

# Come Ride the Rails to Literacy

## Dear Preschool Teacher,

All aboard for a fun-filled learning experience with Thomas the Tank Engine™ and his colorful engine friends! To celebrate the importance of preschool literacy, award-winning curriculum specialists Young Minds Inspired (YMI) and HIT Entertainment are pleased to present this free **Come Ride the Rails to Literacy** program featuring the enclosed episode, *Thomas Tries His Best*, from the DVD **Tales From the Tracks**.

This exciting story, continuing the more than 60 years of literary heritage embodied in the characters from **Thomas & Friends™**, will come to life through a variety of engaging lessons and extended activities that easily fit into your existing curriculum. It is not necessary to view the DVD to use the activities, but doing so will engage students' interest and imagination.

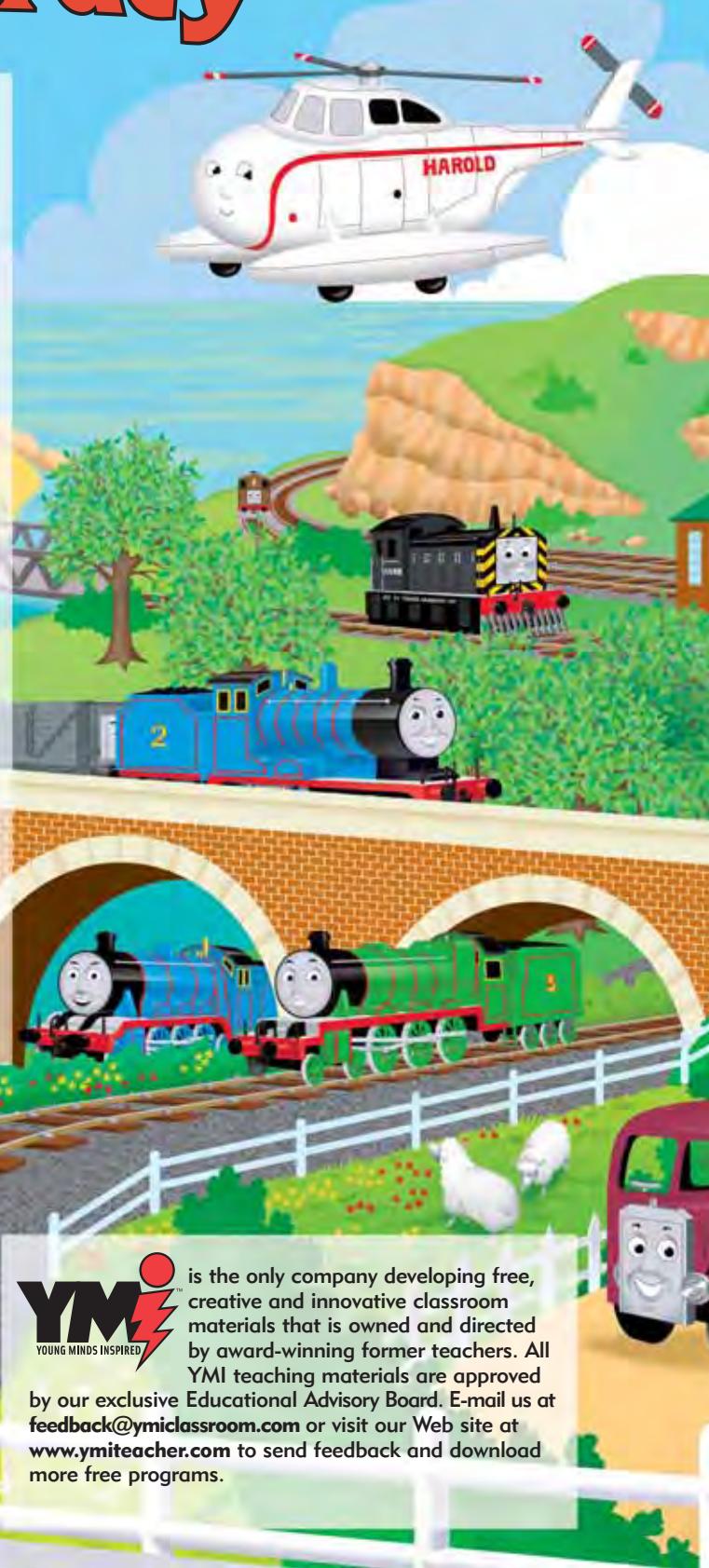
The enclosed program of classroom activities and parent take-home materials expands upon important preschool skills such as **vocabulary, language development, and storytelling**, using **Thomas & Friends** themes. See the enclosed reply card for a special free book offer from Random House, publisher of the **Thomas & Friends** books.

