

Letters from the Lighthouse

Read Chapter 3

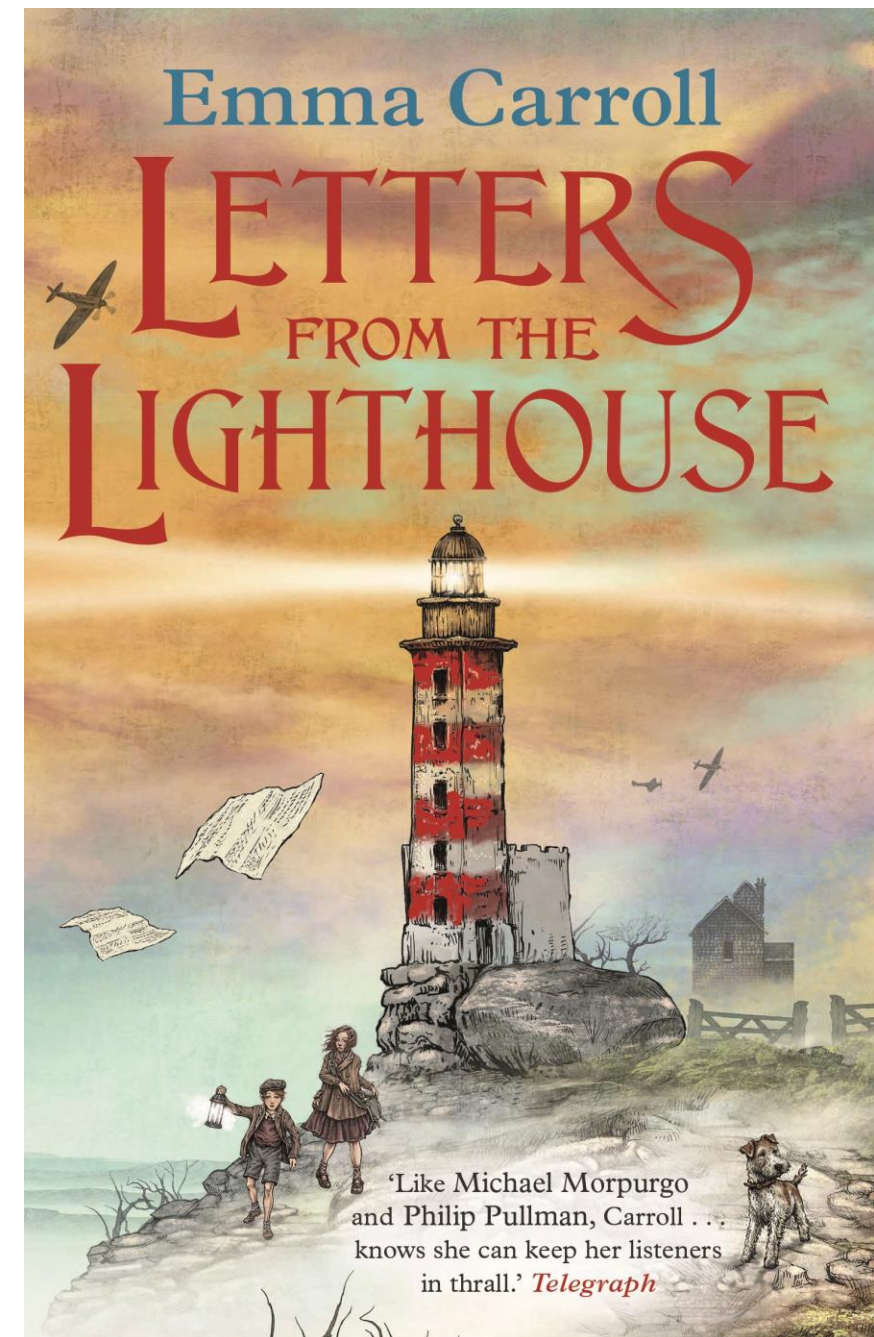
or

[Listen to Chapter 3 here](#)



MOTHERS: SEND THEM OUT OF LONDON

The following Wednesday I was allowed home from hospital. There'd still been no sign of Sukie, and it was strange coming back to our house and her not being here. In my darker moments I began to wonder if Mum was being realistic – perhaps my sister *was* dead. Maybe Mum knew and wasn't telling us. I watched her mood for changes, but the truth was she was always sad nowadays so it was hard to tell. At a loss as to what else to do, I decided to investigate the boyfriend possibility. Sukie had obviously planned to meet someone that night, someone who she'd dressed up for, who'd



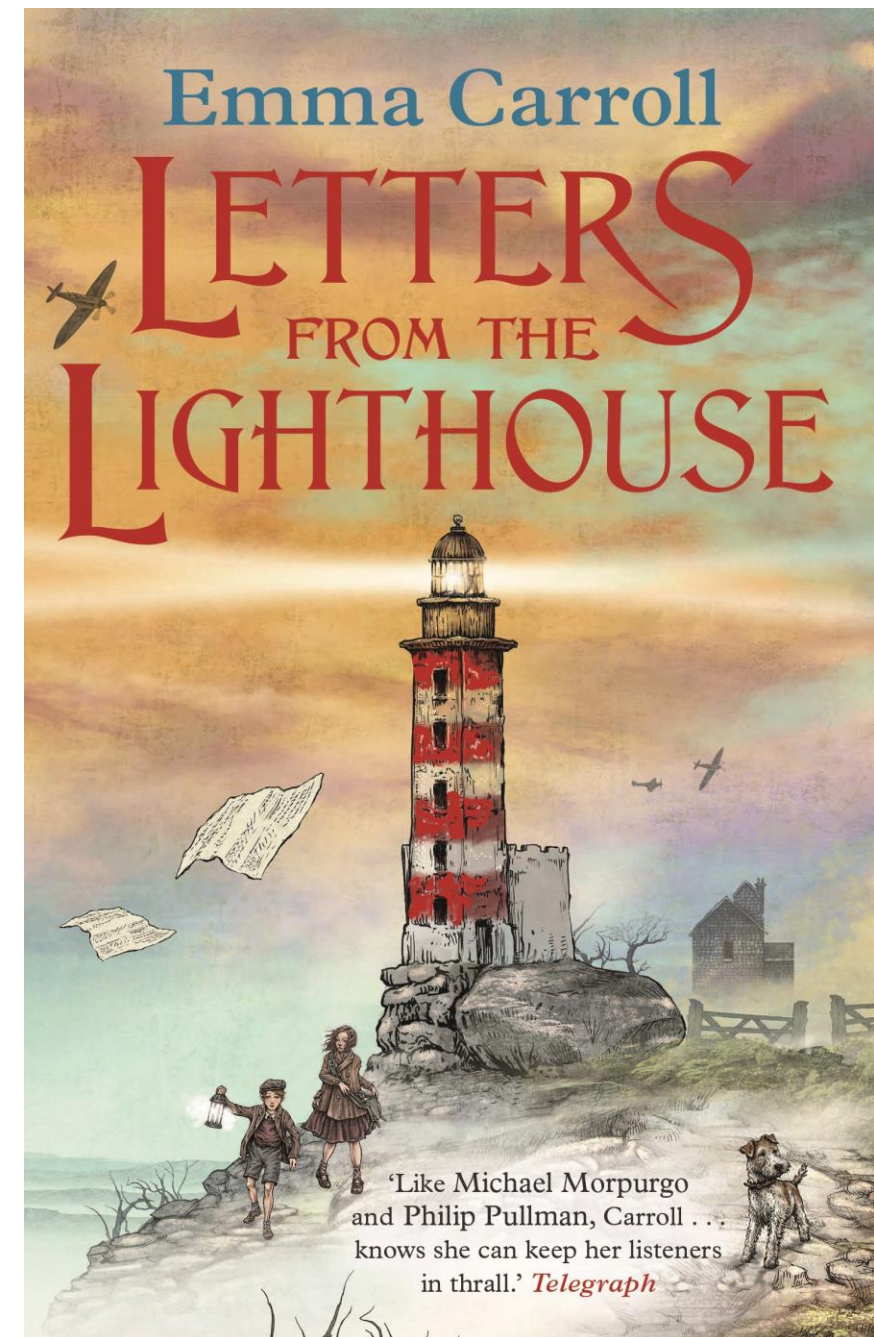
given her a note. Perhaps it'd been a love letter!

