

S1 Flannan Isle Newspaper Report
Home Learning Project

FLANNAN ISLE NEWSPAPER REPORT



Flannan Isle

Read through the tasks below and work your way through them.
Write your answers in a word document or on paper/in your jotter.

BY THE END OF THIS UNIT I WILL HAVE:

- ✓ Worked on my own to understand a poem.
- ✓ Learned about newspaper articles and their structure.
- ✓ Planned and created my own Newspaper Article based on the poem.
- ✓ Evaluated my own work.



Can you see Flannan Isle on the map?

Do you think they are isolated or well connected to other parts of Scotland?

Read through the poem below and look up any words you are not sure of in the dictionary or online.

If you prefer, you can listen to the poem being read aloud here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nEZBcHEuO2A&ab_channel=L=MaverickProductions

Flannan Isle

'Though three men dwell on Flannan Isle
To keep the lamp alight,
As we steer'd under the lee, we caught
No glimmer through the night.

A passing ship at dawn had brought
The news; and quickly we set sail,
To find out what strange thing might ail
The keepers of the deep-sea light.

The winter day broke blue and bright,
With glancing sun and glancing spray,
As o'er the swell our boat made way,
As gallant as a gull in flight.

But, as we near'd the lonely isle,
And looked up at the naked height;
And saw the lighthouse towering white,
With blinded lantern, that all night
Had never shot a spark
Of comfort through the dark,
So ghostly in the cold sunlight
It seem'd, that we were struck the while
With wonder all too dread for words.

And, as into the tiny creek
We stole beneath the hanging crag,
We saw three queer, black, ugly birds-
Too big, by far, in my belief,
For guilliemot or shag-
Like seamen sitting bolt-upright

Upon a half-tide reef:
But as we near'd, they plunged from sight,
Without a sound, or spurt of white.

And still too mazed to speak,
We landed, and made fast the boat;
And climb'd the track in single file,
Each wishing he was safe afloat,
On any sea, however far,
So it be far from Flannan Isle:
And still we seem'd to climb, and climb,
As though we'd lost all count of time,
And so must climb for evermore.
Yet, all too soon, we reached the door-
The black, sun-blister'd lighthouse door,
That gaped for us ajar.

As, on the threshold, for a spell,
We paused, we seem'd to breathe the smell
Of limewash and of tar,
Familiar as our daily breath,
As though 'twere some strange scent of death:
And so, yet wondering, side by side,
We stood a moment, still tongue-tied:
And each with black foreboding eyed
The door, ere we should fling it wide,
To leave the sunlight for the gloom:
Till, plucking courage up, at last,
Hard on each other's heels we pass'd
Into the living room.

Yet, as we crowded through the door,
We only saw a table spread
For dinner, meat and cheese and bread;
But all untouch'd; and no-one there:
As though, when they sat down to eat,
Ere they could even take a taste,
Alarm had come; and they in haste
Had risen and left the bread and meat;
For at the table-head a chair
Lay tumbled on the floor.

We listen'd; but we only heard
The feeble chirping of a bird
That starved upon its perch:
And listening still, without a word,
We set about our hopeless search.

We hunted high, we hunted low,
And soon ransack'd the empty house;
The o'er the island, to and fro,
We ranged, to listen and to look
In every cranny, cleft or nook
That might have hid a bird or mouse:
But, thought we search'd from shore to shore,
We found no sign in any place;
And soon again stood face to face
Before the gaping door:
And stole into the room once more
As frighten'd children steal.

Aye: though we hunted high and low,
And hunted everywhere,
Of the three men's fate we found no trace
Of any kind in any place,
But a door ajar, and an untouch'd meal,
And an overtoppled chair.

And, as we listen'd in the glood
Of that forsaken living room-
A chill clutch on our breath-
We thought how ill-change came to all
Who kept the Flannan Light;
And how the rock had been the death
Of many a likely lad:
How six had come to a sudden end,
And three had gone stark mad:
And one whom we'd all known as friend
Had leapt from the lantern one still night,
And fallen dead by the lighthouse wall:
And long we thought
On the three we sought,
And of what might yet befall.

Like curs a glance had brought to heel,
We listen'd, flinching there:
And look'd and look'd, on the untouch'd meak
And the overtoppled chair.

We seem'd to stand for an endless while,
Though still no word was said,
Three men alive on Flannan Isle,
Who thought on three men dead.

Wilfred Wilson Gibson

The following questions should be answered in sentences and will help with your initial understanding of the poem.

1. How many men normally stayed on Flannan Isle? Why do you think that was?
2. What news did a passing ship give to the coastguard?
3. What season was it?
4. What was unusual about the three birds the rescuers saw?
5. Give a reason for the repetition of the word "climb" in the poem.
6. How did the men feel as they stepped on to the island?
7. What was unusual or frightening about the lighthouse door?
8. Explain what the rescuers found in the living room.
9. We are given an indication that something had happened on Flannan Isle once before. Explain what you think happened.
10. This is a narrative poem as it is telling a story. What kind of story would you say this is?



