

# The Railway Children

These lessons are based on *The Railway Children* by E Nesbit. Children investigate the historical setting and discuss the lifestyle of the family at the centre of the story. They take a close look at the characters and the differences in their speech. This provides an opportunity to look at the differences between written and spoken language, including dialect, and how language changes. Children use what they have learned to write a modern version of part of the story, as well as a newspaper report based on an event in the book. They also explore railways and write an explanation text about how steam engines work. Continuing the railway theme, the children read a selection of poems about trains – including ‘Night Mail’ by WH Auden – and discuss the structure, style, effect and language.



## Expected prior learning

- Can identify the features of an adventure story opening.
- Know how we can infer what is not said in a story.
- Can discuss a range of themes they have identified in reading.
- Can discuss the features of a report.
- Can talk about the impact of setting on a story.
- Can state a preference about poems.
- Can use the first three letters of words to locate them in a dictionary.



## Overview of progression

- By reading and responding to fiction from our literacy heritage, children will practise and develop the skills of inference and deduction and learn the importance of using evidence from the text to justify opinions.
- They will develop a better understanding of the difference between spoken and written language and the place of Standard English.
- They will develop the skills of note-taking and summarising as well as retrieving, recording and presenting information from non-fiction.
- Children will continue to read and discuss poetry. They will write their own poems and be given opportunities to prepare poems to read aloud.



## Creative context

- This work can be linked with geography (connecting ourselves to the world; transport/railways; mapwork).
- The work can be extended into art and design by looking at works of art featuring railways and landscapes, and painting your own.
- In PSHE, you could work in groups to discuss ‘Peter’s coal-mine’ (Chapter 2, *The Railway Children*). Discuss whether stealing is ever justified and why.



## Preparation

The main text in this chapter is *The Railway Children* by E Nesbit which is out of copyright and as such there are many different versions widely available.

### You will also need:

*The Railway Children* by E Nesbit; dictionaries; if possible a dictionary including idioms/sayings; internet access; information books about British railways and canals from the past and steam engines; a working model steam engine (optional); A3 paper; felt-tipped pens; audio recordings of informal spoken language; individual whiteboards; highlighter pens; a display-sized simple skeleton outline; small arrows and postcard-sized cards; Blu-Tack®; sticky notes; poems about trains (see week 6); a recording of a factual programme.

### On the CD-ROM you will find:

Media resources ‘Railway company letters’, ‘How a steam engine works’, ‘Railways and canals’, ‘Britain’s railway map’, ‘Train’; interactive activities ‘Relative clauses’, ‘It’s all relative’; photocopiable pages ‘Night Mail’, ‘*The Railway Children* Chapter 2’, ‘Flying high for science week’, ‘Young MasterChefs cook to impress’, ‘Words with /ee/ after ‘c’’, ‘The first railway’