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TEACHERS' NOTES

Aimed at Nursery schools and Infant schools, Key Stage 1 teachers and their pupils, the activities in this study guide are intended as starting points for a cross-curricular project on the film *Thomas and the Magic Railroad*. Many curriculum areas are covered although the focus is on Literacy and Art.

The activities seek to complement and extend the pleasure the children will derive from a visit to the cinema - although it is not necessary to see the film to carry out the activities. Each worksheet aims to give children an insight into *Thomas and the Magic Railroad*, whilst at the same time meeting some of the requirements of the National Curriculum and Scottish Guidelines.

Pages 2-12 are worksheets which can be photocopied for use in the classroom, or used as a reference for teacher-led questions and tasks. The tasks are differentiated by outcome, but teachers may wish to adopt them as necessary.

On page 5 there is a competition, closing date 14 July 2000, with terms and conditions.

To assist planning, there is a curriculum grid on the inside back cover which outlines how each activity fits into the National Curriculum and Scottish Guidelines.

FILM SYNOPSIS

Thomas and the Magic Railroad brings one of the world's most beloved imaginary characters to the screen in a story that captures the thrills, comedy, poignancy and visual wit of his world as never before.

For as long as anyone can remember, the Island of Sodor, land of talking trains, has been a realm of magic and innocence. Now though Thomas the Tank Engine and his friends on the Magic Railroad are being threatened by diesel engines like the surly Diesel 10. Even the magical Mr Conductor (Alec Baldwin), who has always travelled between the train world and the human world of Shining Time Station, is losing his powers and sparkle.

In the middle of this crisis, Lily (Mara Wilson), a resourceful twelve-year-old, meets up with Mr Conductor on the way to visit her lonely Grandfather Burnett Stone (Peter Fonda). With a host of whimsical, witty and wise characters, they embark on an adventure on the Island of Sodor with Thomas the Tank Engine to preserve that wonderful world that exists just beyond the limits of the imagination. Brave Thomas reminds them all that even little engines can do big things.

Written, directed and produced by Britt Allcroft and produced by Phil Fehrle, *Thomas and the Magic Railroad* is executive produced by Charles Falzon of Guilane Pictures and Steve Stabler, Brent Baum and Barry London of Destination Films.

Thomas and the Magic Railroad will be released across the country 14 July 2000 by Icon Film Distribution. So it's all aboard for Thomas - make tracks to the cinema this summer!

TIPS FOR TEACHERS USING THOMAS AND THE MAGIC RAILROAD IN THE CLASSROOM

You will find that the children already have a good visual literacy and using *Thomas and the Magic Railroad* in the classroom will spark lots of discussion.

- ★ Bring in sensory cues to get attention - perhaps a model of Thomas or a selection of the books. Encourage the children to bring in any Thomas materials they may have at home (books, videos or toys).
- ★ Try to recreate a sensory 'picture' of the film in the classroom - using pictures of mountains to represent those which surround Shining Time and a picture of a station to represent the Island of Sodor - or bring in train tickets and timetables. You could even bring in a pair of sunglasses and a handful of sand to represent Junior - who plays Mr Conductor's beach bum cousin. Gold glitter could be used for Mr Conductor's magic dust.
- ★ Ask the children to tell their favourite Thomas the Tank Engine story - or act it out in drama.
- ★ Practice making train whistling noises using musical instruments.
- ★ Every time you are about to do an activity from the *Thomas and the Magic Railroad* study guide, you could either make a train whistling noise or shout "All aboard!" or hold up a model of Thomas to get the children's attention and draw them into the activity.
- ★ Talk about the characters and story before attempting any activities. Ask the children to talk about their experiences of Thomas as much as possible.
- ★ Repeat the key elements of the story as much as possible using the synopsis.
- ★ Display character maps with the children's input to reinforce the different character elements and interactions which make up the stories.
- ★ Make a *Thomas and the Magic Railroad* collage for display. Introduce children to the concept of film language and how the film adaptation will be different to the books. The film is set in America with American characters and accents. Thomas and friends look the same as in the television series, but this is a whole new adventure for him - where he meets some brand new friends and enemies. The film also mixes stop-motion animation with live action which is a first for Thomas.
- ★ Explain that films are a different type of storytelling experience. Films use dialogue, moving images, special effects and sound effects to tell the story, and instead of being written by an author, the story is told through the camera lens. So in effect, we see what the camera sees.
- ★ Encourage the children to talk about the last time they visited the cinema. What was it like? Loud, scary, fun? Did they have popcorn or sweets? What was the best bit of the film they saw and what was the worst? How is going to the cinema different to watching television?
- ★ Ask the children what they think the film *Thomas and the Magic Railroad* will be like. What do they think will happen? How do they think it will end?
- ★ After the children have seen the film ask them to write reviews.

