



The Railway Children

EDITH NESBIT

3

OXFORD BOOKWORMS



The Railway Children



'We have to leave our house in London,' Mother said to the children. 'We're going to live in the country, in a little house near a railway line.'

And so begins a new life for Roberta, Peter, and Phyllis. They become the railway children – they know all the trains, Perks the station porter is their best friend, and they have many adventures on the railway line.

But why has their father had to go away? Where is he, and will he ever come back? (Word count 9,295)



- ◀ STAGE 6
- ◀ STAGE 5
- ◀ STAGE 4
- ◀ **STAGE 3**
- ◀ STAGE 2
- ◀ STAGE 1
- ◀ STARTER



**HUMAN
INTEREST**



**AUDIO
AVAILABLE**

Text adaptation by John Escott

Main cover image reproduced courtesy of ITV Plc (Granada International)/LFI. Locomotive image by Randy Faris courtesy of Corbis

STAGE 3 1000 Headwords

www.ZabanBook.com



www.ZabanBook.com

زبان بوک

3

MP3-CD

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

The Railway Children

THE RAILWAY CHILDREN

The change in their lives comes very suddenly. One minute they are all a happy family, with everything that they want. The next minute, Father has to go away – ‘on business’, Mother says. But her face is white, and the children know that it’s bad news. They have to leave their nice home in London, and go and live in a little house in the country. They are poor now, Mother says. She tries to sound happy, but her eyes are sad and worried.

Roberta, Peter, and Phyllis also worry about Father, but no one can be sad all the time. A new life is beginning, with adventures around every corner. And there, down the hill from their new house, is the railway, with its shining lines leading all the way back to London; and the black mouth of the tunnel, where trains come screaming out of the darkness like great wild animals . . .

OXFORD

UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide in

Oxford New York

Auckland Cape Town Dar es Salaam Hong Kong Karachi

Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Nairobi

New Delhi Shanghai Taipei Toronto

With offices in

Argentina Austria Brazil Chile Czech Republic France Greece

Guatemala Hungary Italy Japan Poland Portugal Singapore

South Korea Switzerland Thailand Turkey Ukraine Vietnam

OXFORD and OXFORD ENGLISH are registered trade marks of
Oxford University Press in the UK and in certain other countries

This simplified edition © Oxford University Press 2008

Database right Oxford University Press (maker)

First published in Oxford Bookworms 1993

6 8 10 9 7 5

No unauthorized photocopying

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
without the prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press,
or as expressly permitted by law, or under terms agreed with the appropriate
reprographics rights organization. Enquiries concerning reproduction
outside the scope of the above should be sent to the ELT Rights Department,
Oxford University Press, at the address above

You must not circulate this book in any other binding or cover
and you must impose this same condition on any acquirer

Any websites referred to in this publication are in the public domain and
their addresses are provided by Oxford University Press for information only.
Oxford University Press disclaims any responsibility for the content

ISBN 978 0 19 479128 1

A complete recording of this Bookworms edition of
The Railway Children is available on audio CD ISBN 978 0 19 479100 7

Printed in China

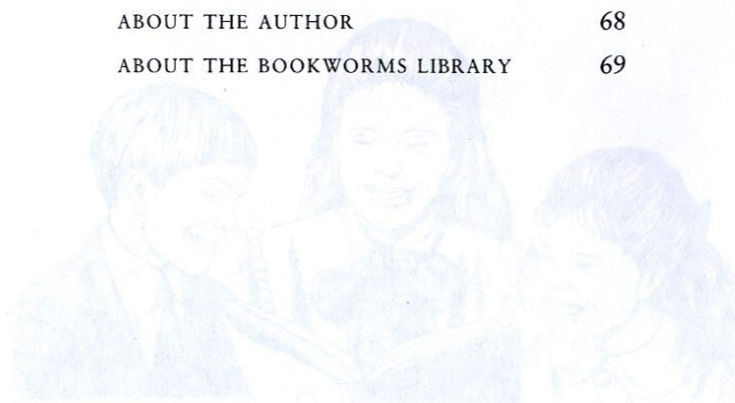
Typeset by Wyvern Typesetting, Bristol

Word count (main text): 9295 words

For more information on the Oxford Bookworms Library,
visit www.oup.com/bookworms

CONTENTS

STORY INTRODUCTION	i
1 The beginning of things	1
2 Peter and the coal	7
3 The old gentleman	15
4 Bobbie's ride	21
5 Saving the train	27
6 A birthday for Perks	34
7 The terrible secret	39
8 The boy in the red shirt	43
9 The man at the station	53
GLOSSARY	58
ACTIVITIES: Before Reading	60
ACTIVITIES: While Reading	61
ACTIVITIES: After Reading	64
ABOUT THE AUTHOR	68
ABOUT THE BOOKWORMS LIBRARY	69



There were three of them – Bobbie, Peter, and Phyllis.

