

Reading Comprehension

The Train to Impossible Places

Year 3/4

HIAS English Team
Spring 2020
Final version

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Using the Home Learning Materials

The materials

- Each reading booklet contains a key text and suggested activities that can be used to develop comprehension and understanding.
- The sequence should take no more than 1 hour to complete, it could be completed in two 30 mins sessions or four 15 minute sessions.
- Reading for pleasure, fluency and stamina should be developed through regular sustained reading using the books identified by the school.

How to use

- Read the instructions carefully before you start a task.
- Each sequence contains simple explanations and examples to help you.

How can parents, carers and siblings help?

- Read the extracts aloud with your child
- Check your child understands any new or unfamiliar vocabulary
- Adapt any of the resources and materials as you feel necessary to support your child's needs

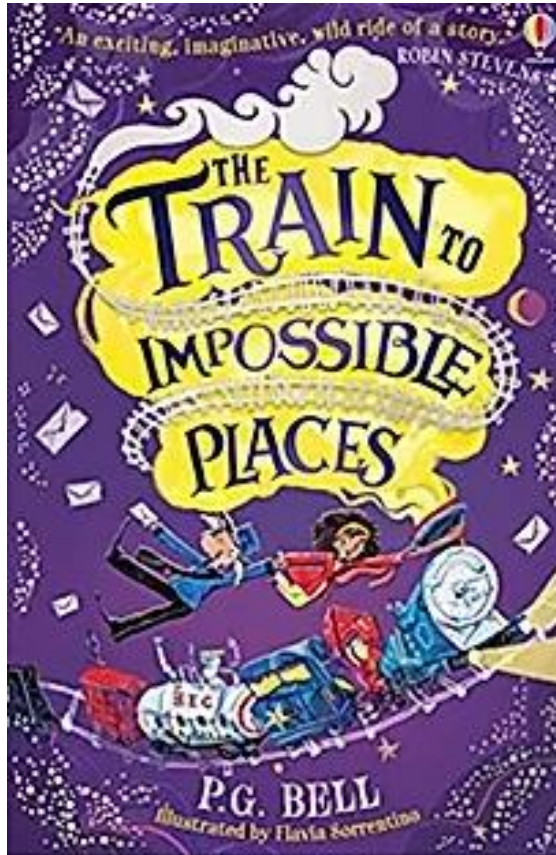
Reading comprehension sequence

This sequence is developed around an extract from 'The Train to Impossible places' by P.G. Bell.

Teaching sequence:

- 1) Prediction using knowledge of books and the world
- 2) Read with fluency and expression
- 3) Make inferences about a character
- 4) Quick quiz!

The Train to Impossible Places, by P.G. Bell



If a copy of the text is unavailable, follow this link to lovereading4kids.co.uk where you can download a free extract:

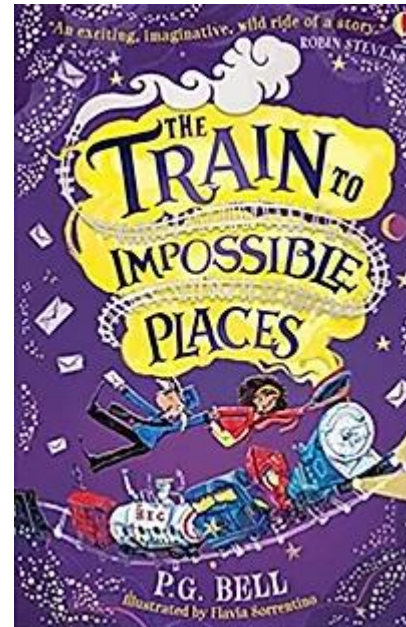
<https://www.lovereading4kids.co.uk/extract/15829/The-Train-to-Impossible-Places-by-P-G-Bell.html>

1 - Prediction

Using clues from the front cover explain your predictions.

Where do you think this story is set?

What type of story do you think this is going to be?



What might the main characters be like?

When might the story be set?

2 - Read with fluency and expression



Read and enjoy together the first chapter, reprinted on the next two pages.

Focus on:

- Expression & volume
- Phrasing
- Smoothness
- Pace

LIGHTNING IN THE LIVING ROOM

It started with a flash.

A green flash, as bright and quick as lightning, there and then gone again. It happened so quickly that Suzy wasn't sure she had seen anything at all, although she raised her head from her homework and looked about.

"What was that?" she asked.

"What was what, darling?" said her mother from the sofa, where she and Suzy's father were both sprawled in a heap, still in their work clothes.

Suzy frowned. "Did you see it, Dad?"

"See what, sweetheart?" Her father was hunched over his tablet, reading the news and muttering to himself about the state of the government.

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“That green flash. Didn’t either of you see it?”

