew to keep the mighty ship afloat, the Edmund Fitzgerald succumbed to the icy waters when two gigantic waves crashed over her. She disappeared from the Anderson's radar, taking all 29 crew members to their graves. Searchers later found the huge freighter broken into two sections on the bottom of Lake Superior.

The bell of the S.S. Edmund Fitzgerald was recovered on July 4, 1995 in an effort led by the Great Lakes Shipwreck Historical Society and is on display inside the Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum at Whitefish Point near Paradise, Michigan. A replica bell engraved with the names of the 29 crew members who lost their lives replaces the original bell at the wreck site. On November 10th of each year, a memorial service is held at Whitefish Point to commemorate the lives of the brave crew of the Edmund Fitzgerald.



Advance Preparation

Prepare copies of the student assessment for each student.

Prepare copies of the three plays for each student: “The Christmas Surprise,” “Another Harsh Winter,” and “The Maps.”

Procedure

Focus Questions:

- *What dangers were faced by the families who lived at lighthouses and by the crews aboard Great Lakes freighters?*

- *What was life like at a lighthouse?*

1. Locate Lake Superior, Whitefish Point, Whitefish Bay, Keweenaw Peninsula, and Sault Ste. Marie on a map. Discuss the shoreline west of Whitefish Point and why it’s the site of many shipwrecks.
2. Watch the 14-minute DVD *Shipwreck: The Mystery of the Edmund Fitzgerald*. Discuss the dangers faced by the crew of the ship. Discuss the safety equipment to which they had access. *Possible student responses: depth sonar, lighthouses, weather instruments, radio communication (ship-to-ship, ship-to-land), radar, life jackets*
3. Listen to Gordon Lightfoot’s commemorative ballad: *Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald*. Discuss what feelings or emotions students experience while listening to it. *Possible student responses: frightened, nervous, sad, angry*
4. Take students to the school gymnasium or cafeteria or to another room with a high ceiling. Compare the height of the walls to the 30-foot

waves seen in the video. Tell students that a basketball hoop is ten feet high. Explain that the waves were three times that height.

5. Read together the Readers’ Theater play “The Christmas Surprise.” Ask the students questions such as:
 - *What dangers did the ships and crew face as they were headed toward Whitefish Point?*
 - *What emotions did you feel while reading the play?*
 - *How do you think Captain Carlson felt when he received the phone call?*
 - *How do you think he felt after the freighters had rounded the point?*
6. Read together the Readers’ Theater play “Another Harsh Winter.” Ask the students questions such as:
 - *How does your family prepare for a bad winter storm?*
 - *What food supplies would your family have that could last five or six months?*
 - *How do you think Bertha and her family would feel after for months on the same diet and with no contact from their friends in Sault Ste. Marie?*
 - *How would you have felt after seeing your first ship after a long winter?*
 - *How would a hard winter have affected the Great Lakes shipping business?*
7. Read together the Readers’ Theater play “The Maps.” Ask the students questions such as:
 - *Do you think the Lake Superior shoreline is changing today?*
 - *Do you think Joe was right when he told Bertha the story about a bad storm?*



- *What forces of nature can cause the shoreline to change?*
- *How could changes in the shoreline of Lake Superior impact Great Lakes shipping?*

Assessment of Student Learning

Ask students to respond to the two questions listed on the student page provided. Assess students' ability to include the required content listed after each question. Teachers are encouraged to utilize *Collins' Writing Focus Correction Areas* (listed in references) strategy which stresses a limited number of skills to be reviewed and corrected by students on each writing assignment.

Question 1: *Would you have wanted to live with Bertha at the lighthouse? Why or why not?*

1. Give two reasons (take a position). 20 points
2. Include two facts from Readers' Theater. 20 points
3. Use four descriptive words. 20 points

Question 2: *You are Captain Carlson. It is November. You are writing a letter to a freighter's captain. What advice can you give him?*

1. Use a friendly letter format. 20 points
2. Include two facts from Readers' Theater or the DVD. 20 points
3. Use three persuasive words. 20 points

Extensions

Find photos and descriptions of other Lake Superior lighthouses and incorporate into a Power Point or other type of presentation.