MEET THOMAS THE TANK ENGINE AND HIS FRIENDS

If you know Thomas the Tank Engine, a cheerful and cheeky blue engine and our number one hero, and his Friends, you will probably know Mr Conductor too.

MR CONDUCTOR

Assistant to Sir Topham Hatt, the Head of the Island of Sodor Railway.

Mr Conductor is a magical man who lives in the Shining Time Station house walls and who comes under threat when he runs out of his magical dust.



You might know Thomas' Friends:



TOBY



GORDON



HENRY



PERCY



HAROLD



JAMES



ANNIE



BERTIE

TASK

How many friends does Thomas have?
Describe what you know about Thomas
and his friends to a classmate.

Take it in turns to speak. Draw your favourite friend
and write a sentence about why that character is your favourite.



• MEET THOMAS' FRIENDS FROM SHINING TIME STATION •

HERE ARE SOME NEW FRIENDS FOR THOMAS:

STACEY JONES

Shining Time's friendly and reliable station master.



BILLY TWOFEATHERS

Shining Time's hardworking Native American engineer whose family has lived in the valley for generations.



What do you think a 'station master' does?

How could you find out?

Why do you think Billy is called Billy Twofeathers?

What does an engineer do?

Draw a picture of yourself as either a station master or an engineer.

TASK



MEET THOMAS' NEW FRIENDS FROM THOMAS AND THE MAGIC RAILROAD

These characters are Thomas' newest friends and they appear in the film *Thomas and the Magic Railroad*.

LILY



Our young heroine. She is a city kid of the new millennium with her own style who goes to visit her lonely grandfather and finds herself on a wonderful journey.

PATCH



A thirteen-year-old boy from Muffle Mountain whose love and knowledge of the Indian Valley helps to bring this story to its happy conclusion.

BURNETT STONE



Lily's grandfather and a former railroad engineer, who overcomes sadness when he helps save Mr Conductor and the magic of the special universe of the Indian Valley, and gets to know Lily again.

MR CONDUCTOR JUNIOR



Mr Conductor's adorable beach bum cousin, who learns that there is more to life than catching waves.

TASK How can you tell from the pictures which are the goodies and which are the baddies?

Draw a wanted poster for the baddies in the film.



DIESEL 10



A naughty diesel engine on the Island of Sodor who is 10 out of 10 for strength and bad behaviour and out to destroy the harmony of Sir Topham Hatt's Railway.

LADY



A very special golden engine, who holds the secret to the Magic Railroad.

MUTT



A scruffy dog with a keen sixth sense.

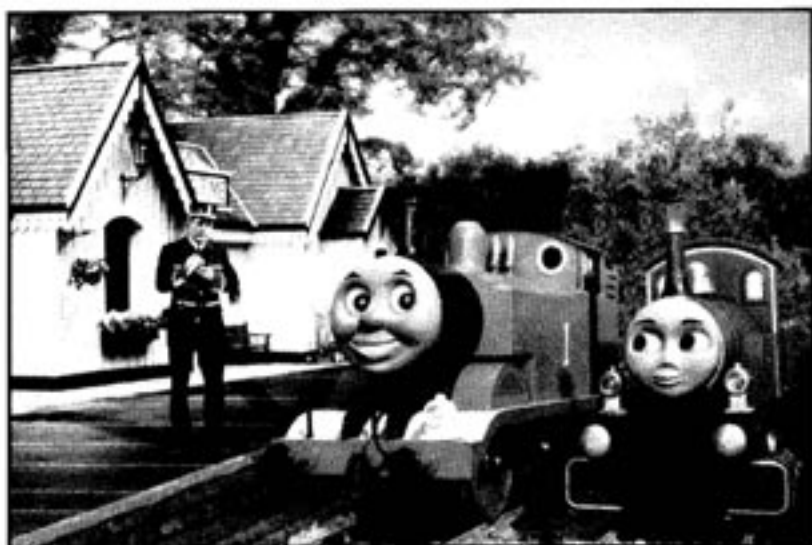
SPLATTER AND DODGE



Diesel 10's silly sidekicks.

