

## Sing, Play, and Cook Railroad-Style

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*Read the “Directions” sheets for step-by-step instructions.*

### SUMMARY

In this activity, children and adults will use the colorful railroad terms from the book *Jingle the Brass* to enhance play activities, such as playing with toy trains, singing songs, and sampling a railroad-related menu.

### WHY

This activity will encourage children to think about language and words and how words associated with a particular industry (train transportation) and a particular time take on different meanings.

### TIME

- Train Play Activity 15–30 min
- Train Menu Activity 20–30 min
- Train Song Activity 10 min

### RECOMMENDED AGE GROUP

This activity will work best for children in kindergarten through 4th grade.

### CHALLENGE WORDS

- Boxcar: Roofed freight cars with sliding doors.
- Caboose: The last car in a freight train and also the office and lunchroom for the train crew. (Many modern trains have an electronic tool called an “end of train device” instead of or in addition to having a caboose.)
- Engine: The car at the head end of the train that supplies the power, and in railroad slang, hog.
- Freight: Goods or produce transported by ship, aircraft, train, van, or truck.
- Jingle the Brass: Ring the bell; blow the whistle.
- Ladder: The main track in the railroad yard.

More information at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/train/>.

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- Assemble: to connect or put together the parts of (something, such as a toy or machine).
- Adapt: to change (something) so that it functions better or is better suited for a purpose.

### GET READY

- Read Patricia Newman's book *Jingle the Brass* together. *Jingle the Brass* is a book about a young boy who learns words used by railroad workers of the steam-engine era while on a train trip. For tips on reading this book together, check out the Guided Reading Activity ([http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/train/train\\_reading.pdf](http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/train/train_reading.pdf)).
- Read the Step Back in Time sheet.

### YOU NEED

- Talk Together Tips sheets (*attached*)
- Step Back in Time sheets (*attached*)
- Computer with Internet access (*video at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/v/johnbull.html>*)
- Speakers or headphones

More information at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/train/>.



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For more information, visit the National Museum of American History Web site <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/train/>.

**R**ailroads have moved people and cargo around America for more than 180 years. The first steam-powered locomotives began to appear around 1830, and were very important to land transportation by the 1850s. By 1860, there were roughly 31,000 miles of track in the country, mostly in the Northeast, but also in the South and Midwest.

As the rail system grew, it connected the lives of Americans across the country. By 1893, almost any town could receive food and goods from any section of the country within a week or two. In the 1920s, trains delivered daily mail and express packages and long-distance travel was available to even more people.



The “John Bull” was one of the first successful locomotives in the United States. It ran for the first time in November, 1831.

#### Facts and Fiction

The words and illustrations in *Jingle the Brass* represent a mix of fantasy and facts about steam locomotives in American history. For example, the illustrations of hobos are comical and in general practice a child would not ride in the cab of a locomotive. For readers interested in “just the facts,” we recommend the nonfiction book *The John Bull: A British Locomotive Comes to America* by David Weitzman.

From the 1830s through the 1950s, people traveled in trains pulled by steam locomotives. Cars in these trains were almost always arranged in a specific order. Coal-burning steam engines sent smoke and cinders into the air, so the most **privileged** passengers sat as far away from the locomotive as possible. The passenger cars—the coaches—were separated from the locomotive by the mail and baggage cars.

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It took many people to make the railroad system work.

- The conductor was the “captain” of the train; he was in charge of the train crew, looked out for the safety of everyone aboard, and made sure that every passenger paid the correct fare.
- Two crew members worked in the engine’s cab: the engineer ran the locomotive, and the fireman managed the boiler and helped watch for signals. Both jobs were highly skilled.
- On trains with luxurious sleeping cars, people called “Pullman Porters” took care of passengers’ needs, like helping with luggage and tidying up the passenger area.
- Other “behind the scenes” railroad workers included the business clerks, track workers, signal tower workers, and express package agents.

The railroads that cross the country, mostly because of the food, coal, cars, and other goods that travel by rail, still have an impact on our lives. Many Americans still travel by rail, on diesel-powered locomotives, streetcars, subways, and commuter trains.

For more information, visit the *America on the Move* online exhibition at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthemove/>.

**Locomotive:** the vehicle that produces the power that pulls a train.

**Cinders:** very small pieces of burned material, such as wood or coal.

**Privileged:** having special rights or advantages that most people do not have, such as money.

**Luxurious:** very comfortable and expensive.

**Diesel:** a specific type of oil fuel.

**Commuter trains:** trains that carry travelers regularly to and from places, especially between their homes and workplaces.

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### *Train Play Activity*

Take a close look at your train engine. See if it looks like a steam or diesel engine. A steam engine would have a smoke stack or chimney tube and should be attached to a tender car carrying water and fuel. A diesel engine has a “dog-nose” shape front. Take a look at the picture to the right for an example of a steam locomotive (left) next to a diesel locomotive (right).



Diesel locomotive (right) brings the Southern Railway’s “Tennessean” passenger train into Harrisonburg, Virginia, 1947 *National Museum of American History, Transportation Collections, McBride photos*

As you are playing with your trains, try to use these words from *Jingle the Brass*.

- When should your conductor “jingle the brass”?
- What kinds of cars are on your train? Do you have a “hog,” “caboose,” “reefer,” or “snoozer?” What goods or people would go inside each of those cars?
- Are there tunnels? When would the brakeman feel the “telldales”?

Try to make your trains look like the scenes in *Jingle the Brass*.

- If you have a steam locomotive, where would it fill up on water, like on page 9?
- Do your trains ever need to “pull off the main line” or “lie dead” to let other trains pass?