While the materials in this program are copyright-protected, make as many copies as necessary to meet your students' needs and to share the materials with other teachers.

All aboard for reading!

Sincerely,

Roberta Nusim, Publisher and former teacher



is the only company developing free, creative and innovative classroom materials that is owned and directed by award-winning former teachers. All YMI teaching materials are approved by our exclusive Educational Advisory Board. E-mail us at [feedback@ymiclassroom.com](mailto:feedback@ymiclassroom.com) or visit our Web site at [www.ymiteacher.com](http://www.ymiteacher.com) to send feedback and download more free programs.





## Program Objectives

- To develop literacy skills, particularly vocabulary, storytelling, listening and comprehension
- To develop fine-motor skills
- To encourage creativity and expression
- To encourage child and parent interaction at home

## Program Components

- Three-page teacher's guide
- Three reproducible activity masters
- A colorful wall poster to foster literacy
- *Thomas Tries His Best*, an episode from the DVD ***Tales From the Tracks***
- A reply card for your important comments. **The first 100 teachers to return the card will receive a free copy of *James and the Red Balloon*.**
- A tearpad for parents with a special offer for a free book and a portrait sitting for their child

## Target Audience

This program is designed for ages 3-5 but may be tailored to suit the needs and abilities of your students.

## How To Use This Program

- Distribute one activity sheet per student.
- Provide crayons or markers, scissors, and additional materials as noted.
- View the DVD with students before using the activities and again as desired.
- Send home to parents the *Dear Parent or Caregiver* sheet from the enclosed tearpad when you begin the unit.

## Thomas Tries His Best Story Synopsis

Sir Topham Hatt asks Thomas to take some chickens to the docks, but the chickens are late getting to the station! Thomas is worried; what if he misses the carnival? James tells Thomas

that he shouldn't wait for the chickens, but Thomas stays because he doesn't want to let Sir Topham Hatt down. Finally, the chickens arrive! Gordon tells Thomas that he can make up time by going extra fast. When Thomas does this, the chickens get upset. Thomas knows that his job is to give the chickens a safe ride, so he slows down. They arrive at the docks safely! But the carnival generator has broken down, and a new one is needed right away. Thomas takes the generator to the carnival and saves the day! Sir Topham Hatt congratulates Thomas on being a really useful engine!

## How To Use the Poster

Use the poster to engage students in different literacy-themed activities throughout the year. Each month, have children work individually or in a group using the idea starters below to tell a story. You might also have children draw a picture to illustrate their stories. Display their completed work near the poster.

**September** All the engines are at the Roundhouse. Can you name them? Where do you think they are going today? (The engines are James, Percy, Thomas, Murdoch, and Gordon.)

**October** It is an exciting day for Thomas. Can you tell me why?

**November** It is a special day on the Island of Sodor. Thomas and Percy are all dressed up. What kind of party are they going to?

**December** Winter has arrived on the Island of Sodor. How will Percy thaw out?

**January** Why is James so happy? Where is he going today? James has a number 5 on him. What numbers do the other engines have on them?

**February** It is a big day for Gordon. What do you think happened to him?

**March** Where is Emily? What is she doing today? Emily is green. What colors are the other engines?

**April** Why do you think Thomas is covered in paint?

**May** Can you name the engines? Sir Topham Hatt has given the engines a job to do. What do you think they have been asked to do?

**About Thomas & Friends™**

Based upon the series of much-loved books by the Rev. W. Awdry—who wrote the stories for his son—**Thomas & Friends**’ adventures honor the long-standing heritage of parents telling stories to their children.