COMPUTERS AND THOMAS AND THE MAGIC RAILROAD

This is the first time that we have ever seen Thomas and his Friends on screen with real human beings.



To do this, the people who made the film *Thomas and the Magic Railroad* used something called 'computer-generated images' (CGI). This is where people use computers to make pictures move on screen.

TASK

What other films have you seen which use computer-generated images?

Write down what you would say to Thomas if you were in a film with him.



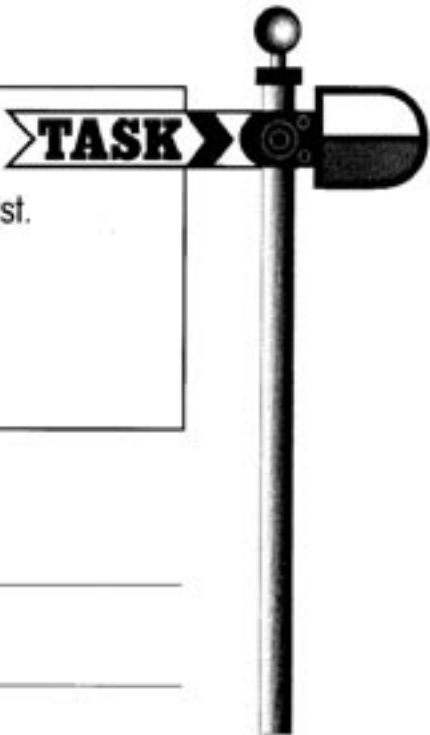
THE ISLAND OF SODOR

Thomas and his friends live and work on the Island of Sodor. The Island is made up of lots of different things:



	WHAT DO THEY MEAN?
A station	_____
Mountains	_____
Tunnels	_____
A quarry	_____
Fields	_____
A scrapyard	_____
An airfield	_____
A castle	_____

- Write down what each of the words above mean.
- Draw an imaginary map of the Island of Sodor making sure that you include all the things on the list.
- Do you have any of these things near you?
- Look on a map of your local area to find out.
- Would your local area make a good setting for a Thomas the Tank Engine film? Why?



SHINING TIME STATION AND THE MAGIC RAILROAD OF LIGHT

Shining Time Station is a magic station which connects the Island of Sodor to the 'real' world.



Shining Time Station and the Island of Sodor are connected by a 'railroad of light'.

TASK

- Find out from looking in books or on the internet what real railroads are made of.
- What do you think a 'railroad of light' looks like?
- Draw Thomas travelling on his Magic Railroad.
- How do you think they made the 'railroad of light' in the film?
 - What materials do you think they used?
- Draw a diagram of how you think they built the railroad and label it.
- After you have seen the film, was the Magic Railroad what you expected?

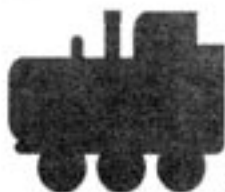
Cut out the train ticket below and play at being Mr Conductor

1st Class return

Valid from: _____

From: Shining Time

To: _____



In groups, take it in turns to be passengers, train drivers and ticket collectors.

What do ticket collectors say to passengers?

Describe what a train driver does on a typical journey?



• GOLD DUST TRAVEL •

In *Thomas and the Magic Railroad*, Mr Conductor is able to travel between Sodor Island and Shining Time Station by using some magic gold dust.



Mr Conductor

TASK

If you had some magic gold dust,
where would you go to?