Excited by my theory, I asked Cliff what he thought.

'Ugh! A *boyfriend*? *Love letters*? That's disgusting,' he said, making sick noises.

So I didn't tell him what I found when, one afternoon as Mum slept, I tiptoed into Sukie's room and looked through her drawers. There were letters – loads of them tied up with ribbon and stuffed inside old chocolate boxes so they smelled of peppermint and toffee. All postmarked 'Devon', they were obviously from her penpal Queenie, though it wasn't these that caught my eye.

Underneath the chocolate boxes was a map. On seeing it, my heart gave a peculiar thud. There wasn't time to read it properly: hearing Mum stir in the next room, I knew I'd better get out of there quick. But not before I'd

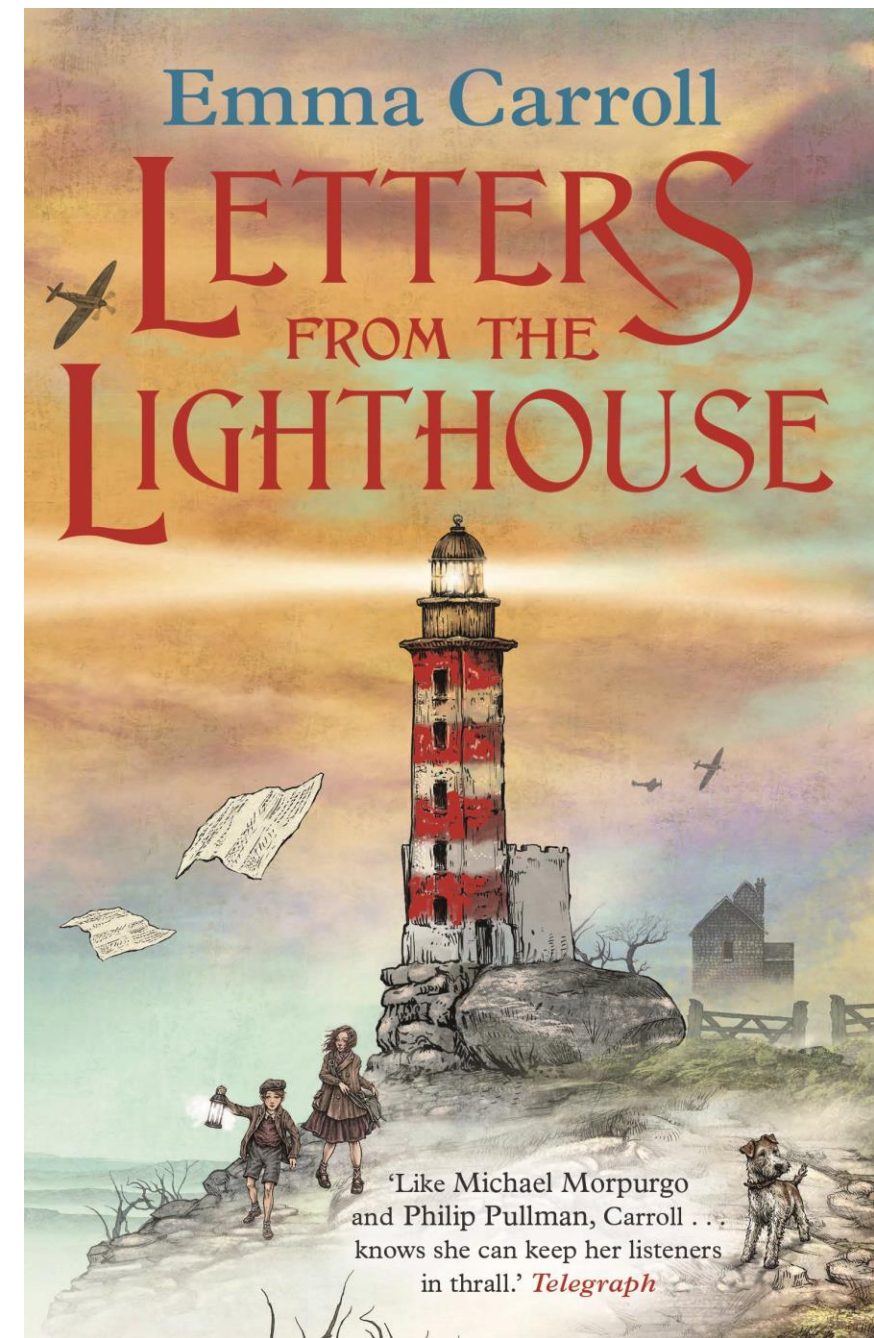


glimpsed a coastline and some foreign-sounding names.

I shut the drawer again feeling more confused, not less. Sukie hadn't mentioned going away, nor had she told us about a boyfriend. Perhaps she'd gone somewhere to be romantic with him, though I couldn't think where. It was winter still, for starters, and people didn't go on holiday these days, not with the war on. Yet it gave me hope thinking that's what she'd done, because holidays didn't last forever: people eventually had to come home.