In Thomas’ world, friendship and hard work are valued, as the characters try their best to be really useful engines. Some of the featured trains include:

<b>Thomas</b> A cheeky, fussy little engine who is always eager to help. Thomas is considered by all to be a really useful engine.	<b>Edward</b> Good-willed and kind, Edward calms everyone and restores order when the other engines misbehave.	<b>Emily</b> Always ready with sound advice, Emily is clever, cheerful and confident.	<b>Gordon</b> Though he knows he is the fastest and most powerful of all the engines, Gordon is goodhearted and uses his strength to help smaller engines.	<b>James</b> Because he thinks of himself as a Really Splendid Engine, James has big ideas about the work he should do, which often gets him into trouble.	<b>Percy</b> Always ready to please, Percy sometimes gets taken advantage of by the other engines.
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## Activity 1 All Aboard for a Thomas Playdate Adventure!

**Additional Materials Needed:** Craft sticks (enough for each child to attach one to each train), 9" x 11" construction paper cut into strips, tape, stapler or paper clips, and chart paper

Help students identify the trains, their colors and numbers on the activity sheet. They should then color and cut out the pictures.

First have students create train puppets, using tape to attach the train images from the activity sheet to craft sticks.

Then have students make a conductor's hat by taping the conductor's hat image to the center of a construction paper strip to make a headband. Help fit the strip around the child's head and fasten the ends together.

Work with children in groups of three or four to develop a story. Have them imagine that they are visiting Thomas and his friends on the Island of Sodor. Where would they go? What would they do together with Thomas? Record the stories on chart paper and have each group member sign his or her name at the bottom. Groups can take turns wearing their hats to tell their story as you read it aloud to the class.

## Activity 2 Tell It Again!

**Additional Materials Needed:** Stapler, glue, and small selection of mixed media such as stickers, foam shapes, glitter, etc.

Read aloud the synopsis of *Thomas Tries His Best* from this guide. Then help children determine body movements and sounds to accompany the synopsis as you read it once more. For example, when children hear Thomas' name, they might make a "peep-peep" sound, or chicken sounds when they hear the word "chicken." Then encourage children to share how they might interact with the trains if they were part of the story.

Now help students color and cut out the pictures on the activity sheet, decorating the story-title square using mixed media, then stapling the pages together in the correct order (2, 3, 1, 4). Help children practice comprehension and storytelling skills by having them tell the story to you. Children may take their books home to share with parents.



## Activity 3 My Ride the Rails Story

**Additional Materials Needed:** 9" x 11" construction paper and glue sticks

Tell children that they will make a new adventure for Thomas using their activity sheets. First they will determine if their story happens in the daytime or at night and color the picture accordingly. Next they will color their preferred engine(s), and then they will color a destination on the Island of Sodor where their story will occur. After cutting out and gluing their choices onto construction paper, they will draw a picture below them that tells what happens in their story, including themselves and some friends if they wish. Take dictation from students to complete their stories, and then display their work.

## Resources

- [www.thomasandfriends.com](http://www.thomasandfriends.com) (for more fun ideas and activities)
- [www.randomhouse.com/kids/thomas](http://www.randomhouse.com/kids/thomas) (for *Thomas & Friends* books)
- [www.ymiteacher.com](http://www.ymiteacher.com)



## Classroom Extensions

**Ride the Rails Circle Time.** Plan a train-themed circle gathering. Select train books to read (including *Thomas & Friends™* titles) and familiar train songs to sing, like "Down by the Station," "I've Been Working on the Railroad," etc. Have children bring trains from home to share. They also can interact with the train puppets they made in **Activity 1** as the books are read and songs are sung.

**Pass the Engine Game.** As children sit in a circle, have them pass a small toy engine (Thomas or another engine) as a musical selection is played. When the music stops, ask the group to identify the child who is holding the train with this rhyme: *Thomas, Thomas who has Thomas? Our friend (child's name), he/she has Thomas!* Continue until each child has been identified. Other response ideas can include: *Someone whose hair is (color), someone whose name begins with (letter or letter sound), etc.*

**All Aboard for Creative Play.** Have children construct and then paint train engines from shoeboxes of various shapes and sizes. In the block area, children can build a station, add people figures and use their trains for creative play.

