

The Railway Children

Study Notes



Directed by: Lionel Jeffries
Certificate: U
Running time: 104 mins
Release date: 21 December 1970

Synopsis

The comfortable lives of three Edwardian children are shattered when their father is arrested on suspicion of betraying State secrets. The children and their mother are forced to move to a modest cottage in the Yorkshire countryside, where their new lives centre on the local steam railway line.

Before seeing the film

1. Look at the front cover of Edith Nesbit's novel *The Railway Children* and use the internet to find images from the film adaptation you are going to see.

- When do you think the story is set? When do you think the film was made? List any clues you see.
- What other older films have you enjoyed? How do they compare to other films you've seen on DVD or at the cinema?

2. Have you travelled by train before? Where to? Look at pictures of steam engines from the Edwardian period (1901–1910) and compare them with pictures of trains today. How did trains and train travel change in the twentieth century?

3. Near the beginning of the film the children move from London to Yorkshire. Look at a map of Britain. Where might a train stop on the way to Yorkshire from London? What might a passenger see out of the window during the journey?

After seeing the film

1. The Old Gentleman that the children befriend regularly takes the 9:15 train. What time would he arrive at his destination if the journey took:

- 1 hour
- 1 hour 15 minutes
- 2 1/2 hours
- 3 hours 45 minutes

If the train were delayed by 20 minutes, what time would he arrive in each case?

2. In the film the children are from a rich family but have to leave their life of luxury. What lessons do you think they learnt by the end of the story? Were they happy in the countryside? If you and your family have had to move home, can you describe how you felt about it? If you've not had to move before, how do you think you would feel in this situation? What games and entertainments can children play even if they don't have any toys or gadgets of their own?

3. What did you learn from the film about the lives of children during the Edwardian period in England? Do some further research into the life of rich people in the city and poor people in the countryside in England in the early 1900s. Create your own history book or leaflet about the period.

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