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Later that day Mum called Cliff and me to the kitchen. On the table stood two empty suitcases. Gloria from next door was sitting in a chair, drinking tea. Seeing my forehead she gave a low whistle. 'Jeepers, Olive, that bruise is all the colours of the rainbow.'



‘She’s got concussion,’ Cliff said proudly.

‘*Had* concussion,’ I corrected him.

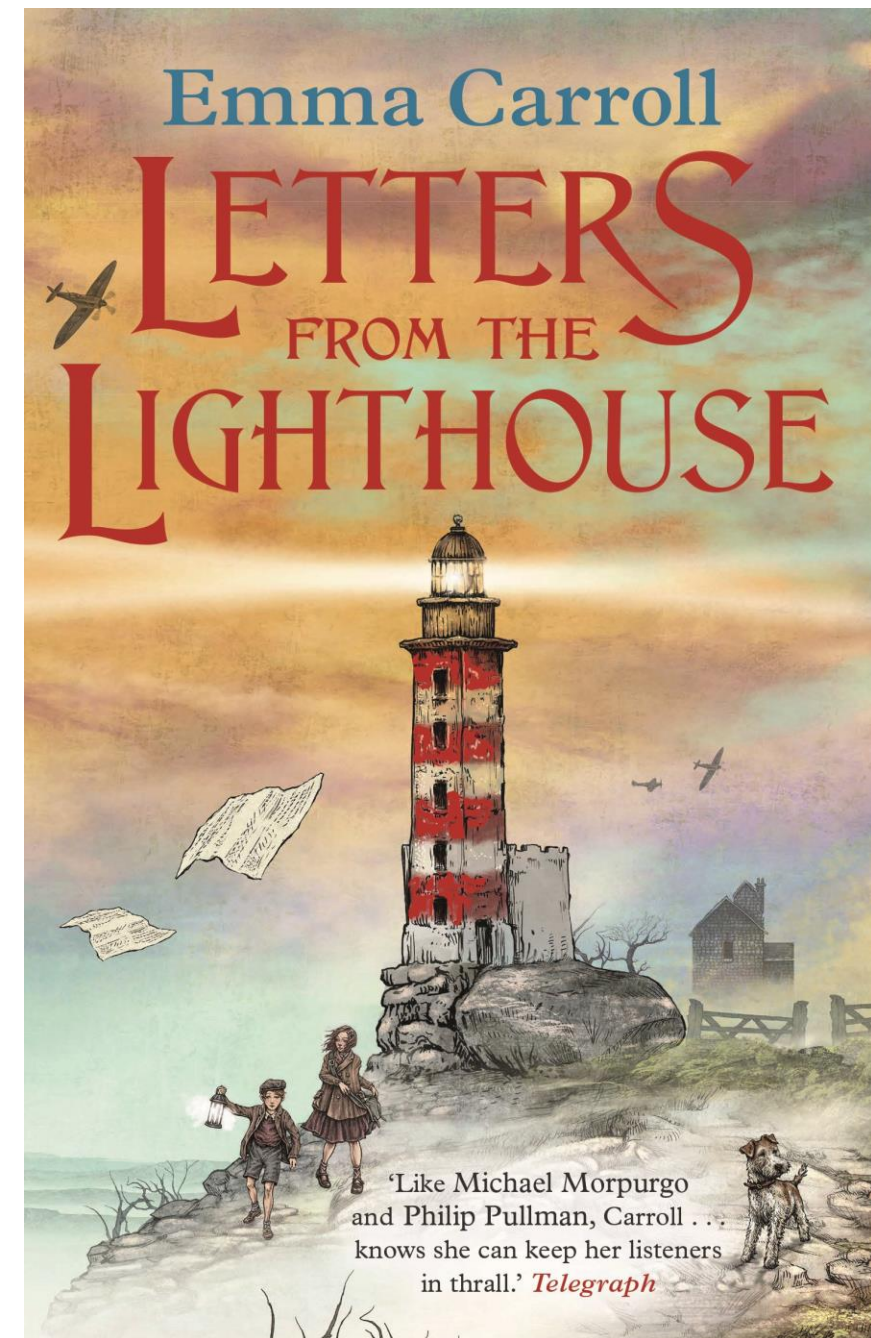
Gloria winked at me: ‘Don’t you let Jerry get away with it, my girl. Make sure you give him what for.’

‘Jerry’ was what Dad and his army pals used to call Germans, and little reminders like this often made me sad. But it was hard to feel glum with Gloria in our kitchen. She was one of those big, bright people you couldn’t help but like, whose throaty laugh made you smile. She was Mum’s best friend, and she’d become a sort of auntie to us, not having kids of her own or a husband – ‘he ran off with the circus,’ she told me once. I didn’t know if it was true.

As Mum moved about the kitchen making tea, I sat down next to Gloria.

‘Do you know anything about Sukie having a boyfriend?’ I asked her.

She gave me a funny look – alarmed, almost –



before glancing over her shoulder at Mum.

‘Best not to mention your sister at the moment,’ she whispered, leaning towards me. ‘Your mum’s feeling fragile about the whole business.’