Web site: <http://www.lighthousegetaway.com/lights/>

Pretend you know a crew member on a freighter. Write him/her a letter.

Read *Gitche Gumee*. Written by Anne Margaret Lewis, this children's book tells in poetic form the fictional story of a young boy who desires to sail the waters of Gitche Gumee. There is much the 'big water' teaches him on his journey into manhood. Illustrations rendered by artist Kathleen Chaney Fritz bring the tale to life in a uniquely beautiful way.

Read *The Edmund Fitzgerald: Song of the Bell* written by Kathy-Jo Wargin and illustrated by Gijbert Van Frankenhuyzen. The combined talents of this well known author/illustrator team have resulted in the creation of a children's book that relates the sensitive and gripping story of the day the S.S. Edmund Fitzgerald was lost in the depths of Lake Superior during an early winter storm.

Students create a timeline that begins with Bertha Endress Rollo's years at the Whitefish Point Lighthouse, includes the sinking of the Edmund Fitzgerald, and ends with two events from each student's own life up to the present.



References

Collins, John J. *Selecting and Teaching Focus Correction Areas*. West Newbury, MA: Collins Education Associates, 2004.

Great Lakes Lighthouse Keepers Association: information on restoring lighthouses.
<http://www.gllka.com>

Great Lakes Shipwreck Historical Society. DVD: *Shipwreck: The Mystery of the Edmund Fitzgerald*.
https://www.shipwreckmuseum.com/retail_shop

Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum: information on the museum, lighthouse, and surrounding areas.
www.shipwreckmuseum.com

Music and lyrics of the commemorative song “Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald” by Gordon Lightfoot
<http://www.gordonlightfoot.com>

Lighthouse Getaway: information on the physical and psychological dangers of living at a Great Lakes lighthouse.
www.lighthousegetaway.com/lights/.

Rollo, Bertha Endress, “Beneath the Shining Light: Memories of the Whitefish Point Light 1910-1931,” Paradise, MI: The Whitefish Eagle News, 2000.
https://www.shipwreckmuseum.com/retail_shop

WEBSITES FOR STUDENT USE

Lighthouse Getaway
<http://www.lighthousegetaway.com/lights/>

Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum
<http://www.shipwreckmuseum.com>

Seeing the Light-The Lighthouses of Lake Superior
http://www.terrypepper.com/Lights/lake_superior.htm

Welcome to Weather Underground
<http://www.weatherunderground.com/>



Name _____

Life at the Whitefish Point Lighthouse with
Bertha Endress Rollo



Answer each of the questions. Be sure to include the information listed after each question.

Question #1: Would you have wanted to live with Bertha at the lighthouse?
Why or why not?

- | | | |
|----|---|-----------|
| 1. | Give two reasons (take a position). | 20 points |
| 2. | Include two facts from Readers' Theater play. | 20 points |
| 3. | Use four descriptive words. | 20 points |

Question #2: You are Captain Carlson. It is November. You are writing a letter to a freighter's captain. What advice can you give him?

- | | | |
|----|---|-----------|
| 1. | Use a friendly letter format. | 20 points |
| 2. | Include two facts from Readers' Theater or the DVD. | 20 points |
| 3. | Use three persuasive words. | 20 points |



The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald

Words and music copyright 1976 by Gordon Lightfoot

The legend lives on from the Chippewa on down
Of the big lake they called 'Gitche Gumee'
The lake, it is said, never gives up her dead
When the skies of November turn gloomy
With a load of iron ore twenty-six thousand tons
more
Than the Edmund Fitzgerald weighed empty.
That good ship and true was a bone to be
chewed
When the gales of November came early.



The ship was the pride of the American side
Coming back from some mill in Wisconsin
As the big freighters go, it was bigger than most
With a crew and good captain well seasoned
Concluding some terms with a couple of steel
firms
When they left fully loaded for Cleveland
And later that night when the ship's bell rang
Could it be the north wind they'd been feelin'?



The wind in the wires made a tattle-tale sound
And a wave broke over the railing
And every man knew, as the captain did too,
T'was the witch of November come stealin'.
The dawn came late and the breakfast had to
wait
When the Gales of November came slashin'.
When afternoon came it was freezin' rain
In the face of a hurricane west wind.



