

# STORYTELLING WITH THE BOXCAR CHILDREN®

## Dear Educators,

The Boxcar Children series, originally written by Gertrude Chandler Warner, has charmed young readers since its publication in 1924. The stories feature sibling orphans Henry, Jessie, Violet, and Benny Alden who, with their unique resourcefulness, work together as a family to solve mysteries.

This free educational program, developed by Penguin Random House in association with the curriculum specialists at Young Minds Inspired, invites students in grades 1 to 3 to join in the Alden children's adventures and have fun while they learn.

- **Share:** We hope that you enjoy the program and share it with other educators.
- **Tell us:** Please share your thoughts about the program by commenting online at [ymiclassroom.com/feedback-boxcar](https://ymiclassroom.com/feedback-boxcar). We look forward to receiving your comments.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Dominic Kinsley  
Editor in Chief  
Young Minds Inspired

## Target Audience

Grades 1-3

## Program Components

Available at [ymiclassroom.com/boxcar](https://ymiclassroom.com/boxcar):

- This one-page teacher's guide
- One reproducible student activity sheet
- Curriculum standards

## Concepts and Skills

- Deductive reasoning
- Vocabulary
- Storytelling
- Teamwork

## How to Use This Guide

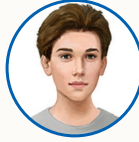
Photocopy the activity sheet for students. The activity can be used regardless of whether students have read the book series. After class, send the activity home for families to enjoy together.

## About the Boxcar Children Series

The Boxcar Children series tells the story of four orphaned children, Henry, Jessie, Violet, and Benny. They create a home for themselves in an abandoned boxcar in the forest. They eventually meet their grandfather, who is a kind and wealthy man (although the children had believed him to be cruel). The children decide to live with the grandfather, who moves the beloved boxcar to his backyard so the children can use it as a playhouse.

## About the Characters

**Henry:** At age fourteen, Henry is the oldest sibling. He likes to figure out how things work, which makes him good at repairing and building stuff. While he'll never brag, he's a great runner, too! It's not always easy being the oldest and having so much responsibility, but there's nothing that Henry can't handle.



**Jessie:** Jessie is twelve. She can always be counted on to take charge. She's good at being organized—she makes lists in her notebook and always keeps track of facts when there's a mystery to be solved. When her younger siblings need help, Jessie's there. She loves planning adventures and taking care of the family dog, Watch.



**Violet:** Everyone knows ten-year-old Violet is creative—she loves to draw, take photos, and play the violin. She's a little on the shy side, but because she's quiet, she's a careful observer. With her artist's eye, Violet picks up on important details that her brothers and sister sometimes overlook.



**Benny:** Benny's only six, and even though he's the youngest Alden, he still helps solve mysteries. He's always curious and full of questions. In fact, one of his favorite questions is "When's lunch?" because he's usually hungry! Benny loves playing with Watch and visiting new places.



**Watch:** Watch is the family dog, a friendly, wire-haired fox terrier. Back when the children lived in the old boxcar in the woods, they found him as a stray. Since then, he has been loyal to the Aldens, especially Jessie, who once removed a thorn from his paw. Watch also has a special bond with Benny, who gives him treats.



## ACTIVITY

### The Missing Words Mystery

In this activity, students complete a story that has had words obscured by the sound of a train whistle. To begin, ask students if they can remember a time when they were trying to pay attention to a story, a movie, or a TV show, but

something kept distracting or interrupting them. Ask them if it was easy or difficult to understand what was happening. If it was difficult, how did they solve the problem?

Next, introduce students to the Boxcar Children series and characters using the details above to help them envision the characters as they work.

**Part 1:** Distribute the activity sheet and review the directions with the class. Students might complete this activity on their own, with a partner, or as a class. Review the definitions of parts of speech as needed.

**Answers** (in order): road, strange, wind, growling, sun, chasing, brown, bark, dog

Once the story is complete, invite a student to read it aloud.

**Part 2:** Have students draw the two pictures and invite them to share what they think happens next in the story. Then use the students' ideas to continue the story from where it leaves off. As a class or in small groups, have students take turns contributing a sentence or thought to introduce the next part of the story, continuing until each student participates and the extended story comes to an end.

## EXTENSION ACTIVITY

### Story Board: Teamwork in Action

Set up a large board in a portion of the classroom that includes a variety of individually laminated words backed by Velcro or magnets, or create index cards with a variety of words: nouns, verbs, prepositions, adjectives, articles, etc. Include a mix of ordinary, silly, and dramatic words. Pair students together to "write" a story about a mystery the Alden siblings might solve using the words they choose. Once the story is finished, ask each team to read their story to the class.

## Resources

- The Boxcar Children site: [sites.prh.com/the-boxcar-children](https://sites.prh.com/the-boxcar-children)
- Series resources for educators: [boxcarchildren.com/for-educators](https://boxcarchildren.com/for-educators)
- [ymiclassroom.com/boxcar](https://ymiclassroom.com/boxcar)

# The Missing Words Mystery

The Boxcar Children books feature four siblings—Henry, Jessie, Violet, and Benny—who like to solve mysteries. Can you help them with this mystery?

**Part 1:** While visiting a town, the children overheard a man telling a story. As he spoke, a train whistle blew over and over. The whistle was so loud that some words were hard to hear. Can you figure out the story? First, read the incomplete sentences below. Then use the parts of speech clues and the word bank to fill in the missing words.



“I was driving along a long \_\_\_\_\_ when I heard a \_\_\_\_\_  
[noun] [adjective]

howling sound. At first, I thought it was the \_\_\_\_\_ through the trees, but then I  
[noun]

heard \_\_\_\_\_. I shielded my eyes from the \_\_\_\_\_  
[verb] [noun]

and saw a creature \_\_\_\_\_ a squirrel through the woods. It had floppy,  
[verb]

\_\_\_\_\_ ears. I was sure of what it was when it began to  
[adjective]

\_\_\_\_\_. It was a \_\_\_\_\_!”  
[verb] [noun]

## Word Bank

chasing      strange      wind      sun      bark  
dog      road      growling      brown

**Part 2:** What happens next? On the back of this sheet, draw one picture of the story above. Then draw a second picture to show what you think happens next.