**Thomas Small Group.** Work with children in small groups to make cognitive connections using Thomas as the theme. Ask questions such as, "Thomas is blue—what other things are blue? Thomas has wheels—what other things have wheels? Thomas makes a noise as he travels—what noises do ships, planes and cars make?"

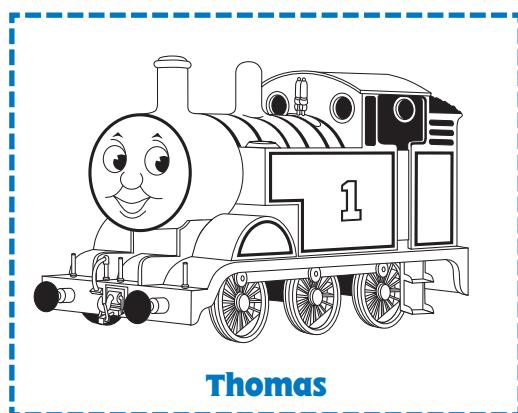
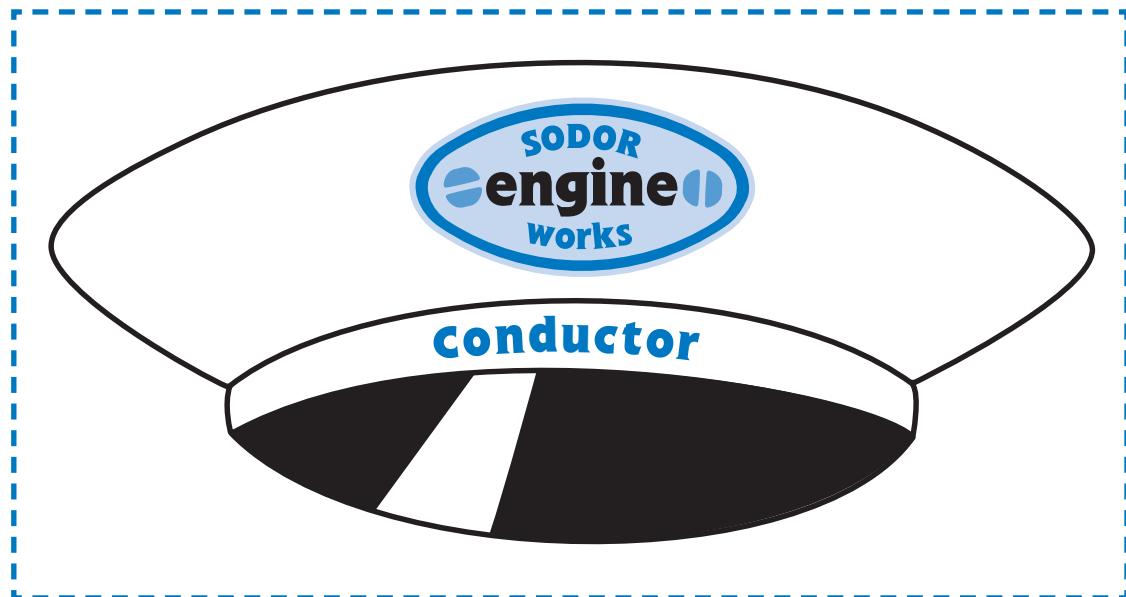