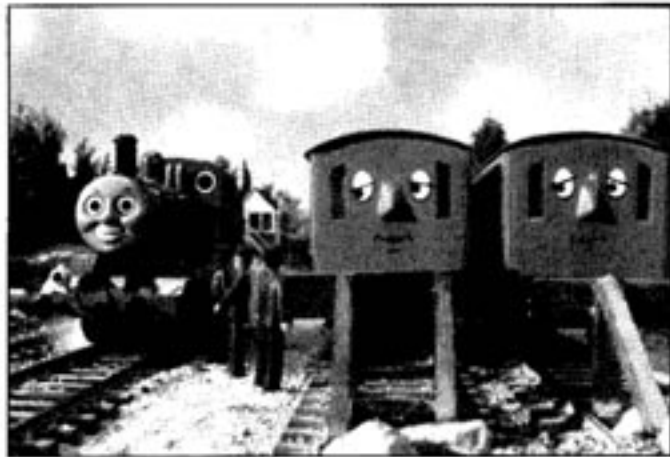
Draw a picture showing you sprinkling your gold dust
and then travelling to your magic place.

Write a story about your journey.



• BEING REALLY USEFUL •

Thomas and his friends are all very good at being 'really useful'. They work together to solve problems. Have you ever worked with friends to solve problems?
 Make up a play showing how you resolved the problem.



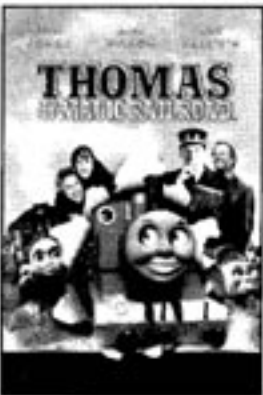
TASK How can you be really useful?
 Fill in the timetable below outlining how you can be really useful throughout the day.
 For example, after breakfast, you could clear up your plates.

TIME OF DAY	BEING REALLY USEFUL
Breakfast	
Going to school	
Morning lessons	
Lunchtime	
Afternoon lessons	
Home time	
Teatime	
Bedtime	

THE HISTORY OF THOMAS THE TANK ENGINE

The first Thomas the Tank Engine stories were told by a man called Reverend Wilbert Awdry.

Wilbert loved trains and railways. He started to tell train stories in 1940, when his son was ill in bed. To make his son feel better, he made up a story of a little old engine who was sad. He named the engine Edward. So 'Edward's Day Out' became the first Tank Engine story to be written down. In 1946, he wrote many train stories about other engines - one of them called Thomas. He even made up an imaginary island for all the trains to live on called the Island of Sodor.



In 1984, Britt Allcroft, a storyteller and film maker was so fond of the Thomas the Tank Engine books that she made a television series about Thomas and his friends which was very popular.