If you found the poem difficult to follow or understand watch this 16 minute clip which will give you all the information you need: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MoFwXvDEy2Q&ab_channel=BedtimeStories

Flannan Isle

TABLOID NEWSPAPER REPORT

TASK 1:

Make up a headline about the Flannan Isle mystery that would attract some interest and attention.

Here is a headline about Boris Johnson and the coronavirus in the Sun newspaper: "Bo Way Out". This uses a pun (a play on words with two meanings - in this case playing with the phrase no way out and using Boris's first name to make a pun) to attract the reader's attention.



Think about words like: MYSTERY, TRAGEDY, DISASTER... You could also include some ALLITERATION or a PUN in your headline.

Write the headline in the box below:

1. Why is your headline effective?

2. Why would your headline make readers want to read your article?

Flannan Isle

TASK 2:

The first paragraph...

You are now going to think about the first paragraph of your newspaper report.

- The first paragraph should be short
- It should only contain the most basic information about the mystery
- It should only deal with WHERE, WHEN, WHAT, WHO...

Write your answers in the boxes below:

Where?

When?

Who?

What?

Flannan Isle

DEVELOPING A TABLOID NEWSPAPER REPORT



Having looked at what makes a good Headline, and what to include in the opening paragraph, you are now going to write your opening paragraph.

- The opening paragraph answers four key questions - briefly.
What happened
Where is happened
When it happened
Who it happened to

The following paragraph about a road accident includes all of these facts. Use this as a model for your first paragraph.

Yesterday evening, two people were injured in a road traffic accident when traffic lights failed on the Loch Lomond Road.

TASK: Individual activity

- 🕒 You have 5 minutes to construct a similar opening paragraph for your Flannan Isle newspaper report.



THE HIGHLAND NEWS

Friday 28 December 1900

Price 1d



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Flannan Isle

By now you should have completed your Newspaper Article on the Flannan Isle Mystery. Let's look and see how well you have done!
Colour in each circle below depending on how well you think you did.



GREEN - I was confident and understood the target exactly. I can do what it says.

AMBER - I could do a bit of the target but will need to do some more work on it.

RED - I did not understand what I was supposed to be doing.

HAVE I:

- Ⓢ Worked effectively on my own?
- Ⓢ Learned about newspaper articles and their structure?
- Ⓢ Planned and created my own newspaper article?
- Ⓢ Developed my confidence when listening and talking to others?
- Ⓢ Checked my own spelling?
- Ⓢ Checked my own paragraphing?
- Ⓢ Checked my own punctuation?

In my opinion:

The strengths of my newspaper article are



My Personal Target is to work on:



Piece of work - next steps

Learning Partner's Name - could be your parent

I thought the strengths of this piece of work were -

For the redraft my partner should focus on improving-

Flannan Isle Close Reading Extension Task

In this passage, the writer tells us about a famous Scottish mystery.

THE ISLAND OF LOST SOULS

Seven lumps of rock 30 miles off the west coast of Lewis, the outermost of the Outer Hebrides, the Flannan Islands have a good claim to be the most deserted place in Britain. The only inhabitants are thousands of puffins, some nesting fulmars, the “little people” of Gaelic folklore and the ghosts. But I have longed to visit the Flannans ever

since, when I was a little boy, my father would scare us into delighted terror with the story of the Flannan lighthouse, one of the strangest unsolved mysteries in Scottish history.

The story goes like this: for centuries the Seven Hunters, as the local people called the islands, had preyed on shipping. Innumerable vessels had perished on the rocks, including remnants of the Spanish Armada. So the Victorians, with the spirit typical of the age, decided to build a lighthouse here, on the edge of the world.

A year after the lighthouse was lit, a steamer from Oban was sent out to relieve the three lighthouse keepers, who had been on the island, alone, for three months. As the ship approached in the morning gloom, her master could see no lights on the island. Captain Harvie sent two men scrambling up the cliff. The gate to the lighthouse enclosure was bolted, but the door of the lighthouse itself was open. Food lay uneaten on the table. Two sets of boots and oilskins had gone, but the third was still in the rack. The entries in the lighthouse log ended abruptly a week earlier, and the clocks had wound down. A chair lay on its back, but otherwise there was no sign of violence. The lamp was filled with paraffin, and the beds were neatly made. Of the three lighthouse keepers there was not a sign. The mystery remains unsolved, though many have put forward theories. For more than 30 years I had wanted to see the place for myself.

We anchored at the main island, Eilean Mor, with the lighthouse silhouetted above us through the clearing mist. Most of the steps in the side of the rock have been worn away by the sea, and all that remains of the handrail are a few rusting posts. We had to time our jump to the height of the 5 foot swell, and cling to the seaweed. We crawled up the side of the rock, 80 feet of scramble, to emerge on the top of the cliff. There a reception committee was waiting, clad in formal evening wear: several thousand tiny puffins stood and stared at us, curious, entirely without fear.