When supertime came, the old cook came on
deck sayin'.
Fellas, it's too rough to feed ya.
At Seven P.M. a main hatchway caved in, he
said
Fellas, it's been good t'know ya
The captain wired in he had water comin' in
And the good ship and crew was in peril.

And later that night when his lights went outta
sight
Came the wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald.
Does any one know where the love of God goes
When the waves turn the minutes to hours?
The searches all say they'd have made White-
fish Bay
If they'd put fifteen more miles behind her.
They might have split up or they might have
capsized;
May have broke deep and took water.
And all that remains is the faces and the names
Of the wives and the sons and the daughters.



Lake Huron rolls, Superior sings
In the rooms of her ice-water mansion.
Old Michigan steams like a young man's
dreams;
The islands and bays are for sportsmen.
And farther below Lake Ontario
Takes in what Lake Erie can send her,
And the iron boats go as the mariners all know
With the Gales of November remembered.



In a musty old hall in Detroit they prayed,
In the Maritime Sailors' Cathedral.
The church bell chimed till it rang twenty-nine
times
For each man on the Edmund Fitzgerald.
The legend lives on from the Chippewa on down
Of the big lake they call 'Gitche Gumee'.
Superior, they said, never gives up her dead
When the gales of November come early!



THE CHRISTMAS SURPRISE

A Readers' Theater play
by Vernon J. Schutter

Characters

Narrator
Bertha
Granddad
Grandmother

Act One

SETTING: It is the middle of December inside the home of Captain Robert Carlson, lighthouse keeper at Whitefish Point, Michigan, on the shores of Lake Superior.

Bertha: Granddad, what have you and the other men been doing?

Granddad: I was notified that the fog signal and the light tower are to be closed by December 24. Shipping on Lake Superior is ending for another season. The workers and I need to make sure the signal and tower are closed down properly for the winter.

NARRATOR: Just then, the telephone rings in the dining room. Granddad picks up the receiver.

Granddad: Hello? (pause) How are you? (pause) Good, good. (pause) I would be glad to help. I will be listening for your boat to give us a toot when you get close. Talk to you later. Good-bye.

Bertha: Who was that, Granddad? Who needs your help? Why would someone give a toot when they get close? Is someone trying to drive a car here with all the snow on the ground?

Granddad: Bertha, you certainly are an inquisitive young lady. Do you ask your teacher questions all of the time at school?

Bertha: Yes, I do! Granddad, I answered your questions, but you haven't answered mine.

Granddad: Well, the ship captain I spoke with on the telephone said that his freighter and six others are on the way here. Their boats are fully loaded with iron ore. They have to reach Sault Ste. Marie by December 14 because the locks are closing for the winter also.

Bertha: It's almost December 14. They'll have to hurry.



Granddad: I know. Storms are threatening to move in, and the captains are worried. They've asked me to keep the fog signal and the light operating until they clear Whitefish Point. The weather can be harsh out on the open water. Travel on Lake Superior at this time of year is so dangerous that the insurance on the boats is stopped in November. I sure hope the freighters make it to safety.

Bertha: Thank you for reminding me, Granddad.

Granddad: Of what?

Bertha: We're supposed to help others. Let's keep the light and the fog signal on and help those men get home for Christmas.

Granddad: Everyone on the freighters thought you would say that, so they've planned something special for you, Goldilocks.

Bertha: (giggling) Goldilocks! That's funny, Granddad. What are they going to do for me?

Granddad: There you go again. Questions, questions! You'll have to wait until tomorrow to find out. When you hear the boats start tooting, let me know.

Act Two

NARRATOR: The next day the weather was cold. The wind blew strongly off Lake Superior. Small icebergs had begun to form along the shoreline. That evening, Bertha finally hears the sound that she has been anticipating.

Bertha: Granddad, I hear the boats tooting! They're getting close! What is the surprise?

Granddad: Questions, questions.

Bertha: Granddad, stop teasing me! What is the surprise?

Granddad: Put on your warmest clothes, Goldilocks. We will go down to the beach to see.

