

The Railway Children by E. Nesbit

Worksheet

Name:

1. Before Reading

a. When you look at the picture, what do you think this book is about?

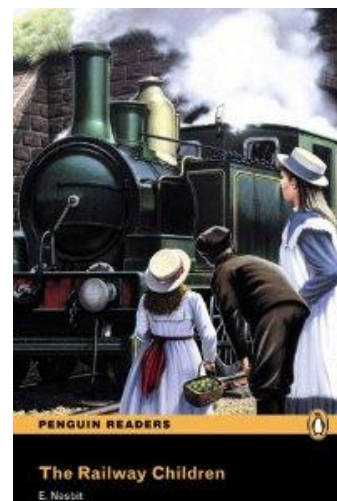
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b. Where do you think this story is set?

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c. In what time do you think this story is set?

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2. The Beginning of Things

a. Read the extract of chapter 1 below. Then answer questions b to d, then read the rest of chapter 1 in your book and answer questions e to g.

'The Beginning of Things

They were not railway children to begin with. I don't suppose they had ever thought about railways except as a means of getting to Maskelyne and Cook's, the Pantomime, Zoological Gardens, and Madame Tussaud's. They were just ordinary suburban children, and they lived with their Father and Mother in an ordinary red-brick-fronted villa, with coloured glass in the front door, a tiled passage that was called a hall, a bath-room with hot and cold water, electric bells, French windows, and a good deal of white paint, and 'every modern convenience', as the house-agents say.

There were three of them. Roberta was the eldest. Of course, Mothers never have favourites, but if their Mother had had a favourite, it might have been Roberta. Next came Peter, who wished to be an Engineer when he grew up; and the youngest was Phyllis, who meant extremely well.

Mother did not spend all her time in paying dull calls to dull ladies, and sitting dully at home waiting for dull ladies to pay calls to her. She was almost always there, ready to play with the children, and read to them, and help them to do their home-lessons. Besides this she used to write stories for them while they were at school, and read them aloud after tea, and she always made up funny pieces of poetry for their birthdays and for other great occasions, such as the christening of the new kittens, or the refurnishing of the doll's house, or the time when they were getting over the mumps.

These three lucky children always had everything they needed: pretty clothes, good fires, a lovely nursery with heaps of toys, and a Mother Goose wall-paper. They had a kind and merry nursemaid,

and a dog who was called James, and who was their very own. They also had a Father who was just perfect — never cross, never unjust, and always ready for a game — at least, if at any time he was not ready, he always had an excellent reason for it, and explained the reason to the children so interestingly and funnily that they felt sure he couldn't help himself.

You will think that they ought to have been very happy. And so they were, but they did not know how happy till the pretty life in the Red Villa was over and done with, and they had to live a very different life indeed.

The dreadful change came quite suddenly.'

(The Railway Children by E. Nesbit, chapter 1)

b. Why do you think this chapter is called the 'Beginning of things'?

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c. In the first paragraph you are told that the children used the railway, but were not railway children to begin with, why do you think there is a difference?

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d. In this extract the children are referred to as 'happy' and 'lucky', can you give some examples why you think they are described as 'happy' and 'lucky'?

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e. What do you think is the matter with the children's Father? Do you think he will come back?

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f. Why can the mother not tell the children anything according to the text?

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g. What are the differences between their house in London and the new house they move to and why can they only take the 'ugly useful things'?

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3. Write!

a. Travelling by train was very different in those times. What kind of differences do you think there were? You can write down the differences you can discover in the book, but you can also use the internet to find some information about trains. Tip: The book was first published in 1906.

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b. What was the task of a station master?

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c. Why do you think the children give the train names and where do they come from?

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d. Teleport yourself to 1906 and imagine you are going to travel on the train. Write a short story about your 'adventure'. Continue on a separate sheet if necessary.



4. After Reading

Complete the exercises below after you have read the book.

(Source: penguin readers)

a. Write the right name in front of these sentences. Choose between Bobbie, Peter and Phyllis.

- wants to be the boss.
- is the youngest.
- loves trains.
- wants to help repair the engine.
- is the oldest.
- often breaks things.
- is ten years old.
- is the most clever.
- faints while saving the train.



b. Match the letters with the right numbers to complete the sentences. You can find the answers in chapters 3-4.

- A. Roberta
- B. Peter
- C. Phyllis
- D. The children's mother
- E. The old man
- F. Perks
- G. The station master
- H. Jim and Bill

- 1. suggests that they wave to the train.
- 2. Is very ill.
- 3. Tells the children stories about the trains.
- 4. Gives the letter to the man on the train.
- 5. Is the children's first friend at the railway.
- 6. Says 'Red is for danger'.
- 7. Gives the children some food.
- 8. Work on the engines.

c. Who are the words in italics? Read chapter 5-6 to find the answers.

- 1. '*He* is always good to us. Perhaps we can do something for him.'
- 2. '*You* can't fish here!'
- 3. '*He* usually likes children.'
- 4. '*She* found *them* in a shop.'
- 5. '*We* took *him* off the boat.'
- 6. '*He* could not understand why *she* cried.'



- 7. 'He was very angry.'
- 8. 'That's why *they* gave us these things for you.'

d. Make a list of the people the children helped in the story.

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5. The End

a. Did the story end the way you expected it? Compare what actually happened to the Father with your answer in exercise 2, where you right?

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b. Read the extract below and answer question c and.

'He goes in and the door is shut. I think we will not open the door or follow him. I think that just now we are not wanted there. I think it will be best for us to go quickly and quietly away. At the end of the field, among the thin gold spikes of grass and the harebells and Gipsy roses and St. John's Wort, we may just take one last look, over our shoulders, at the white house where neither we nor anyone else is wanted now.' (*The Railway Children* by E. Nesbit, chapter 14)

c. Why do you think 'we' are in this extract?

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d. Why do you think 'neither we nor anyone else is wanted now'?

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e. What will happen next? What do you think what will happen to the family after they get back together? Where will they live, what will they do? How do you think they have changed compared to the beginning of the story?

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