1

The beginning of things

They were not railway children at the beginning. They lived with their father and mother in London. There were three of them. Roberta – she was always called Bobbie, and was the oldest. Next came Peter, who wanted to be an engineer when he grew up. And the youngest was Phyllis, who was always trying to be good.

Mother was almost always at home, ready to play with the children, or to read to them. And she wrote stories, then read them to the children after tea.

These three lucky children had everything that they needed. Pretty clothes, a warm house, and lots of toys. They also had a wonderful father who was never angry, and always ready to play a game.



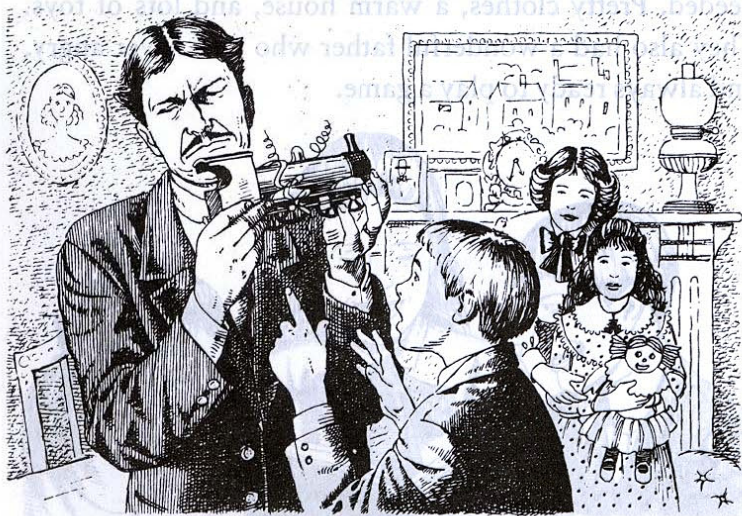
There were three of them – Bobbie, Peter, and Phyllis.

They were very happy. But they did not know *how* happy until their life in London was over, and they had to live a very different life indeed.

The awful change came suddenly.

It was Peter's birthday, and he was ten years old. Among his presents was a toy steam engine, and it quickly became Peter's favourite toy. But after three days, the engine went BANG! Peter was very unhappy about his broken toy. The others said he cried, but Peter said his eyes were red because he had a cold.

When Father came home that day, Peter told him the sad story about his engine, and Father looked at it very carefully. Mother and the children waited.



Father looked at the toy steam engine very carefully.

'Is there no hope?' said Peter.

'Of course there's hope!' said Father, smiling. 'I'll mend it on Saturday, and you can all help me.'

Just then, someone knocked at the front door. A few moments later, Ruth – the maid – came in. 'There are two gentlemen to see you,' she said to Father.

'Now, who can they be?' said Father.

'Try to be quick, dear,' said his wife. 'It's nearly time for the children to go to bed.'

But the two men stayed and stayed. Father's voice got louder and louder in the next room, but the children and Mother could not hear what was said. Then Ruth came back and spoke to Mother.

'He wants you to go in, ma'am,' she said. 'I think he's had bad news. Be ready for the worst.'

Mother went into the next room, and there was more talking. Soon after, the children heard Ruth call a taxi, then there was the sound of feet going outside and down the steps.

Mother came back, and her face was white.

'It's time to go to bed,' she said to the children. 'Ruth will take you upstairs.'

'But, Father—' began Phyllis.

'Father's had to go away on business,' said Mother.

'Now, go to bed, darlings.'

Bobbie whispered, 'It wasn't bad news, was it?'

'No, darling,' said Mother. 'I can't tell you anything tonight. Please go *now*.'

* * *

Mother went out early the next morning, and it was nearly seven o'clock before she came home. She looked ill and tired, and the children asked her no questions.

Mother drank a cup of tea, then she said, 'Now, my darlings, I want to tell you something. Those men did bring bad news last night. Father will be away for some time, and I'm very worried.'

'Is it something to do with the Government?' asked Bobbie. The children knew that Father worked in a Government office.