Grandmother: No one is going outside. The weather is too cold and nasty. It's not fit for a little girl.

Granddad: Those men have a surprise for our Goldilocks. They want her to be on the beach to see it.

Bertha: Grandmother, please help me get dressed so I can see the surprise. I want you to come with us.



Grandmother: The weather is so bad that no one can come to visit, yet you want to go outside to watch freighters go by! Why don't you wait until next summer when it's warmer and then watch the boats? You won't have to walk through deep snow and climb around on all that slippery, dangerous ice.

Bertha: Please, Grandmother, please?

Grandmother: Oh, all right! I just hope we don't all perish out there in the cold.

Act Three

NARRATOR: The family gets bundled up and heads toward the beach as the boats approach.

Bertha: Thank you for bringing me out here. I'm so excited!

Grandmother: I'm glad the wind isn't blowing as hard tonight as it was this morning. At least when it's windy, there isn't any fog. We should be able to see your surprise.

Granddad: I'm glad the weather has improved a bit for the men on the freighters. Their work is extremely dangerous even on clear days like today.

Bertha: Granddad, look! What is that on the boat?

Granddad: Well, I'll be! There are two fake deer on the hatch covers. The men have decorated their freighters with big wreaths.

Grandmother: Oh, my! The next boat has a Christmas tree with toys under it.

Bertha: Look! The third boat has a big decorated tree on the front and a huge wreath on the back!

Granddad: The fourth boat has a big tree at each end. In the middle, those crazy guys put a table with a fruitcake on it!

Bertha: This is so much fun! There's another boat with a Christmas tree on it. They built a pretend fireplace on it, too. Look at the stockings blowing in the wind!

Grandmother: Well, fancy that! They've decorated the sixth boat with pine boughs, apples, and oranges. It looks like decorations around the outside of a house.

Bertha: Listen! I hear something.

Grandmother: The men are singing Christmas carols for us. How lovely! They're saluting us, too.

Granddad: Here comes the last boat, Goldilocks.



Bertha: Look, Grandmother! That one is decorated with boughs and a Christmas tree, too. Everything is so beautiful!

NARRATOR: The family watches as the freighters round Whitefish Point to the safety of the bay and head for Sault Ste. Marie.

Granddad: Goldilocks, those men worked hard in dangerous conditions so they could surprise you and cheer all of us up.

Bertha: I know, Granddad. We were helping them get home safely, and they helped us by making our Christmas special.

Grandmother: I'm so glad you talked me into coming out here. Now let's head back to the house, and I'll fix us something hot to drink.

Bertha: Wait! I forgot something. (Bertha turns, waves toward the freighters, and shouts) Thank you for a wonderful surprise! Have a Merry Christmas!

NARRATOR: The family hurries back home, thankful for the efforts of the ships' crews in making this the best Christmas surprise Bertha has ever had. And it was!



ANOTHER HARSH WINTER

A Readers' Theater play
by Vernon J. Schutter

Characters

Narrator
Bertha
Granddad
Grandmother

Act One

SETTING: Captain Robert Carlson's dining room in the Whitefish Point lighthouse on Lake Superior during a cold, harsh winter.

NARRATOR: The government supply boat named the Clover brought the Carlson family's winter groceries before freeze up. The Carlsons thought they were set for food for the winter. Then several men came to repair the fog signal. Later, other men came from Sault Saint Marie to ice fish. Staying true to their custom of helping others, the Carlsons fed the men. Later that winter, the little family was running short of food.

Grandmother: Robert, I'm worried. Supplies are getting low.

Granddad: The snow is so heavy and deep that I haven't seen any signs of deer in long time. It's been too cold, and the ice on Lake Superior is too thick to cut through to fish.

Grandmother: Well, we need to do something.

Granddad: I saw some rabbit tracks out back. I'll make some traps and set them near the bushes.

Act Two

Narrator: It is one week later. Granddad has succeeded in trapping several rabbits.

Grandmother: This meat tastes good. I was getting worried about our food supply.

Bertha: Granddad, thank you for trapping the rabbits. They are delicious. Grandmother, your bread tastes wonderful. I just love the way it makes the house smell.