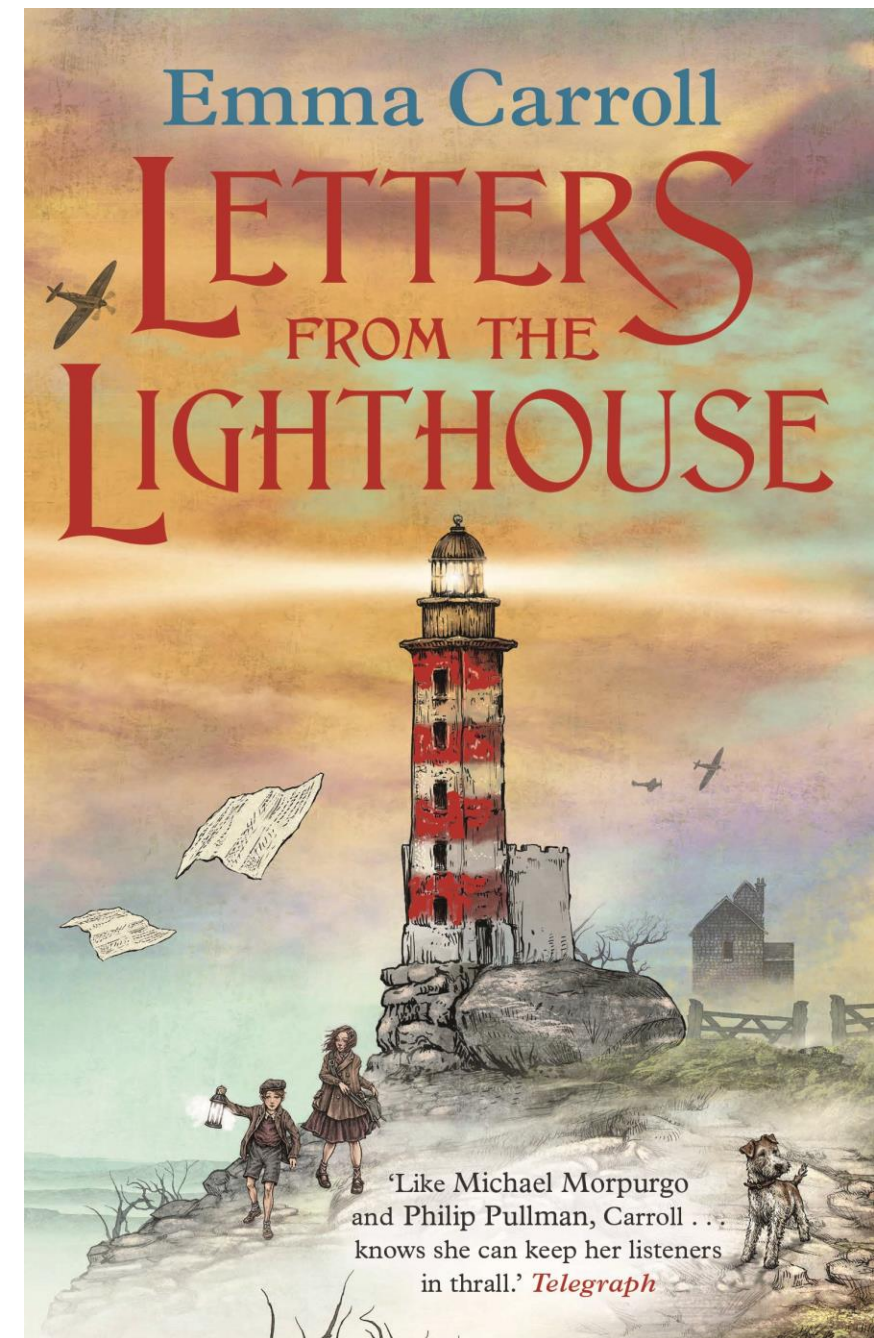
I sat back in my seat. It was then I properly took notice of the suitcases on the table. Cliff was *click-clicking* the catches and asking Mum if we were going somewhere nice.

‘Hopefully.’ Mum twisted her wedding ring, which meant she was nervous. ‘After what happened to you, Olive, and ... to Sukie ... I’ve had to accept it’s really not safe for you to stay on in London.’

Now I was nervous too, because I’d guessed what the suitcases were for.

‘You’re *evacuating* us, aren’t you?’ I said in surprise. ‘But you can’t. I mean ... you need us here ... *we* need to be here.’

That was always what Mum said. We *needed*



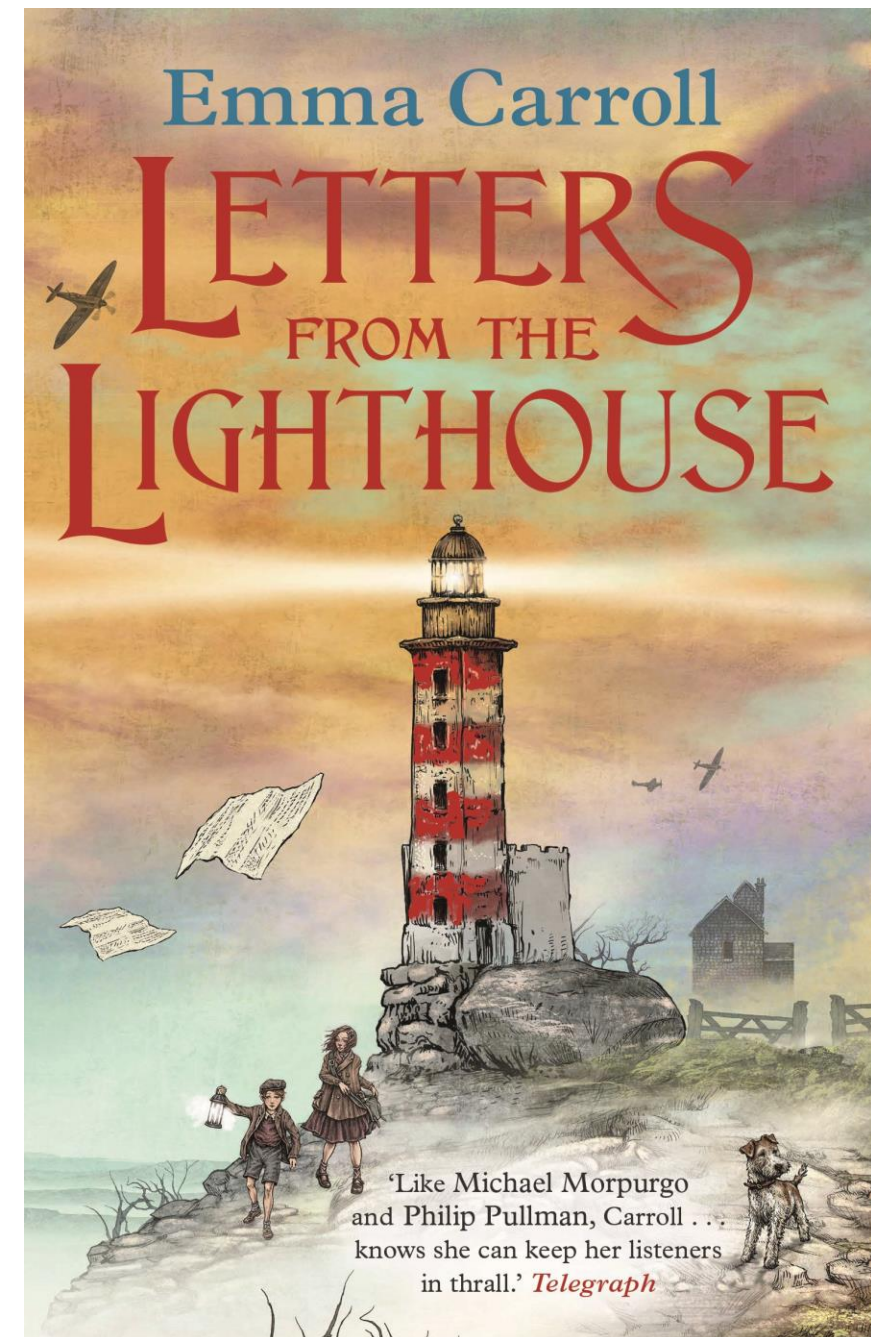
to be together, especially after Dad went off to fight. When war was declared, all the schools round our way closed. Our classmates and our teacher Miss Higgins got evacuated to Kent and for a while I'd get postcards from my friends Maggie and Susan, who told me all I was missing – which wasn't much by the sound of it.