## Activity 1

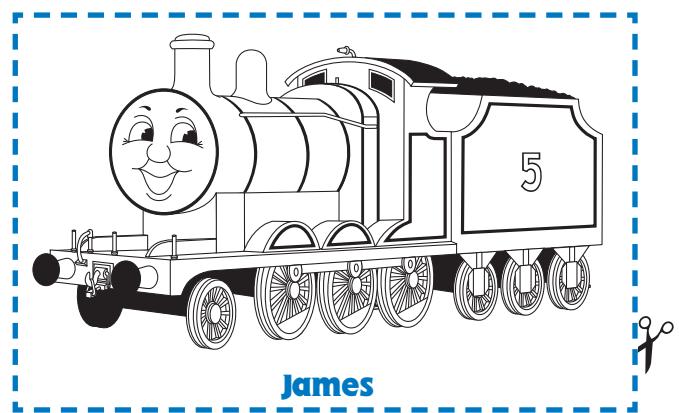


Reproducible Master

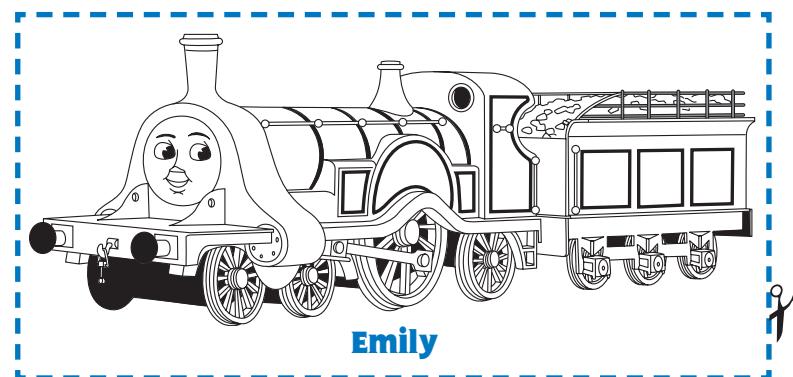
# All Aboard for a Thomas Playdate Adventure!