'Yes,' said Mother. 'Now don't ask me any more questions about it. Will you promise me that?'

The children promised.

Everything was horrible for some weeks. Mother was nearly always out. Ruth, the maid, went away. Then Mother went to bed for two days, and the children wondered if the world was coming to an end.

One morning, Mother came down to breakfast. Her face was very white, but she tried to smile.

'We have to leave our house in London,' she said. 'We're going to live in the country, in a dear little white house near a railway line. I know you'll love it.'

A busy week followed, packing everything up in boxes. The children almost enjoyed the excitement.

'We can't take everything,' Mother told them. 'Just the necessary things. We have to play "being poor" for a while.'

On their last night in the house, Peter had to sleep on the

floor, which he enjoyed very much. 'I like moving,' he said.

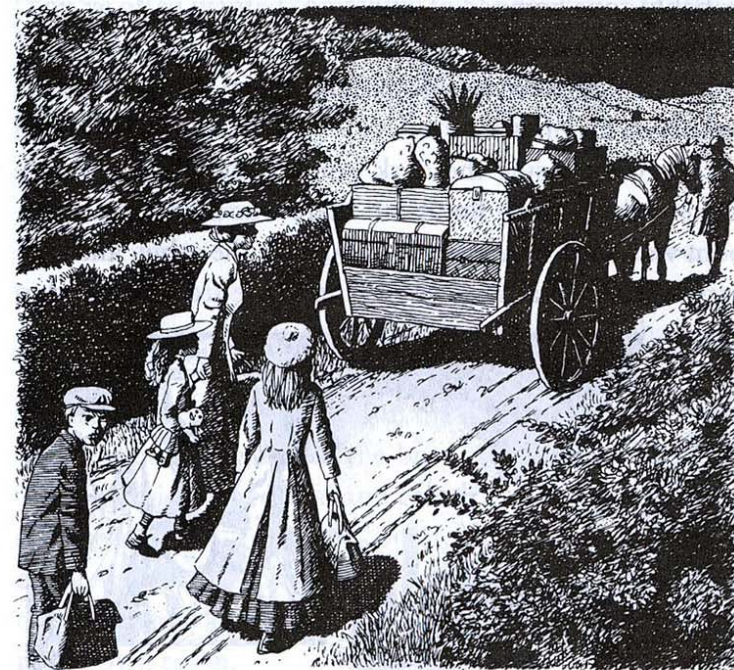
'I don't!' said Mother, laughing.

Bobbie saw her face when she turned away. 'Oh, Mother,' she thought. 'How brave you are! How I love you!'

Next day, they went to the railway station, and got on a train. At first, they enjoyed looking out of the windows, but then they became sleepy. Later, Mother woke them.

'Wake up, dears,' she said. 'We're there.'

There were no taxis, and a man with a cart took their boxes. The children and Mother walked behind the cart



A man with a cart took their boxes.

along a dark, dirty road, which seemed to go across the fields. After a while, a shape appeared in the darkness.

'There's the house,' said Mother.

The cart went along by the garden wall, and round to the back door. There were no lights in any of the windows.

'Where's Mrs Viney?' said Mother.

'Who's she?' asked Bobbie.

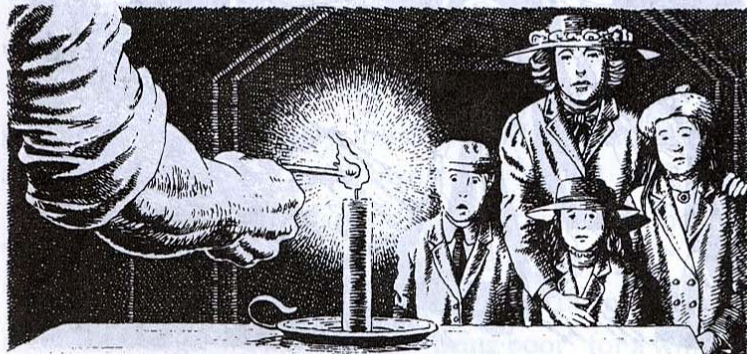
'A woman from the village. I asked her to clean the place and make our supper,' said Mother.

'Your train was late,' said the man with the cart. 'She's probably gone home.'

'But she has the key,' said Mother.

'It'll be under the doorstep,' said the man. He went to look. 'Yes, here it is.'