'You know the raids have got worse these past few months, darling.' Mum looked pained. 'It won't be for ever, I promise.'

I felt guilty when Cliff seemed so excited. He was already lifting one of the suitcases down from the table and bombarding Mum with questions.

'Will I have to share a bedroom? Will the people we stay with be nice? I hope they've got a dog – can we ask to be with a dog?'

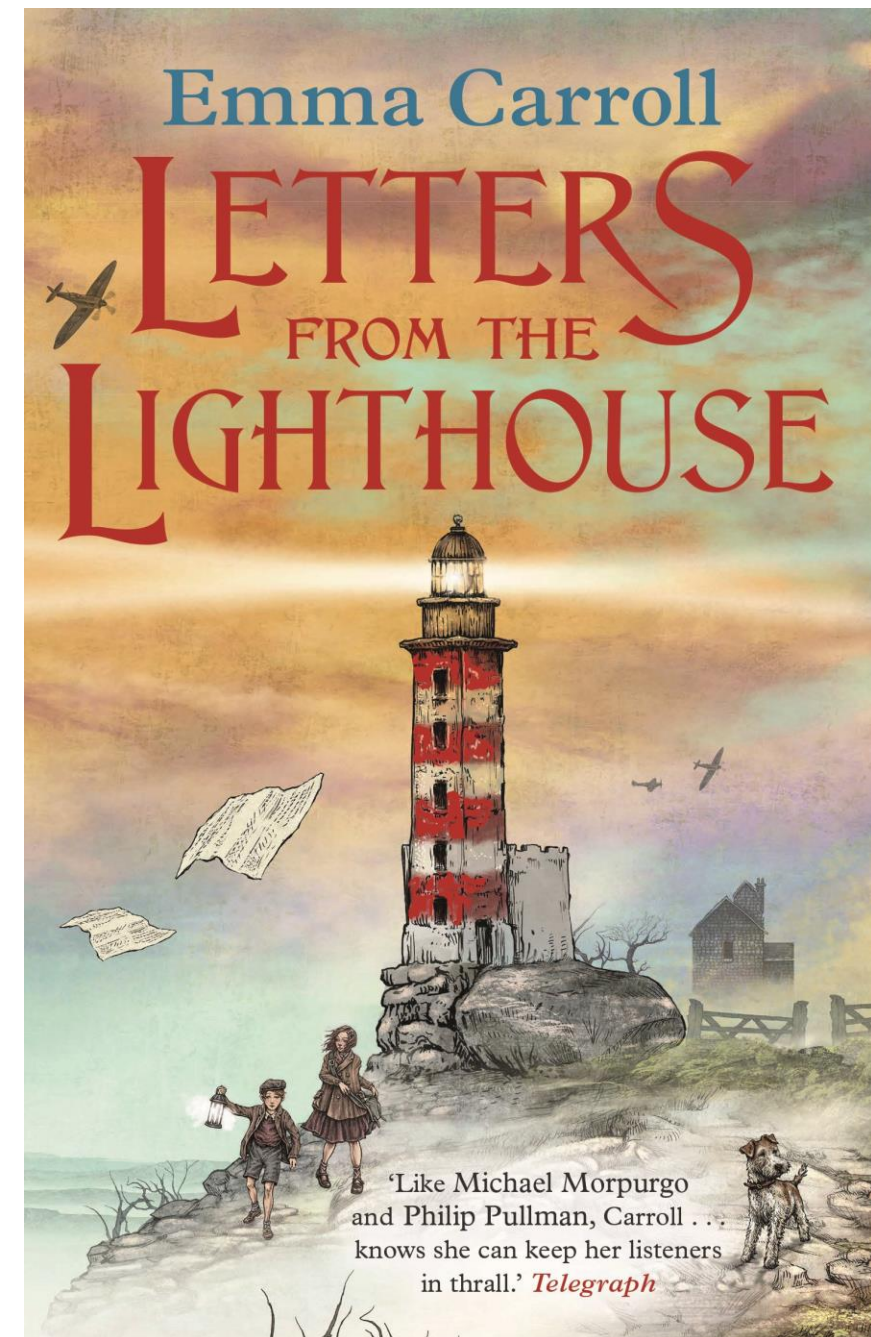
'I don't know,' Mum kept saying. 'You'll have to wait and see.'



Yet how could we leave not knowing where Sukie was? How could I find out about her boyfriend from somewhere deep in the countryside? It was infuriating and disheartening and made my head ache.

‘Lots of children get sent away,’ Mum said, putting her arm round me. ‘Some even have to move whole countries because of the war. You remember the Kindertransport, don’t you?’

I did, vaguely. A year or so ago, at school, some children who couldn’t speak English joined our class and we were amazed at how quickly they learned. They’d come over from Germany because, being Jewish, it wasn’t safe for them there. Mum said they’d been blamed for all the bad things happening in their country, which was odd because lots of their parents were musicians and doctors and writers. You’d think their country would be proud of such clever people.



‘So chin up, you won’t be going too far – a train journey at most.’ Mum kissed the top of my head, then looked distant again. ‘The most important thing is that you’re safe.’

‘Are we going soon?’ I asked.

‘First thing Monday,’ Mum replied.

I bit my lip: that was only a few days away.