Thomas



James



Emily



# Tell It Again!

**Tell the story about  
how Thomas tries his best!**

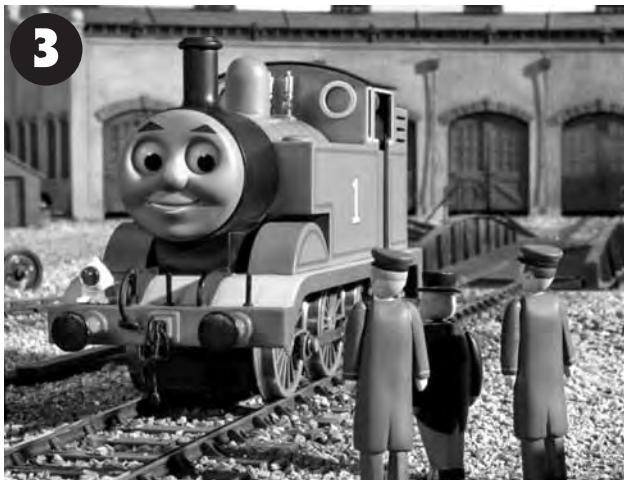


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## Thomas Tries His Best

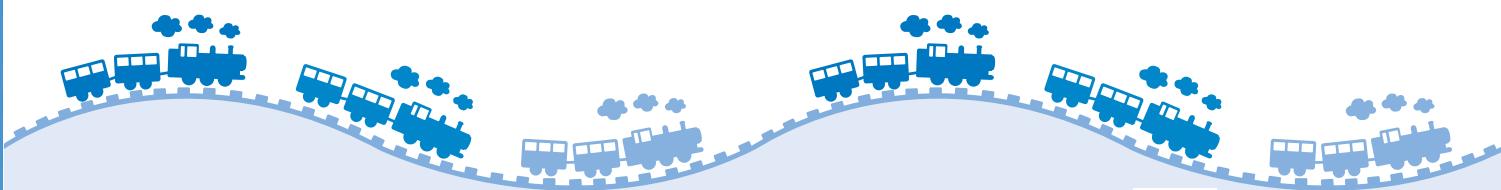
THOMAS  
& FRIENDS™



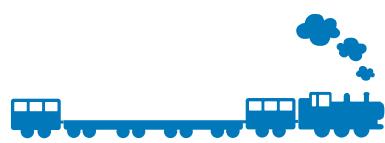
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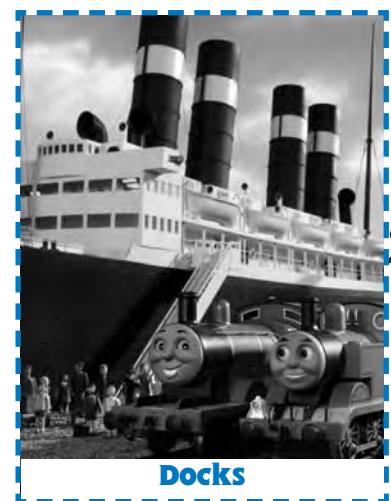
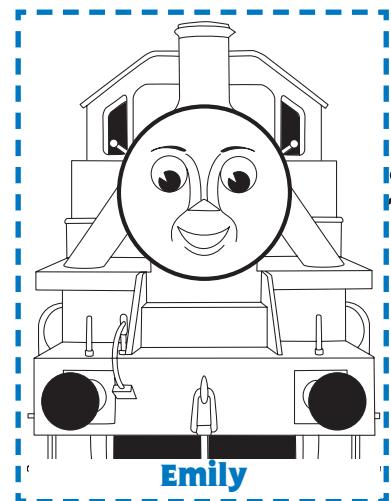
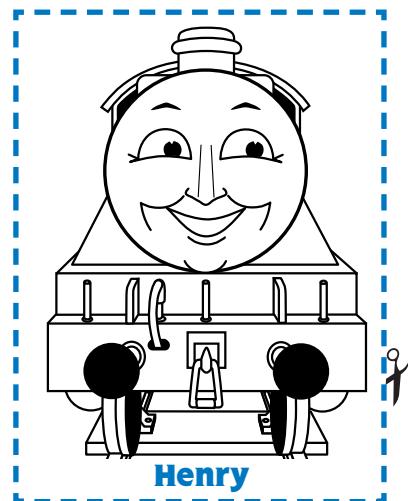
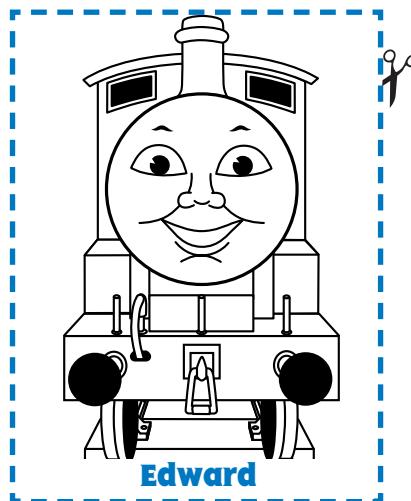
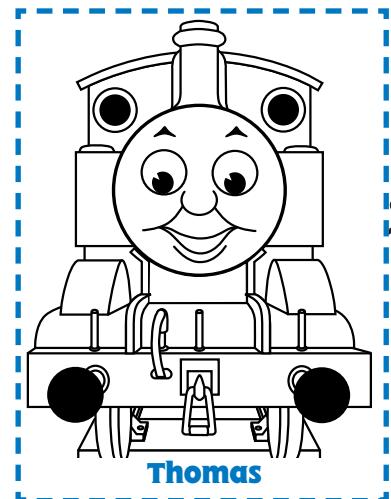
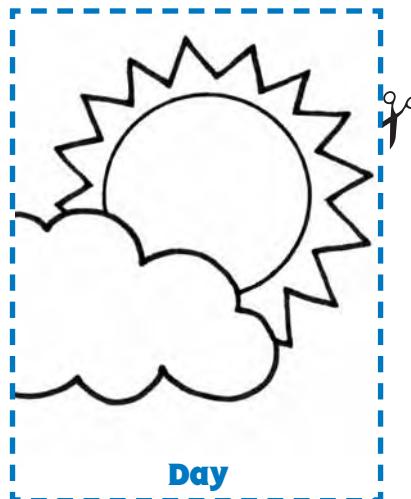


## Activity 3

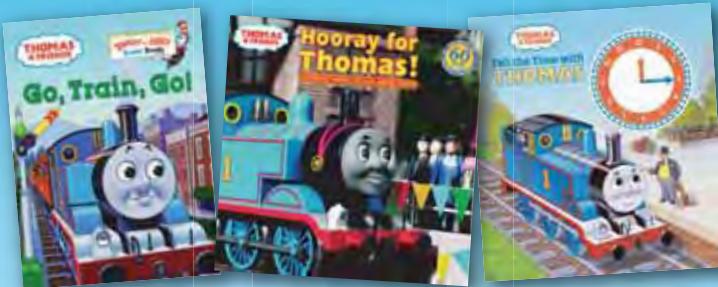


Reproducible Master

# My Ride the Rails Story



# Picture Your Child Reading with *Thomas & Friends*™!



**Dear Parent or Caregiver,**

**T**homas & Friends has been educating and entertaining youngsters around the world for more than half a century. Stories about everyone's favorite cheeky little engine and his friends offer adventures rich in detail, as well as important life lessons.