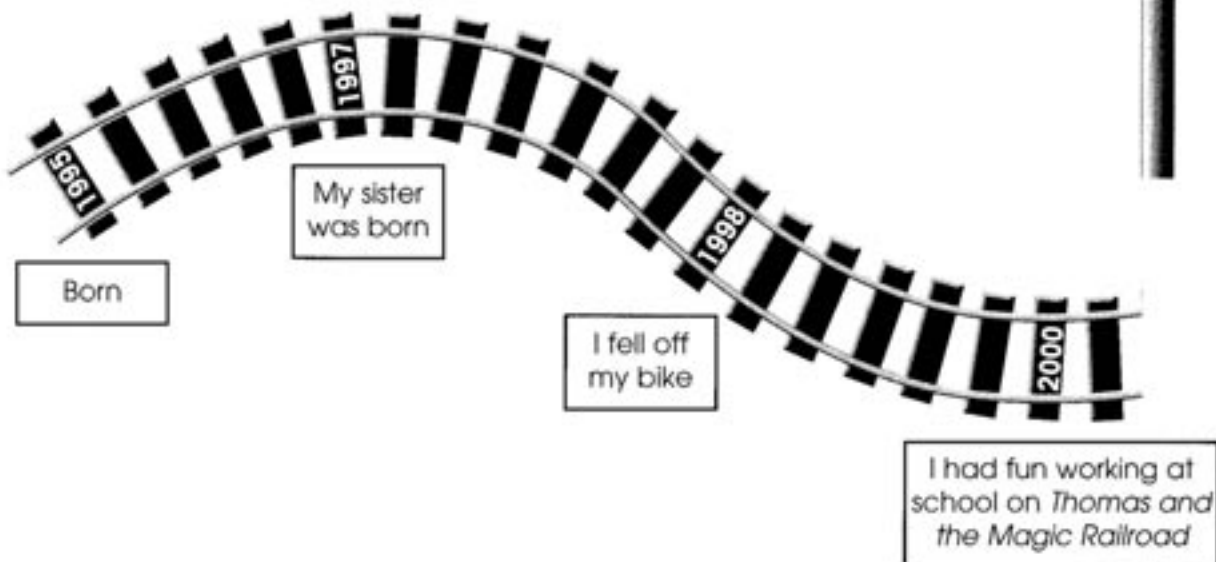
Britt Allcroft

Millions of families across the world like to watch the adventures of Thomas and his friends. People liked them so much, that in 1998 Britt Allcroft decided to make a film featuring Thomas and his friends. That film is called *Thomas and the Magic Railroad*.

Make up a Thomas the Tank Engine time line based on the information outlined above.

TASK

Here is an example of a time line of a typical five-year-old's life:



Thomas the Tank Engine and the other really useful engines are so popular that you can now visit life size versions of the engines all around the country. You can ride Thomas at UK Heritage Railways and you can see the costumes used for the film at the London Transport Museum.

NATIONAL CURRICULUM PLANNING GRID (KEY STAGE 1)

PAGE		NATIONAL CURRICULUM	SCOTTISH GUIDELINES (LEVEL A)
2	MEET THOMAS THE TANK ENGINE AND HIS FRIENDS	English - Group discussion and interaction (Speaking and listening). Literacy - Sentence construction and punctuation (Sentence level). Art and design - Exploring and developing ideas.	English Language - Talking about texts (Talking). Punctuation and structure (Writing). Art and design - Investigating visually and recording.
3	MEET THOMAS' FRIENDS FROM SHINING TIME STATION	English - Reading for information (Reading). Group discussion and interaction (Speaking and Listening). Literacy - Reading comprehension (Text level). Numeracy - Organising and sorting data.	English Language - Reading for information (Reading). Talking in groups (Talking). Maths - Collect and organise (Information handling).
4	MEET THOMAS' NEW FRIENDS FROM THOMAS AND THE MAGIC RAILROAD	Literacy - Reading comprehension (Text level).	English Language - Reading for information (Reading).
5	STEAM AND WHISTLES	Science - Forces and motion.	Science - Understanding energy and forces, forces and their effects.
6	COMPUTERS AND THOMAS AND THE MAGIC RAILROAD	Information Communication Technology - Talk about the uses of ICT outside school; finding things out. Literacy - Writing composition (Text level).	Information Technology - Understanding and using Information Communication Technology. English Language - Personal writing and imaginative writing.
7	THE ISLAND OF SODOR	Geography - Geographical enquiry and skills. Knowledge and understanding of places.	Social Subjects - Understanding People and Place. Aspects of the physical and built environment. Making and using maps.
8	SHINING TIME STATION AND THE MAGIC RAILROAD OF LIGHT	Science - Materials and their properties. Art and design - Exploring and developing ideas. Design Technology - Developing, planning and communicating ideas.	Science - Understanding earth and space; materials from earth. Art and design - Expressing feelings, ideas, thoughts and solutions.
9	GOLD DUST TRAVEL	Art and design - Exploring and developing ideas. Literacy - Writing composition (Text level).	Art and design - Expressing feelings, ideas, thoughts and solutions; communicating. English Language - Imaginative writing.
10	BEING REALLY USEFUL	Literacy - Non-fiction writing composition. Personal, Social and Health Education and Citizenship - Preparing to play an active role as citizens.	English Language - Functional and personal writing. Religious and Moral Education - Personal search, Relationships and Moral Values.
11	THE HISTORY OF THOMAS THE TANK ENGINE	History - Knowledge and understanding of events, people, and changes in the past, organisation and communication. Art and design - Exploring and developing ideas; investigating and making art, craft and design.	Social Subjects - Understanding People in the Past; developing an understanding of time and historical sequence. Art and design - Creating and designing; using media.