They went inside the dark house. There was a large kitchen with a stone floor, but there was no fire, and the room was cold. There was a candle on the table, and the man lit it. Then a noise seemed to come from inside the



There was a candle on the table, and the man lit it.

walls of the house. It sounded like small animals running up and down. Then the cart man went away and shut the door. Immediately, the candle went out.

'Oh, I wish we hadn't come!' said Phyllis.

2

Peter and the coal

'You've often wanted something to happen,' said Mother, lighting the candle again. 'And now it has. This is an adventure, isn't it? I told Mrs Viney to leave our supper ready. I suppose she's put it in the other room. Let's go and see.'

They looked in the other room, but found no supper.

'What a horrible woman!' said Mother. 'She's taken the money, but got us nothing to eat at all!'

'Then we can't have any supper,' said Phyllis, unhappily.

'Yes, we can,' said Mother. 'We can unpack one of the boxes. There's some food from the old house.'

They found candles in the box, and the girls lit them. Then Bobbie fetched coal and wood, and lit a fire. It was a strange supper – tomatoes, potato chips, dried fruit and cake. And they drank water out of tea-cups. After supper, they put sheets and blankets on the beds, then Mother went to her own room.

Very early next morning, Bobbie pulled Phyllis's hair to

wake her. 'Wake up!' she said. 'We're in the new house, don't you remember?'

They wanted to surprise their mother and get the breakfast ready, but first they went to look outside. The house seemed to stand in a field near the top of a hill, and they could see a long way.

'This place is much prettier than our house in London,' said Phyllis.

They saw the railway line at the bottom of the hill, and the big black opening of a tunnel. Further away, they could see a high bridge between the hills, but the station was too far away to see.

'Let's go and look at the railway,' said Peter. 'Perhaps there are trains passing.'

'We can see them from here,' said Bobbie.

So they sat down on a big, flat, comfortable stone in the grass. And when Mother came to look for them at eight o'clock, they were asleep in the sun.

'I've found another room,' Mother told them. 'The door is in the kitchen. Last night, we thought it was a cupboard.'

There was a table in the little square room, and on the table was their supper.

'There's a letter from Mrs Viney,' explained Mother. 'Her son broke his arm and she went home early. She's coming again later this morning.'

'Cold meat and apple pie for breakfast!' laughed Peter. 'How funny!'

But their supper made a wonderful breakfast.



When Mother came to look for them, they were asleep in the sun.

All day, they helped Mother to unpack and arrange everything in the rooms. It was late in the afternoon when she said, 'That's enough work for today. I'll go and lie down for an hour, before supper.'

The children looked at each other.

'Where shall we go?' said Bobbie, although she already knew the answer.

'To the railway, of course!' cried Peter.

At the bottom of the hill there was a wooden fence. And there was the railway, with its shining lines, telegraph wires and posts, and signals. They all climbed on to the top of the fence. Suddenly, they heard a noise, which grew louder every second. They looked along the line towards the dark opening of the tunnel. The next moment, the railway lines began to shake and a train came screaming out of the tunnel.

'Oh!' said Bobbie, when it had gone. 'It was like a great wild animal going by!'

'It was very exciting!' said Peter.