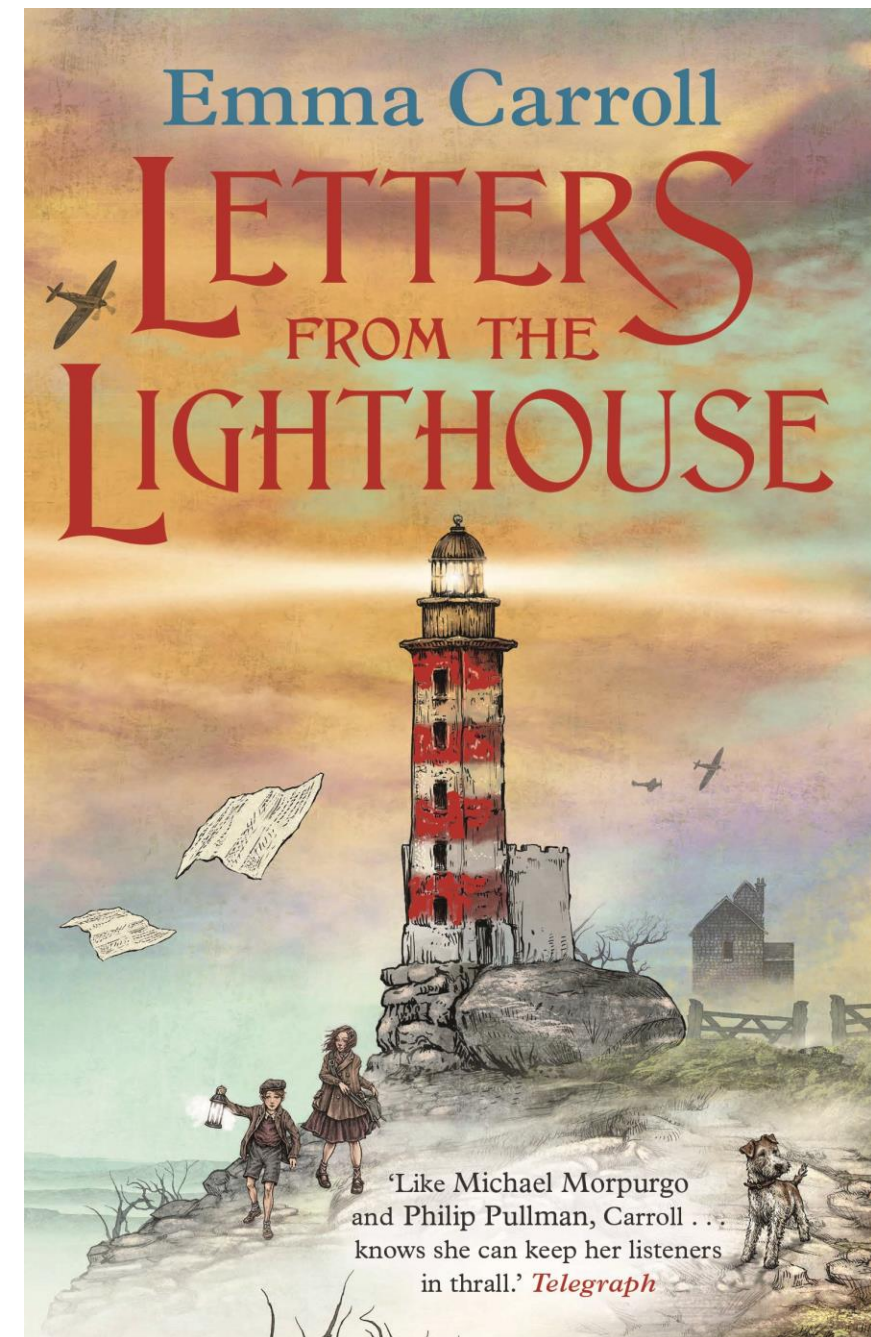
‘Where are we going, though?’ Cliff wanted to know.

Gloria tapped the side of her nose. ‘Leave that to me.’

Then her and Mum shared a *meaningful* look, the sort adults do when they don’t want you to understand.

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Cliff and me spent the weekend packing: underclothes, nightclothes, sweaters, socks, toothbrushes, combs. Though it still didn’t seem right to be leaving, I couldn’t deny the



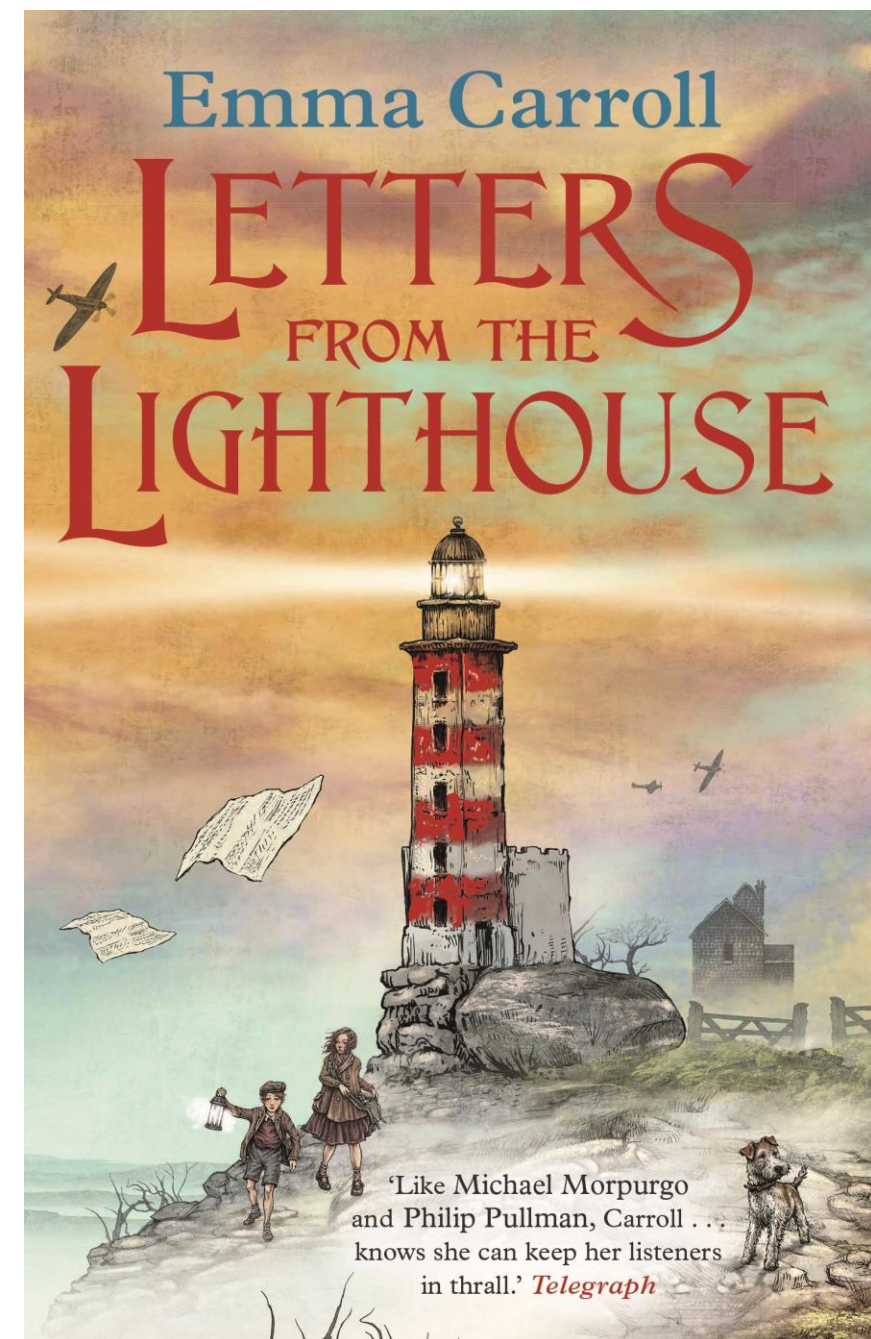
odd twinge of excitement. It'd been quite boring really, staying behind in London. The only people left on our street these days were babies, women and grumpy old men: there weren't even enough kids to play a game of hopscotch. I missed my classmates. There were even times when I'd missed going to school.

