The story
In September 1838, a ship, the *Forfarshire*, is making its way up the east coast of England, from Hull to Dundee. In the middle of the night, during a fierce storm, the ship’s engines break down and the wind pushes it onto the rocks of the Farne Islands.

There is a lighthouse on one of the Farne Islands, and the lighthouse man, William Darling, his wife Thomasin, and their daughter Grace are looking after the light. Grace sits up in the night checking that the light is burning properly, and early in the morning, as she goes to bed, she sees the wreck of the *Forfarshire* on Harker’s Rock about three hundred metres from the lighthouse.

At first, she and her father think that everyone on the ship is dead, but in fact twelve people have climbed onto the rock itself. Later in the morning, Grace sees them on the rock, and she and her father realize that they must row their boat to the rock and rescue them. It is a terrible and dangerous journey, as the storm is still raging. When they reach the rock, they realize that their boat is too small to take all the survivors. One man and two children have died from the cold, but there are still nine people there. They are forced to take only a few back to the lighthouse. Then Mr Darling and two of the survivors row back again to the rock to rescue the others. Because of her help in the brave rescue, Grace Darling became a national heroine.

Background to the story
*Grace Darling* tells a true story of the days when Britain was famous as a maritime power. Many people at that time depended on the sea and ships, and the importance of lighthouses, and the people who worked in them, was recognized by all. It is not surprising that so many people, including Queen Victoria, were so impressed with the bravery of Grace Darling – they knew that the lives of hundreds of thousands of people depended on the protection of people like her.

There are still hundreds of lighthouses around the coast of Britain, but there are no more lighthouse men living in lonely isolation on them. Since 1997, all Britain’s lighthouses have been automatic.

Before reading
Here are some ways to help your students approach the story:

1. Give students the title of the book and show them the picture on the cover. Ask them to try and guess what kind of story it is.
2. Ask the students to read the text on the back cover of the book, and the story introduction on the first page. Then ask them a few questions about the story, or use the Before Reading Activities in the back of each Bookworm.
3. Use the pre-reading activity in this worksheet.
4. If there is a recording of this title, play the first few pages and stop at an interesting point.
Match the words with the pictures

1. a ‘If there are people alive on that ship now, you cannot save them, William.’
2. b They shouted and waved at the lighthouse as hard as they could.
3. c ‘These engines are too old, and this one is broken in three places.’
4. d The fourth time, William Darling jumped.
5. e ‘God help the poor sailors to see this light.’
6. f ‘We’re all going to die!’ Daniel shouted. ‘No one knows we’re here!’
7. g Slowly, very slowly, the lighthouse came nearer.
8. h ‘What’s happened to the engines?’ said Mrs Dawson suddenly.

To the teacher

Aim: To familiarize students with the story and its setting
Time: 5–10 minutes
Organization: Give one copy of the worksheet to each student or each group of students. Ask the students to match the words with the appropriate picture. When the students have completed this task, check the answers with them. Then ask them for ideas about the content of the story. Do not concentrate on getting the correct answers: the important thing here is for students to develop ideas which they can check when they read.

Key: 1c, 2a, 3g, 4h, 5d, 6b, 7e, 8f
Grace Darling
While reading activity

Spot the mistakes

Read this summary of the story (Chapters 1–3) and correct the mistakes.

One night in the winter of 1840, the *Forfarshire* was making a journey from Dundee to Hull. The wind was strong and the waves were very big. One of the passengers, Daniel Donovan, was travelling with his two sons.

About thirty kilometres north of the *Forfarshire* was the lighthouse on St Abbs Head. In the lighthouse were Grace Darling and her husband William. It was their job to keep the light burning all night. Their son, who lived with them, was not there that night.

The captain stopped the *Forfarshire’s* engines. They were broken. The sailors put up a big sail to help the ship move through the waves. It was dark, and Daniel could see nothing except the sea and the waves.

Now write your summary of Chapter 4. Include five mistakes.
When you have written it, give it to somebody to correct.

To the teacher

*Where:* At the end of Chapter 4
*Aim:* To help with summarizing and revision of reading
*Time:* 20–30 minutes
*Organization:* Give each student a worksheet. The activity is in three parts which can take place in one lesson or be spread over two. For the first part, the students read the summary (which summarizes the story up to the end of Chapter 3) and correct the mistakes they find. In the second part they write their own summaries for Chapter 4 with deliberate mistakes included. In the third part they read one another’s summaries and find and correct the deliberate mistakes.
Grace Darling
After reading activity

Character crosswords

Look at the crosswords for Mary Dawson. Can you make similar
crosswords for some of the other characters?

OTHER
ALONE
LOVES HER CHILDREN
VERY FRIGHTENED

G
R
A
C
E

D
A
N
I
E
L

W
I
L
L
A
M

To the teacher

Aim: To revise character
Time: 20–30 minutes

Organization: Give each student, or group of students, a copy of the worksheet and ask them to make character crosswords as in the example.