“Hmmm,” said her mother, shaking her braids loose whilst trying to stifle an enormous yawn.

Her father looked around the room in bleary-eyed confusion. “I didn’t notice anything.”

Suzy pressed her lips together. Perhaps it had been the TV? She peered over her mother’s shoulder at the screen, but she was watching another costume drama – men with tall hats riding on horses in the countryside. No green flashes there.

“You’ve been overdoing the homework again,” said her father, scratching at his unruly mop of ginger hair. “Give your eyes a rest and come and sit with us for a bit.”

“I’m almost finished,” Suzy said, and turned back to her workbook.

It was physics homework, and Suzy was good at physics. Actually, she was good at maths, but she preferred physics because it made the maths useful; it turned the numbers into real things that moved and made a difference. She couldn’t understand why anyone would want to do plain old maths all by itself – solving equations was fun for a while, but all you ever ended up with was more numbers, and what were you supposed to do with them then? No, maths was just another way of filling up pieces of paper. Physics was where the action was.

The trouble was, she was starting to feel that liking physics so much made her a bit unusual, which wasn’t a feeling she

LIGHTNING IN THE LIVING ROOM

liked much. None of her friends shared her enthusiasm, and they had started to sneak little sideways glances at her in class whenever she gave the right answer or got her experiments to work properly. They never said anything, of course, and they weren’t being rude exactly, but she had seen it in their eyes – it was the same look they sometimes gave Reginald, the boy with the dinosaur obsession, who, on the rare occasions someone engaged him in conversation, would talk about nothing else. It was a look that mixed pity with suspicion, as though she were the victim of some terrible affliction, and they were afraid it might be catching.

The thought made her pause, and lift her pen from the paper. The homework was pretty simple. Mr Marchwood, her teacher, had set ten questions on Newton’s laws of motion. Suzy had actually finished them an hour ago, but her imagination had been sparked and she had carried on, testing herself to see how she could put the knowledge to use. How fast would a rocket need to fly to escape Earth’s gravity? How long would it take at that speed to reach the moon? How much force would she need to get back?

She had taken up three extra pages of her book with her own questions, her workings-out spilling over into the margins. She was fairly confident she had the answers right, but would need Mr Marchwood to confirm them. She hoped he would; he had rolled his eyes the last time she had handed in her homework.

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“Suzy,” he had sighed. “As if I didn’t have enough work to do.”

Her pen hovered over the page, the next question already forming in her mind. She looked back over her shoulder at her parents, who were now propped against each other, snoring gently. Tomorrow was Saturday – she had the whole weekend to work out more questions for herself, she decided. Perhaps her dad was right; if she was seeing green flashes that weren’t there, her eyes probably needed a rest.

Suzy replaced the top of her pen, shut her homework book and stuffed them both back into her school bag.

She decided not to disturb her parents. “Goodnight,” she whispered, as she padded across the room and out into the hall.



Her footsteps had faded upstairs before another green flash filled the living room. Then another. And another. Ribbons of green energy curled out of the air around the table where she had been working, probing down across her chair, as though searching for something. When they didn’t find it, they flickered uncertainly for a few seconds before fizzling away into nothing. The green light faded.

Upstairs, Suzy brushed her teeth and prepared for bed, oblivious.

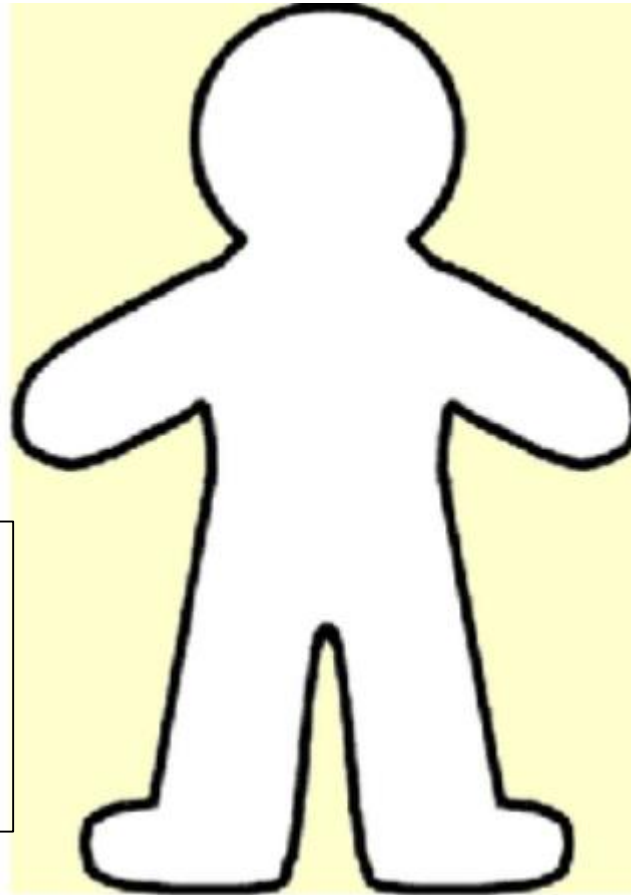
3 - Make inferences about a character.

