**Activities to use with *To Keep the South Manitou Light***

This book is historical fiction. To write historical fiction, you gather and use true details of a place and time. Then you make up characters who might have lived during that time.

In this book, Anna made up a twelve-year-old girl named Jessie who lives on South Manitou Island. Her family took care of the island lighthouse for generations. Jessie’s grandfather died of a heart attack ten days before the story begins. Her dad is at sea, so Jessie’s mom keeps the light by herself. Afraid her family will lose the lighthouse, Jessie decides not to mail her mother’s letter that tells the Lighthouse Service that they need help, with winter coming. She “mails” it by putting it in one of her mother’s canning jars and tossing it into the lake.  This causes trouble.

During violent storms the light had to guide ships to safety. In the last half of the book, Jessie is called upon to be very brave and keep the light shining.

**Writing historical fiction.** Fictional characters and plot are set in a real time and place.

**This is what Anna did to research *To Keep the South Manitou Light:***

* ***Get to know the place***
* Find Michigan on a map. Four of five Great Lakes touch its shores. What are they?
  + Find Traverse City on the map. Travel west to Lake Michigan. Do you see “Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore”? Find two islands: South Manitou Island and North Manitou Island?
  + Websites showing the South Manitou Island Lighthouse:
    - [www.traversecity.com/listings/south-manitou](http://www.traversecity.com/listings/south-manitou)...
    - [South Manitou Lighthouse Complex (U.S. National Park Service)](https://www.nps.gov/places/000/south-manitou-lighthouse-complex.htm) Check out this link to visit the lighthouse with the grown-up grandchildren of a lighthouse keeper on this island.
* ***Get to know the time***. Anna chose the fall of 1871, a specific time.
  + FACTS: It had been a very dry fall. On the evening of October 8, 1871, two terrible fires ignited. One of those, the great Chicago fire, destroyed the city and claimed up to three hundred lives. Across Lake Michigan, another fire was raging around Green Bay Wisconsin, burning 1.25 million acres of forest and destroying the lumber town of Peshtigo. Possibly as many as two thousand people died. Smoke from both of those fires spread like a blanket all the way up Lake Michigan to the Straits of Mackinac.
  + FACTS: Just as in Anna’s story, the lighthouse inspector was racing in his boat to tell the lighthouse keepers they would have to get ready to keep the light burning and their fog bell ringing because, due to the smoke, ship captains might not see the light. The smoke covered the lake for three days and three nights! There really was a lighthouse keeper who piled pots and pan lids on his lap to keep himself awake. When he fell asleep, they would crash to the stone floor and wake him up. Anna used that true detail and so many others in her story.

Anna and her family camped on South Manitou Island. They went up up the winding steps of the lighthouse and went out onto the lower balcony. It was scary to look down. The Park ranger said that, during an ice storm, the lighthouse keeper had to hook a ladder onto the railing above and climb that ladder, with the wind and sleet pushing against him. He had to climb over that upper railing and scrape the ice off the windows so the light could shine out and warn the ships and lead them to safety in the island’s harbor.

Anna kept asking herself questions: What if I were only twelve years old? What if something happened to the lighthouse keeper? What if there was an ice storm in the middle of the night? What if I were the only one who could go up the ladder to the upper balcony and scrape the ice off the windows so the ships being tossed by the waves could see the light and find safety?

Anna used those questions to help write *To Keep the South Manitou Light.*

**Activity: Write ideas and questions for a historical fiction story of your own.**

You will need to research literary elements that are true:

* Setting – Where will your story happen? Write or do a rough drawing of where it might take place.
* Time period – When? Is it set in the present? The past? The future? Is there a time you are curious about? Maybe when your mother or father were small? How will you find out about it?

You make up other literary elements:

* Character – Who will be your main character? Use your imagination. Write a description of that character. Who will be your other characters? How will you fit your character into the time you chose?
* Point of View – Are you telling the story as if everything is seen through the eyes of your main character? Or are you writing it from the viewpoint of a person telling the story?
* Plot – Give your main character a problem, a *big* problem. What does your character do? How does she or he react when confronted with this problem? Put yourself into that character. One thing after another will go wrong for your character. Describe them.

Then write! And keep writing! Create a rough first draft. It doesn’t have to be perfect. Often, Anna will write her first draft on scrap paper. Put yourself into the shoes of your character. As you write, use as many of your five senses as you can.

Find and read other books of historical fiction: See how the authors have used real facts and details to make that time, place, and their characters come alive. Some suggestions:

* THE MINER’S DAUGHTER by Gretchen Moran Laskas (set in a coal camp and then in Arthurdale, WV by a WV author)
* THE STAR FISHER by Laurence Yep (set in WV based on his immigrant parents’ experience in Clarksburg, WV)
* NUMBER THE STARS by Lois Lowry
* BUD, NOT BUDDY by Christopher Paul Curtis

### ESPERANZA RISING by Pam Muñoz Ryan

* SOPHIA’S WAR: A TALE OF REVOLUTION by Avi