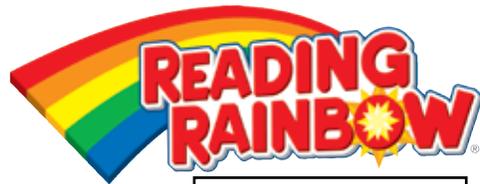


Kate Shelley and the Midnight Express

(GPN #79/PBS #804)

Author: Margaret K. Wetterer

Illustrator: Karen Ritz



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Program Description:

This true story is about 15-year-old Kate who bravely rushed out into a storm to save two men as well as prevent hundreds of other lives from being lost. LeVar explores Amtrak's Coast Starlight train and sees how trains are maintained at the train yard before boarding the Coast Starlight to travel along the California coastline. Together with LeVar, we tour the engineer's cab, find out what an engineer does, and watch film clips of early trains.

Social Studies Concepts:

- transportation
- communication
- geography
- history



Classroom Activities:

Transportation

Trains are only one of the many forms of transportation; have students brainstorm a list of others. Collect (or have students create) pictures of various forms of transportation (both present and past) and use them as a display where students can identify and categorize these modes as "Land Transportation," "Water Transportation," and "Air Transportation."



Transportation/Communication

In the story a telegraph was used for communication. Discuss what a telegraph is, how it was used and why it was important in the past. Research Morse Code and have students use it to spell their first names. Then provide several flashlights so they can practice the dots (fast flashes) and dashes (slower flashes) and send their name or a short message to others in the class. Discuss the process of using Morse Code – what were the challenges, what are some situations where this type of communication would work well, etc.

Transportation

Obtain a map that details the railroads across the United States (check a train station, or download one from the Internet (see appendix for suggested websites) and post it in the classroom. Have students use the map to name various places they could travel to and from on a train. Explain that in the past railroads were the fastest modes of transportation, and compare that speed to the fastest modes of transportation today. If possible, take a field trip to a train station or invite a speaker who has had experience with the railroad system.



Geography

Using the railway map from the previous activity, have students find and highlight the first train track system that went across the United States from the east coast to the west coast. Discuss the impact of this intercontinental railway when previously horses had been the fastest way to travel. How do they think it changed travel, transporting goods and communication via the mail? Ask students to write a story about their experiences as a passenger on that first train traveling across the United States. Suggest that they include what they saw, what they experienced and the reason for their trip.



History

Invite a train enthusiast to visit the class to talk about their hobby of collecting trains, and train memorabilia. Ask them to share what they know about the history of the railroad with the class. Prepare students beforehand by having them think of topics or questions to discuss with the speaker.



History

Discuss with students what it means to be brave, how this applies to Kate, and how she overcame her fear of the dark and of crossing the railroad trestle. Ask students what they think they may have done in that situation. Display a variety of books about real life heroes, and read one or more to the class. Then ask students to write a personal experience about a time when they overcame something they feared. (Most students this age will be able to relate to being afraid of the dark, getting lost, or fear of failing at some task.)

Book suggestions:

Stitching Stars by Mary Lyons

The Story Quilts of Harriet Powers

Adventurous Spirit; A Story About Ellen Swallow Richard by Ethlie Ann Vare

Sacagawea by Dennis Fradin

Booker T. Washington by Jack L. Roberts

George Washington's Mother by Jean Fritz

Zora Hurston and the Chinaberry Tree by William Miller



Do-At-Home Activity:

Transportation Survey

Send home the “Transportation Survey” activity and encourage families to discuss and chart the types of transportation they have used.

Suggested Reading:

Review Books:

The Train To Lulu’s by *Elizabeth Fitzgerald Howard*

The Little Engine That Could retold by *Watty Piper*

The Polar Express by *Chris Van Allsburg*

Other Suggestions:

Trains At Work by *Richard Ammon*

Freight Train by *Donald Crews*

Trains by *Gail Gibbons*

John Henry by *Julius Lester*

She’s Been Working On The Railroad by *Nancy Smiler Levinson*

All Aboard ABC by *Doug Magee and Robert Newman*

Casey Jones: The Story Of A Brave Engineer by *Glen Rounds*

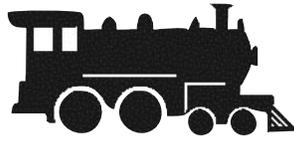
Kate Shelley: Bound For Legend by *Robert D. San Souci*

Train Song by *Diane Siebert*

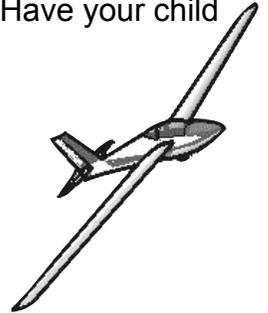
The Real McCoy: The Life Of An African-American Inventor by *Wendy Towle*

I’ve Been Working On The Railroad illus. by *Nadine Bernard Westcott*

On the Go



Fill in the chart to record different forms of transportation your family has used. Have your child return the completed chart to school so we can create a large graph.



Transportation mode

Family Names

walk					
bike					
car					
van					
bus					
boat					
subway					
train					
plane					
truck					