Imagine what people might be a part of your train’s story.

- Where would your conductor ride? Would your train have passengers? Is there an “ashcat” on your train?
- Are all of the tracks in top condition? Where might the “gandy dancers” be working?

**Tip** For extra fun, sing together like the track workers!

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### *Train Menu Activity*

Using *Jingle the Brass* vocabulary and the glossary of definitions from the back of the book, re-write the breakfast menu on the next page. This menu is one that is used on one of today's Amtrak Cross Country Café Tours. The Cross Country Café offers a unique onboard experience on the trains City of New Orleans and Texas Eagle that includes the tastes of the regions.



Dining car on the B&O Railroad's Capitol Limited, June 12, 1925  
Smithsonian Institution, Negative #: 77-7595

### *Old Fashioned Railroad Food Terms:*

- Bait Can or Nosebag:* Lunch bucket or bag.      *Put on the nosebag:* To eat.  
*Beanery:* A railroad eating house.      *Rolling Stock or sinkers:* Donuts.  
*Beanery Queen:* Waitress.      *Torpedoes:* Green beans.  
*Diner:* The dining car on a passenger train.      *Whitewash:* Milk.  
*Eggs with headlights:* Eggs sunny-side up.      *Wreck on the main line:* Scrambled eggs.  
*Jailhouse spuds:* Waffled potatoes.

Some of the items on the menu below don't have a definition found in the *Jingle the Brass* glossary. Think about how the terms above create a picture in your mind. Can you create some "railroad" lingo for the following: French toast, biscuits, bacon, or a sausage patty?

Next, using your railroad terminology, decide what you will eat and place your breakfast order with the beanery queen.

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### *Train Menu Activity (continued)*

#### *Sample Children's Menu on the City of New Orleans Train*

Scrambled Eggs (Served with breakfast potatoes or grits, small croissant or warm biscuit)

Railroad French Toast (Traditional thick slices of egg-batter-dipped toast, grilled to a golden brown and served with syrup, berry topping and dusted with powdered sugar)

Breakfast Meats

Pork Sausage - One Patty

Bacon - Two Strips

#### **Tip**

For more fun, cook part of the railroad menu together. While you're cooking, take a look at the packages your food came in. Can you tell where the foods were grown or packed? Which ones might have traveled by train?



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### *Train Songs Activity*

Songs are a great way to explore life on the railroads! Take a look at these two songs.

#### *“I’ve Been Working on the Railroad”*

Traditional Song

<http://www.folkways.si.edu/listen2.aspx?type=preview&trackid=8760>

I’ve been working on the railroad  
All the live long day,  
I’ve been working on the railroad,  
Just to pass the time away;  
Can’t you hear the whistle blowing?  
Rise up so early in the morn;  
Don’t you hear the captain shouting?  
Dinah blow your horn.

According to the song, what does the whistle sound mean? (“Rise up so early” means it is the alarm to wake up the workers.) How do you wake up in the morning?

What jobs do your friends and family have? What words would be important to write a song about their jobs?

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For more activities about trains in American history and *Jingle the Brass*, visit <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/train/>.

*Train Songs Activity (Continued)*

*“Chattanooga Choo Choo”*

by Glenn Miller

<http://www.archive.org/download/MinaMazzini-ChattanoogaChooChoo/>

MinaMazzini-ChattanoogaChooChoo.mp3

Pardon me, boy  
Is that the Chattanooga choo choo?  
Track twenty-nine  
Boy, you can gimme a shine  
I can afford  
To board a Chattanooga choo choo  
I've got my fare  
And just a trifle to spare

You leave the Pennsylvania Station 'bout a quarter to four  
Read a magazine and then you're in Baltimore  
Dinner in the diner  
Nothing could be finer  
Than to have your ham an' eggs in Carolina

When you hear the whistle blowin' eight to the bar  
Then you know that Tennessee is not very far  
Shovel all the coal in  
Gotta keep it rollin'  
Woo, woo, Chattanooga there you are

There's gonna be  
A certain party at the station  
Satin and lace  
I used to call “funny face”  
She's gonna cry  
Until I tell her that I'll never roam  
So Chattanooga choo choo  
Won't you choo-choo me home?  
Chattanooga choo choo  
Won't you choo-choo me home?

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### *Train Songs Activity (Continued)*

Listen for all of the different locations mentioned in the song. Find them on a map. If you look at the song's lyrics in order, can you tell if the train is traveling north or south?

The word "choo choo" is an onomatopoeia, or the creation of words that imitate natural sounds (like "buzz" and "hiss"). What part of a steam-powered train sounds like "choo choo?" If you were going to write a song about a car, boat, or airplane, what onomatopoeia might you use?

**Tip**

To see and hear a steam train in action, watch a video of the John Bull locomotive at (<http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/v/johnbull.html>).

Most modern trains are diesel-powered, not steam-powered, so they sound different. The "choo-choo" sound was typical of the whistles on steam-powered locomotives.

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## Sing, Play, and Cook Railroad-Style

### *For Teachers*

*Read the “Parent Guide” and “Directions” sheets for specific instructions.*

#### OBJECTIVES

The students will be better able to:

- Discuss and understand how vocabulary and expressions can be specific to a particular activity or industry.
- Discuss what it would be like to ride or work on a steam train.

#### STUDENT PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- Successfully use vocabulary and expressions from *Jingle the Brass* accurately and appropriately while at play.

#### STANDARDS

##### *IRA/NCTE Language Arts Standards*

1. Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.
4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
9. Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.
12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

More information at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/train/>.