What do these extracts from the text tell you about the main character, Suzy?

“What was that?” she asked

None of her friends shared her enthusiasm

She was fairly confident she had the answers right, but would need Mr Marchwood to confirm them



“You’ve been overdoing the homework again,” said her father

The homework was pretty simple.

She decided not to disturb her parents. “Goodnight,” she whispered

Write what you infer inside the character outline. For example, you might infer that she likes doing homework.

4 – Quick Quiz

Read the text over the following two pages and discuss the linked questions. There is no requirement to write the answers formally but you may wish to print and annotate the text with the evidence which backs up the answers.

Suzy wasn't sure, at first, what woke her. She was just awake, in that sudden, surprising way that catches your brain unawares, as though it hadn't realized it had been asleep to begin with.

The clock on her bedside table read 2 a.m. She sat up, waiting for her eyes to adjust to the dark and tell her what was wrong.

After almost a minute the answer seemed to be: nothing. But she was wide awake, and a troubling little itch at the back of her mind told her there was a good reason.

She swung her feet out of bed and into her slippers, then crept to the window, easing the curtain aside to peer out. The street was deserted, the houses dark and sleeping. No traffic hummed, no people spoke. Even the clouds, vague and shadowy in the overcast night, were still.

She was just getting back into bed when she heard it: a sharp, hard noise from somewhere inside the house. She jumped in shock.

It came again; a *clank!* of metal on metal, like heavy saucepans being smashed together. Her parents wouldn't be up in the middle of the night banging pots and pans together, which meant only one thing – there was someone else in the house!

The sound drew Suzy towards the door, her chest tight with apprehension.

What phrase tells us that Suzy is worried even though there seems to have been nothing that woke her up?

What is unusual about the clouds when she looks out of the window?

What do you think woke Suzy up?

“Mum?” Her voice shook. “Dad? Is that you?”

The hammering sounds stopped immediately and she heard someone gasp. There was the noise of something heavy being dropped and a sudden scuffle of feet on the hall carpet. Then a rustle and a flap, like bed sheets being folded. Then silence.

“Hello?” Suzy leaned over the banister, wary of another eruption of sparks, and looked down into the hall. At first everything seemed normal, but then a glint of metal caught her eye. Two long silver strips winked up at her from the carpet. They lay side by side, a metre or so apart, and seemed to run into the house from underneath the front door. Suzy frowned in confusion, her fear momentarily forgotten as she descended the stairs, trying to understand what she was seeing.

They were railway tracks.

She knew they couldn't be, and yet there they were. She prodded the nearest one with her toe, then kneeled down and rapped her knuckles against it. It was cold and hard and very, very real. A railway line, set into the floor of the hall. Someone had even cut strips of carpet away to make room for the tracks; she could see the frayed edges.

“But that doesn't make sense,” she said to herself, stepping back and giving them a hard look. They glinted back at her, indifferent. She turned and followed their path with her eyes, past the living room door and down the whole length of the hall towards the kitchen – where her attention fell on an object sitting to one side of the kitchen door.

It was a workman's tent, made of grubby red-and-white striped tarpaulin – the sort she had seen erected over holes in the road when people had to dig up gas mains or water pipes. They were usually small, but this one was minute. It sagged a bit in the middle, and it barely reached her shoulder.

Light spilled from between the canvas flaps.

“Mum? Dad?” she called, taking a cautious step forward. Something shifted inside the tent, and a vague shadow played across the fabric. “Who's in there?”

“Nobody!” replied a hoarse voice that she did not recognize. “There's nobody in 'ere. Go back to bed.”

There was a stranger in her house!

Where were her mum and dad? Why hadn't the noise woken them up too? She took a step back, ready to turn and run. She should call the police, or go and fetch help.

But...

Whoever this person was, why were they hiding in a tent? And what were those rails doing here? Her mind started to prickle, searching for an answer that didn't seem to be there.

What word suggests that the metal is shiny?

What clues in the text tell you that the person was not expecting Suzy to be there?

Based on what you have read so far, what do you think will happen next in the story?

HIAS English team

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During the current school closures, we are still offering school support in a variety of ways such as video conferencing, phone calls and bespoke creation of resources remotely. Coming soon will be teacher training via virtual classrooms. We would be happy to discuss your needs.

For further details referring to English, please contact:
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