A Staircase Of Light

C1 Advanced · Travel · about 2 min of audio

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Name _____ Date _____

Part 1 — Fill the gaps while you listen

1. A _____ beam seems effortless from shore, but its apparent simplicity emerged from a stubborn problem in glass and geometry.
2. In the early _____ century, oil lamps wasted most of their light, scattering it uselessly across the lantern room.
3. French engineer Augustin Fresnel proposed _____ the flame with concentric glass rings, each shaped to bend rays toward distant water.
4. Rather than carving one massive lens, makers _____ stepped sections that were lighter, cheaper, and easier to transport.
5. The design looked almost _____, less like a window than a transparent staircase circling a lamp.
6. In eighteen twenty three, the tower at Cordouan, guarding the Gironde estuary, received the first Fresnel _____ lens.
7. Its revolving mechanism sent bright flashes seaward, allowing navigators to _____ one coastline from another by the rhythm of light.
8. What changed was not merely brightness, but the reach of public _____: a precise optical instrument now served ordinary passage.
9. Other nations adopted the system, and coastal warnings became more legible without _____ towers to burn vastly more fuel.
10. The lens did not tame the sea, but made human _____ visible, measurable, and faintly answerable from shore.

Part 2 — Write every sentence you hear

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

Answer key

Part 1 — the missing words

1. lighthouse 2. nineteenth 3. surrounding 4. assembled 5. architectural 6. lighthouse 7. distinguish
8. infrastructure 9. requiring 10. uncertainty

Part 2 — the full transcript

1. A lighthouse beam seems effortless from shore, but its apparent simplicity emerged from a stubborn problem in glass and geometry.
2. In the early nineteenth century, oil lamps wasted most of their light, scattering it uselessly across the lantern room.
3. French engineer Augustin Fresnel proposed surrounding the flame with concentric glass rings, each shaped to bend rays toward distant water.
4. Rather than carving one massive lens, makers assembled stepped sections that were lighter, cheaper, and easier to transport.
5. The design looked almost architectural, less like a window than a transparent staircase circling a lamp.
6. In eighteen twenty three, the tower at Cordouan, guarding the Gironde estuary, received the first Fresnel lighthouse lens.
7. Its revolving mechanism sent bright flashes seaward, allowing navigators to distinguish one coastline from another by the rhythm of light.
8. What changed was not merely brightness, but the reach of public infrastructure: a precise optical instrument now served ordinary passage.
9. Other nations adopted the system, and coastal warnings became more legible without requiring towers to burn vastly more fuel.
10. The lens did not tame the sea, but made human uncertainty visible, measurable, and faintly answerable from shore.

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