**Here's how you can improve your child's reading-readiness skills**

Create storytelling opportunities for your child using Thomas' adventures:

- Read a book with your child and ask your child to tell you his or her favorite part, along with how the story might change if he or she were a part of it.

**More ideas on the back ▶**

**D**id you know that *Thomas & Friends*™ is based on the time-honored tradition of parents telling stories to children? It all started in 1943 when the Rev. W. Awdry began to tell his young son, Christopher, the adventures of several trains that worked on the Island of Sodor. Eventually, Rev. Awdry published his stories. Christopher continued the tradition of writing stories about Thomas and his friends with his own

family, and Thomas hasn't slowed since. Thomas' world is a special place where friendship, hard work, and problem solving are important as the characters try their best to be really useful engines.

For more *Thomas & Friends* fun, be sure to visit [www.thomasandfriends.com](http://www.thomasandfriends.com), and for a complete listing of *Thomas & Friends* books, visit [www.randomhouse.com/kids/thomas](http://www.randomhouse.com/kids/thomas)

**THOMAS  
& FRIENDS**

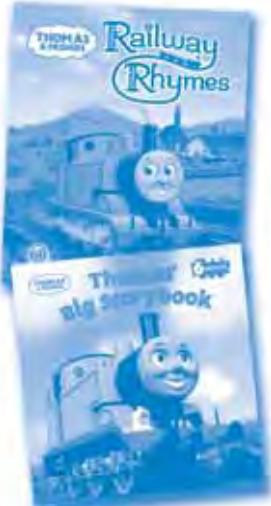
**HIT**  
INDEPENDENT

**RANDOM HOUSE**  
**CHILDREN'S BOOKS**

**YMI**  
YOUNG MINDS INSPIRED



## More ideas to help your child get on track for literacy

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- ➊ Begin (or continue!) a storytelling tradition by creating a new adventure for Thomas together with your child. You can do this anywhere—in a store, in the car or at the zoo.
  - ➋ Talk about the illustrations as you read with your child. What do the different faces on the engines tell about how the characters feel?
  - ➌ Help your child relate to the words on the page by moving your finger across the lines of text as you read together.
  - ➍ Challenge your child to predict what will happen next in the story. This helps your child to think and understand cause and effect.

## All aboard for literacy fun!

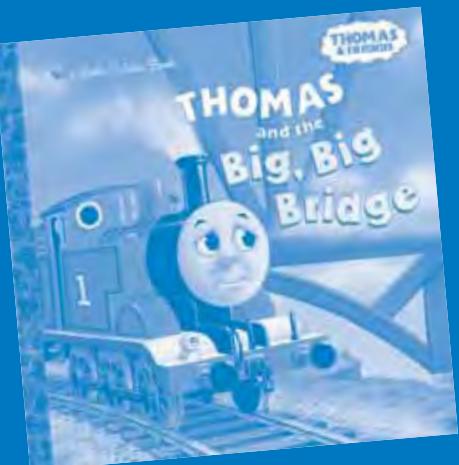
Look for these and other **Thomas & Friends™** titles from Random House Children's Books wherever books are sold!



## Bonus **Thomas & Friends™** Mini Book and 8 x 10 Portrait

Simply go to any portrait studio in Wal-Mart and receive one Bonus **Thomas & Friends** mini book and one 8 x 10 portrait. Appointments are available. Walk-ins are welcome. For the studio nearest you, call 1-800-599-4343 or view studio locator at [www.goportraits.com](http://www.goportraits.com)

**WAL-MART®**  
Portrait Studio



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