The lighthouse has been fully automated since the Seventies, when the last keepers departed, leaving the islands in perfect human isolation, save for the helicopter that lands once a year for the annual service by the Northern Lighthouse Board, and the odd rugged birdwatcher.

The sense of solitude was as penetrating as the mist. Here on the last outcrop of the Atlantic shelf, look in any direction and you see . . . nothing. Solitude brought St Flannan here in the first place. Below the lighthouse is the ruin of his “chapel”, the tiny stone bothy where this resilient hermit reputedly spent several years in the 9th century. We crawled inside; the rising wind howled through the cracks between the stones. What must it have been like for the lighthouse keepers, cooped up in a brick tube for months, battered by wind, rain and waves? That was one of the many questions asked by Superintendent Robert Muirhead, who was dispatched by the Northern Lighthouse Board in January, 1901, to try to solve the Flannan Islands mystery.

Muirhead studied the weather, the tides, and the logs of every ship in the area. He interviewed the families of the vanished men, the people of Lewis and the ocean. A man of the modern age, an engineer, Muirhead was plunged into a world of ancient superstitions.

Some claimed that the men had been devoured by sea monsters, or spirited away by the angry spirit of Flannan. The poet Wilfred Wilson Gibson whipped up controversy by writing a ghostly poem imagining that the men had turned into three great black birds, and plunged into the sea. Newspapers luridly speculated that the men had fallen out, or been driven to madness and suicide by solitude, or the demon drink; it was rumoured that one man had murdered the other two, and then hurled himself from the cliff-top. The sailors and fishermen talked of the “Fist of God”, the freak wave of ancient maritime legend, a rogue wall of water that rises suddenly out of the sea and pulls down ships and men, only to vanish again.

Several aspects of the incident did not (and do not) add up. The superintendent dismissed the notion that the three men had been blown off the island by a mighty gust of wind, pointing out that since the wind was westerly that night, this would have forced them up to the island and away from the cliffs. About 100 feet above sea-level, safety railings had been wrenched out of shape. Muirhead reckoned a boulder must have crashed down from the ledge above, but the sight of the ironwork—“displaced and twisted in a manner difficult to believe unless actually seen”—spooked even him. Why had one of the men left the lighthouse building in his shirtsleeves? If some catastrophe had befallen the men, who had had time to bolt the entrance gate to the lighthouse? Above all, if the men had drowned, the prevailing tides should have swept the bodies towards the Hebrides. Despite an intensive search, no body was found.

We stood on the crumbling steps leading down to the north landing. Here the wind was so strong that it was easy to imagine a man being swept to his death from here; but three? Was there some tragic collision between new technology and ancient beliefs? Or was there a rational explanation? Muirhead concluded “that an unexpectedly large roller had come up on the Island, and swept them away with resistless force”.

He was probably right. Recent satellite research has shown that rogue waves of immense height are a more frequent occurrence than previously believed, scientific fact rather than maritime folklore.

Ben Macintyre in *The Times Magazine*, 21st January, 2006 (slightly adapted)

QUESTIONS

1. Explain why “the Flannan Islands have a good claim to be the most deserted place in Britain” (lines 2–3). **Use your own words** as far as possible.
2. What is surprising about the expression “delighted terror” (line 5)?
3. Why is the word “preyed” (line 9) appropriate here?
4. Look at lines 15–21, and explain **in your own words** what the “mystery” was.
5. Look at lines 24–27. Explain why any **one** example of the writer’s **word choice** effectively makes it clear that the climb up to the lighthouse was a difficult one.
6. Look at the words “formal evening wear” (line 28). Explain why this expression may seem **either** surprising **or** appropriate here.
7. Choose an expression from lines 30–33, and show how it helps us to understand the meaning of “rugged” as it is used here.
8. The writer tells us: “The sense of solitude was as penetrating as the mist” (line 34).
 - (i) What does the writer mean by a “sense of solitude”?
 - (ii) Why is this an effective comparison or simile?
9. Why does the writer use inverted commas round “chapel” (line 36)?
10. Show how **one** example of the writer’s **word choice** in lines 38–40 effectively

conveys the hardships of the lighthouse keepers' lives.

11. What do lines 43–44 tell us about the way Muirhead approached his task?

12. Look at the sentence “A man of the modern age, an engineer, Muirhead was plunged into a world of ancient superstitions” (lines 45–46). How does one feature of the **imagery** help to suggest something about Muirhead’s task?

13. Write down an expression from the next paragraph which continues the idea introduced by “superstitions” (line 46).

14. Show how the meaning of “luridly speculated” (line 50) is made clear in the rest of the paragraph.

15. Look at lines 57–68. Identify **two** of the “aspects” of the events which “do not . . . add up”. **Use your own words** as far as possible.

16. Identify one feature of **sentence structure** in lines 69–72 which is appropriate for this story of mystery.

17. Explain why any feature of the final paragraph (lines 75–77) helps to make these sentences a satisfying conclusion to the passage.