Granddad: After eating government pork and beef, rabbit does taste pretty good. I'll keep on setting my traps.

Act Three

NARRATOR: It is two months later. The Carlson family has been trying to make their food supply last as long as possible.

Granddad: I trapped five rabbits today. That's a new record. We'll be eating well tonight.

Grandmother: That's fine, but I'm certainly getting tired of rabbit. Bertha, what on earth are you doing in front of the mirror?

Bertha: I've eaten so many rabbits that my ears are starting to grow, and my nose is twitching! I can't move without hopping!

Grandmother: Bertha, if you're going to be silly, get dressed and hop right outside with the rest of the rabbits.

Act Four

NARRATOR: By the middle of May, the ground is still blanketed with snow, and Lake Superior remains frozen. The family has been eating rabbit twice a day. The supply of flour is running low, so the Carlsons have been eating crackers instead of bread.

Bertha: Granddad, what in the world are you doing? Why are you smashing the rabbit traps? What will we have to eat?

Grandmother: Listen, girl! Don't you hear that beautiful sound?

Granddad: The icebreakers are coming! That means our supply ship will be here soon.

Grandmother: I don't care if I never eat another rabbit as long as I live!

Bertha: Hurray! We'll have beef and pork for dinner!

Granddad: I can finally get the news from the Soo. It'll be good to hear what has been going in town.

NARRATOR: After that winter, no one in the Carlson family wanted to eat rabbit ever again.



THE MAPS

A Readers' Theater play
by Vernon J. Schutter

Characters

Narrator
Bertha
Grandmother
Indian Joe
Bessie
Bert
Irene

Act One

SETTING: Bertha and several friends are crowded around the dining room table of the lighthouse at Whitefish Point as her grandmother walks in.

Grandmother: Bertha, whatever are you children doing?

Bertha: We're studying these maps.

Grandmother: Are you planning a trip?

Bessie: No, Mrs. Carlson. The maps look different from the shape of the land today.

Grandmother: Now, come on. The men worked very carefully drawing those maps.

Bert: Look, Mrs. Carlson. On this map, Whitefish Point goes a long way out into the middle of the fishing channel. That's closer to Canada. Today if we swim there, there are only sandbars. Are these maps wrong?

Irene: What do you think, Mrs. Carlson? Are the maps wrong? Are we reading the maps wrong?

Grandmother: What happened the last time you and your friends went swimming with Uncle Carl?

Bertha: Uncle Carl carried us to the sandbars beyond the point. There are three sandbars out in the lake.

Grandmother: Well, maybe the point did go out farther into the water in the past. Perhaps you can think of someone else to ask.



NARRATOR: Bertha and her friends sat down and discussed the problems, trying to think of people to ask for help. Bertha suddenly remembers a story told to her by old Indian Joe.

Act Two

SETTING: The story flashes back to 1916. We see a puzzled Bertha sitting on a small hill in the cranberry marsh in front of the lighthouse. She is looking at the land. Indian Joe walks by.

Joe: Little One, what is wrong?

Bertha: Mr. Joe, this land is so strange. Sand, gravel, marsh, and then big stones over there. None of it fits.

Joe: You are right. None of it fits now, but it did once.

Bertha: Over there, it's beach and underwater sand, and then it's cranberry bogs to the lighthouse. Where did all the huge stones come from? Why are all the rocks on the bay side and not on the lake side?

Joe: Little One, there is a story about when my great-great-grandfather was young. There was a terrible storm here. The sky turned black. Twists of clouds reached from the sky to the surface of the water. The water rose up to meet the sky. The rain poured and beat against the land. The storm increased, and the water threw many stones against the land. For two days, no one left their shelters. When the land began to dry off, Great-Grandfather could see what happened. The lake left behind its stones as a reminder that it would return.

NARRATOR: After telling Indian Joe's story to her friends, Bertha and the other children were left wondering if the storm really was the cause of the lake becoming larger. Remembering what her grandmother had said about the mapmakers working carefully added much to the children's discussions.

What do you think happened? Did the map makers make a mistake, or was Joe's story about the storm real?



