

The Railway Children



By

E. Nesbit

A Novel Study
by Joel Michel Reed

The Railway Children

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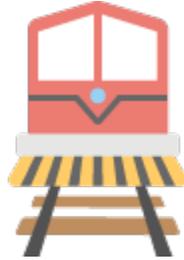


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Suggestions and Expectations

This curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses on 2 chapters and is comprised of five of the following different activities:

- Before You Read
- Vocabulary Building
- Comprehension Questions
- Language Activities
- Extension Activities

Links with the Common Core Standards (U.S.)

Many of the activities included in this curriculum unit are supported by the Common Core Standards. For instance the *Reading Standards for Literature, Grade 5*, makes reference to

- a) determining the meaning of words and phrases. . . including figurative language;
- b) explaining how a series of chapters fits together to provide the overall structure;
- c) compare and contrast two characters;
- d) determine how characters ... respond to challenges;
- e) drawing inferences from the text;
- f) determining a theme of a story . . . **and many others.**

A principal expectation of the unit is that students will develop their skills in reading, writing, listening and oral communication, as well as in reasoning and critical thinking. Students will also be expected to provide clear answers to questions and well-constructed explanations. It is critical as well that students be able to relate events and the feelings of characters to their own lives and experiences and describe their own interpretation of a particular passage.

A strength of the unit is that students can work on the activities at their own pace. Every activity need not be completed by all students. A **portfolio cover** is included (p.7) so that students may organize their work and keep it all in one place. A **Student Checklist** is also included (p.6) so that a record of completed work may be recorded.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/antonyms
3. Identifying/creating *alliteration*
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Identify *foreshadowing*.
7. Identify *personification*
8. Use of singular/plural nouns
9. Listing compound words
10. Identifying parts of speech
11. Determining alphabetical order
12. Listing homonyms
13. Identify/create *similes*
14. Identify *anagrams*

Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

Plot Activities

1. Complete a *time line* of events
2. Identify conflict in the story
3. Identify *cliffhangers*
4. Identify the climax of the novel.

Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Identify the protagonist/antagonist
3. Relating personal experiences

Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Participate in a talk show
4. Conduct an interview
5. Create a poem.
6. Write a description of personal feelings
7. Write a book review
8. Complete an Observation Sheet
9. Write a friendly letter
10. A story pyramid

Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
4. Design a cover for the novel
5. Create a comic strip

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Synopsis

Roberta, Peter and Phyllis don't realize how happy their life in London is until their beloved Father goes away unexpectedly. They move to a simple country cottage with mother, and befriend the local railway porter, who goes by the name of *Perks*. But even though they have many exciting adventures, the mystery remains: where is Father, and will he ever return. (Courtesy of the Publisher: Puffin Classics)

A complete synopsis and other helpful reviews can be found on the following website:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Railway_Children

Author Biography

Edith Nesbit

Nesbit was born in 1858 at 38 Lower Kennington Lane in Kennington, Surrey (now part of Greater London), the daughter of an agricultural chemist, John Collis Nesbit, who died in March 1862.

Her sister Mary's ill health meant that the family travelled around for some years, living variously in *Brighton, Buckinghamshire, France (Dieppe, Rouen, Paris, Tours, Poitiers, Angouleme, Bordeaux, Arcachon, Pau,, Bagneres-de-Bigorre, and Dinan in Brittany)*, Spain and Germany, before settling for three years at Halstead Hall in Halstead in north-west Kent, a location which later inspired *The Railway Children*.



At eighteen, Nesbit met the bank clerk Hubert Bland in 1877. She married Bland on 22 April 1880, though she did not immediately live with him, as Bland initially continued to live with his mother. Their marriage was a stormy one, and remained as such for most of their lives together. Towards the end of her life she moved to a house in Friston, East Sussex, and later to "The Long Boat" at Jesson, St Mary's Bay, New Romney, East Kent where, probably suffering from lung cancer, she died in 1924 and was buried in the churchyard of St Mary In The Marsh. (Courtesy of Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E._Nesbit)

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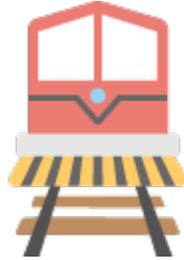


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Name: _____

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Chapters 1-2



Before you read the chapter:

Briefly predict what you believe the plot-line of *The Railway Children* will be about.

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Vocabulary:

Draw a straight line to connect the vocabulary word to its definition. Remember to use a straight edge (like a ruler).

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| 1. Suburban | A. An angry argument or disagreement. |
| 2. Testimonial | B. Having won a battle or contest. |
| 3. Calamity | C. To inspire affection or admiration. |
| 4. Triumphant | D. Lasting for a long time or slow to end. |
| 5. Quarrel | E. A thing intended; An aim or plan. |
| 6. Endearing | F. An event which causes sudden disaster. |
| 7. Lingering | G. To be without hope or promise. |
| 8. Martyr | H. An outlying part of a city or town. |
| 9. Intention | I. A person who is killed for their beliefs. |
| 10. Despaired | J. A formal statement made in regards to a person's character and qualifications. |

Questions



Part 1 - Chapter 1

1. Briefly describe the setting of Chapter One.

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2. What happened to Peter's train?

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3. Use four adjectives to describe the children's attitude towards their parents?

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Part 2 - Chapter 2

1. In Chapter Two Roberta mentioned the *Roman Martyrs*. Do a bit of research in your school library or the Internet and write three fascinating facts on the *Roman Martyrs*.

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2. What did the children do for their mother on the first morning in their new home?

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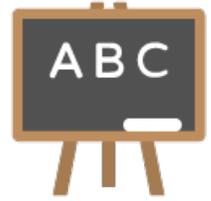
3. Briefly describe the incident involving Peter and the Station Master.

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Language Activities



A. Many authors seem to enjoy using **alliteration** – a literary device where the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. Here's an example of an alliteration: "... **g**rouching, **g**rouching, **g**rumbling, **g**ripping about something or other."



Using your imagination, create your own examples of **alliteration** using three out of the five following topics. Each example must contain a minimum of three words.

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| The sound made by a train. | |
| | |
| The sound of children playing. | |
| | |
| One from your own imagination. | |
| | |

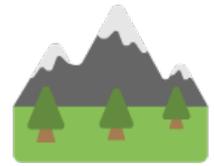
B. What is Your First Impression?

Peter, Phyllis and Roberta have not only endured a tremendous loss when they learned that their father left, but they are also forced to live in poverty until he returns. What sort of adjustments do you think the children will have to make in order to accommodate this new lifestyle? Briefly predict what you think will happen to them as the novel continues.



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C. Chapter One contained an important literary device called a **cliffhanger**. A cliffhanger usually occurs at the end of a chapter when the author leaves the reader in suspense. How is this true in Chapter One? Why do you think the author ended the chapter this way?



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D. All Aboard!

Traveling across the Canadian Rockies by train is said to be one of the worlds most amazing journeys. Picturesque views of endless rivers, mountains and valleys stretch across the landscape, making it one of the most memorable vacations imaginable. Using resources from your school library or the Internet do a bit of research on more of the world's most fascinating trips by rail, and describe which journey appeals to you the most, and why.



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Extension Activity



Storyboard

A storyboard is a series of pictures that tell about an important event in a story. A storyboard can describe one scene – or the entire novel.

Complete the storyboard below illustrating the events described in the first two chapters of *The Railway Children*. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.



| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 4 |
| 5 | 6 |