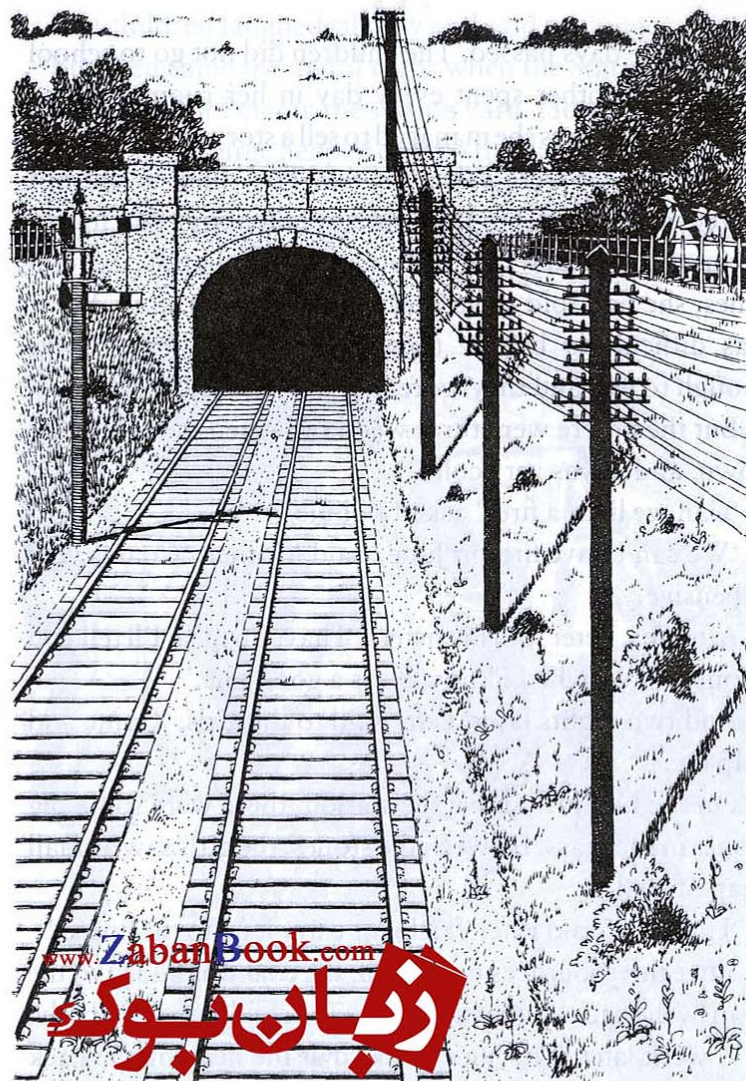
'I wonder if it was going to London,' said Bobbie. 'London is where Father is.'

'Let's go down to the station and find out,' said Peter.

They walked along the edge of the line, beneath the telegraph wires, to the station. They went up on to the platform, and took a quick look into the Porter's room. Inside, the Porter was half asleep behind a newspaper.

There were a great many railway lines at the station. On one side of the big station yard was a large heap of coal, which the steam trains used for their engines. There was a white line on the wall behind, near the top of the heap. Later, when the Porter came out on to the platform, Peter asked about the white line.

'It's to show how much coal there is in the heap,' said the Porter. 'So we shall know if anybody steals some.' The Porter was smiling, and Peter thought he was a nice, friendly person.



And there was the railway, with its shining lines, telegraph wires and posts, and signals.

ACTIVITIES

Before Reading

- 1 Read the back cover of the book and the story introduction on the first page. How much do you know now about the story? Choose T (true) or F (false) for each sentence.

- 1 The children live next to the railway in London. T/F
- 2 They have always been railway children. T/F
- 3 They leave London and go to live in the country. T/F
- 4 There are wild animals living in the railway tunnel. T/F
- 5 Their best friend is an engine driver. T/F
- 6 The family now has very little money. T/F
- 7 The children's father is dead. T/F
- 8 Their mother is unhappy but tries to hide it. T/F

- 2 How much can you guess about this story? Choose answers to these questions. (You can choose more than one.)

- 1 The family is poor, so what do the children do? They . . .
 - a) steal things.
 - b) get jobs.
 - c) make things and sell them.
 - d) ask strangers for help.
- 2 Why has the children's father gone away? Because he . . .
 - a) is very ill.
 - b) is a criminal.
 - c) is in prison.
 - d) is abroad on business.
- 3 What kind of adventures do the children have? They . . .
 - a) get locked in a train.
 - b) stop a train on the line.
 - c) ride with the engine driver.
 - d) see a ghost train.

ACTIVITIES

While Reading

Read Chapters 1 and 2, and then answer these questions.

- 1 What happened to Father three days after Peter's birthday?
- 2 Where were Mother and the children going to live?
- 3 How did they travel to their new house?
- 4 Why did they eat cold meat and apple pie for breakfast?
- 5 Where did the children go the first afternoon?
- 6 Why didn't Mother let them have fires in June?
- 7 Why did the Station Master call Peter a thief?
- 8 What did the Station Master do about Peter and the coal?

Read Chapters 3 and 4. Who said this, and to whom? Who or what were they talking about?

- 1 'It's going to London, where Father is.'
- 2 'That's over and forgotten now.'
- 3 'We can't buy all those things! We're poor, remember?'
- 4 'I thought I was going to miss you!'
- 5 'The old gentleman asked me to bring it.'
- 6 'I hope Mother thinks we were right, too.'
- 7 'Now we won't say any more about it.'
- 8 'You mustn't see what we're doing. It's a surprise.'
- 9 'You . . . you can have half, if you like.'
- 10 'I . . . I wanted to ask if you could mend this.'
- 11 'Can we help the little lady?'