Who knew where we'd be this time next week? Perhaps I'd make some new friends and Cliff might find himself a dog willing to sleep at the foot of his bed.

Mum told me to limit the books I took.

'Just take three,' she said. 'You won't be able to carry your case otherwise.'

But wanting all my favourites with me, I couldn't choose, so I packed five when she wasn't looking. I also took the seashell Dad had once given me, that sat on my window and had the sound of waves in it when you put it to

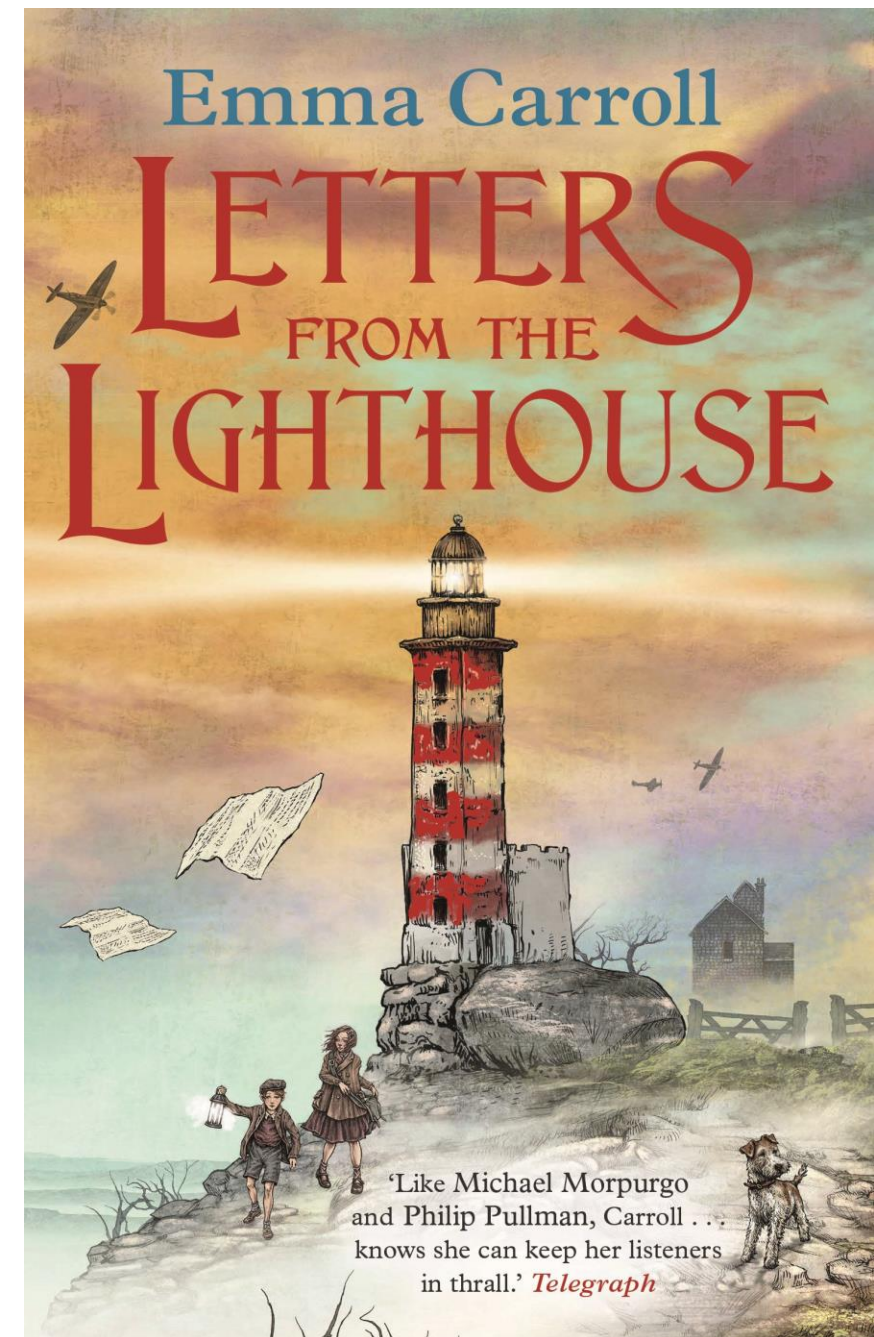


your ear.

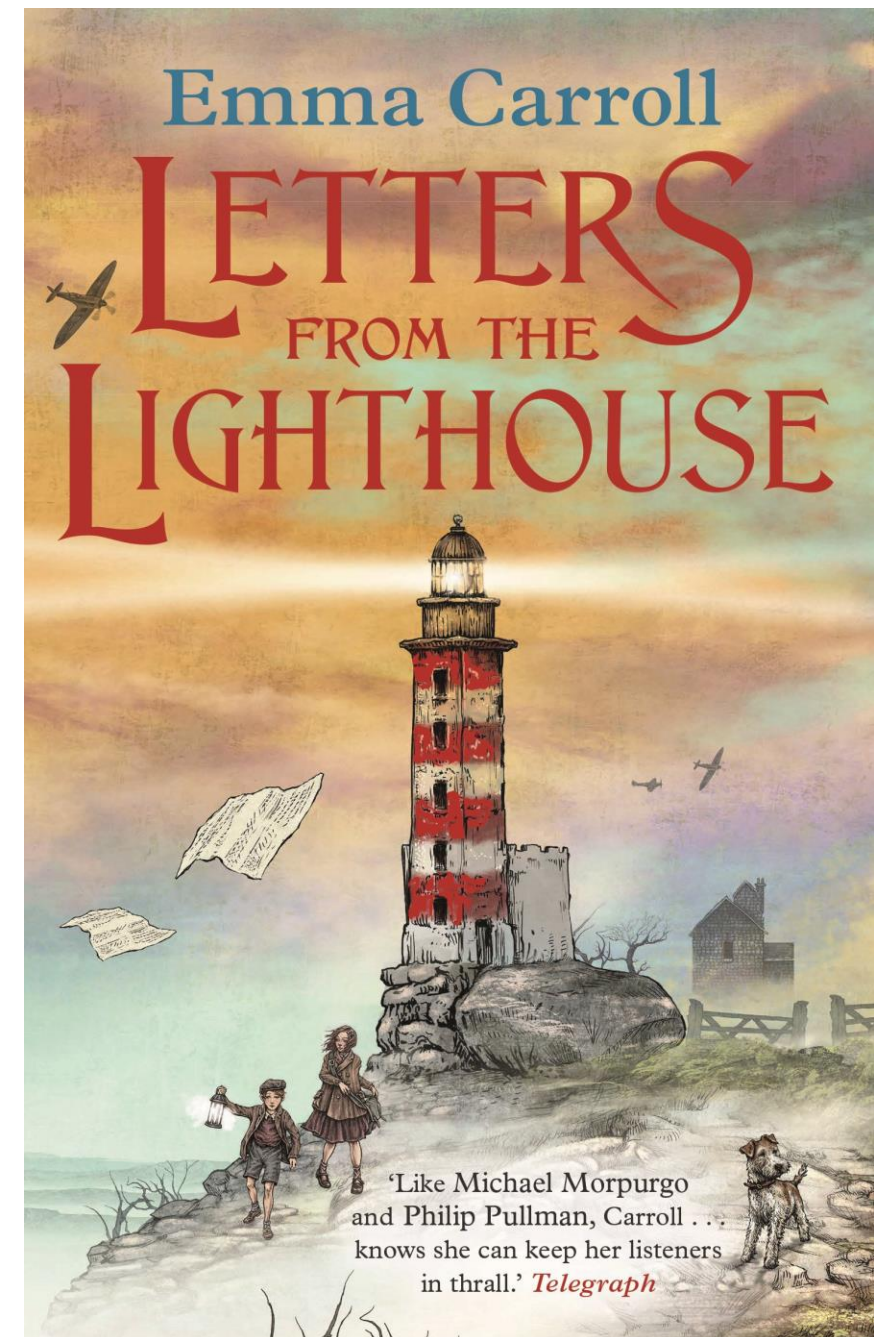
Once packed, we checked our things off from the list our local billeting officer had given out and which'd been unread in the kitchen drawer since the war began. The official government information said we had to wear school uniform for our journey. After a year at the back of our wardrobe, Cliff's short trousers hung high above his knees, and my pinafore would barely do up. There was also the question of my winter coat, which looked decidedly shabby.

'I can't send you off looking like that,' Mum said, eyeing me critically. 'You'd better have my smart one. It's decent and warm, and it's silly not to make use of it.'

Even so, I almost didn't take it. The smell on the collar was Sukie's smell, and it made a lump come to my throat. Yet when I put the coat on and turned back the cuffs a bit, I could



almost imagine how she'd felt that night wearing it: strong and brave. By the time I went to bed on Sunday night, I was almost looking forward to the morning.



What is Formal and Informal Language?

Do you know what the difference between formal and informal language is?

Formal Language

Formal language is used for more official and serious purposes. The correct grammar and standard English should always be used.

Imagine you were speaking to the queen. This 'posh' way of speaking is formal language.



“Good afternoon Your Royal Highness, how do you do? I am delighted to make your acquaintance.”



Informal Language

Informal language is used for more casual and less serious purposes. Slang words and chatty language can be used.

‘Ugh! ~~A boyfriend? Love letters?~~ That’s disgusting,’ he said, making sick noises.

Slang words

‘So chin up, you won’t be going too far – a train journey at most.’ Mum kissed the top of my head, then looked distant again. ‘The most important thing is that you’re safe.’

Chatty language

‘I can’t ~~send you off looking like that,~~ Mum said, eyeing me critically. ‘You’d ~~better have~~ my smart one. It’s decent and warm, and it’s silly not to make use of it.’

Contractions

We often use informal language in dialogue (when characters are speaking).

Formal language

uses a serious tone

uses correct grammar
and punctuation

uses correct vocabulary



Informal language

uses a 'chatty' tone

can use contractions and
abbreviations e.g. 'it's' or 'TV'

can use 'text'
language and slang.

When do we use formal or informal language?

Formal language

talking to the headteacher

writing a job application

writing a letter to The Queen



Informal language

talking to friends

sending a text to a friend

writing a letter to gran

Examples of formal and informal vocabulary

formal

thank you

wonderful

we have

as soon as possible

are not

tomorrow

imagine

informal

ta

wicked

we've

ASAP

ain't

tomoz

reckon

Formal or Informal?

Read the following emails and decide whether they are **formal** or **informal**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to inform you of my upset when I opened the lucky dip bag I had recently purchased with my own pocket money.

I was disappointed to find that my favourite toy brand had been replaced with an inadequate copy, which even had pieces missing.

I shall expect to be fully compensated for the distress and inconvenience this experience has caused me and hope that you send a replacement promptly.

Yours sincerely,
Miss F. James

Hi Kerry,

You know the lucky dip bag I bought when we went into town yesterday? Well, you'll never believe what happened when I opened it – there was a broken, copy of the toy instead of the real thing!

I was so shocked and annoyed that I've emailed the company to tell them what I think.

I hope they send me a new one ASAP so I can complete the set.

Was your pack ok? I hope so.

C u soon,
Frankie

Year 4 Independent Learning



Discuss each of these sentences with an adult. Can you identify which words in each of the sentences are formal?



Discuss each of these sentences with an adult. Identify one word in each sentence that is formal. Can you suggest an informal word to use in its place? Hint: You could use slang or contractions.



Re-write each of these sentences to make them sound informal.

1. I am writing to complain about the unsatisfactory service that I received in your shop yesterday afternoon.

2. It is vitally important that all children walk on the left hand side of the corridor.

3. I guarantee that your journey will be an enjoyable experience.

4. You are not permitted to enter the staff room.

Years 5 & 6 Independent Learning

Write each of these informal sentences in a more formal style. Remember, you can always use an online thesaurus to help you find more formal words.

1. C u soon hopefully.

2. The TV was rubbish, it didn't even turn on.

3. That was so funny lol!

4. You won't believe what happened to me yesterday.

For an additional challenge (if you have sufficient time), see next slide.

Years 5 & 6 Challenge:

Imagine these characters are meeting for the first time. Can you make one speak in a very formal style and one in a more informal style?
Think carefully about the vocabulary and grammar that each character uses.

