

AGES 9–11

NOTES & ACTIVITIES

for Teachers & Librarians

READ FOR THEMES:

- Geography of Southern Africa
- History of Africa's Railways
- Safari and Conservation

SUBJECT CHECKLIST:

- Literacy
- History
- Geography
- Science
- Art, Design & Technology
- Drama

These activities have been created to prompt discussions around the themes in the *Adventures on Trains* series by M.G. Leonard and Sam Sedgman – encouraging students to develop their reading comprehension, inference and creative writing skills, all while embarking on a mysterious and thrilling adventure...

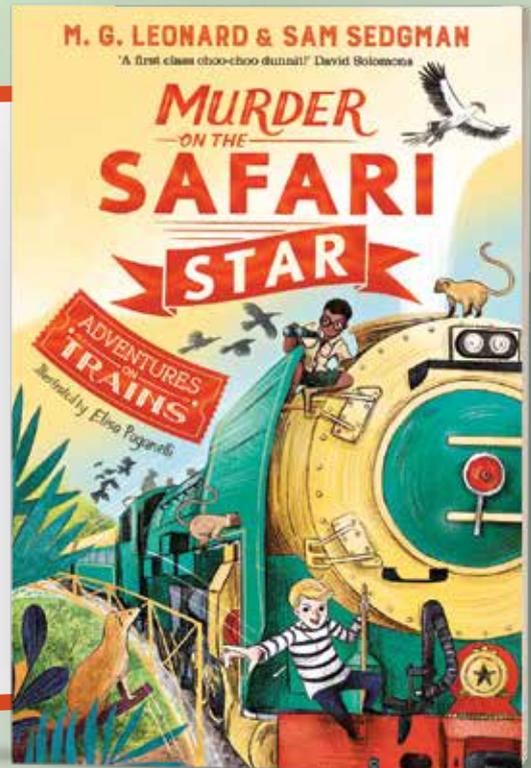
ADVENTURES ON TRAINS

JUMP ON BOARD

Harrison Beck and his Uncle Nat are on the journey of a lifetime aboard the Safari Star – a luxurious steam train that will take them from Pretoria to the stunning Victoria Falls. Close encounters with the amazing animals and landscape of Southern Africa are adventure enough, but things get mysterious when a passenger is found dead inside a locked compartment. Is it just a terrible accident or is something more suspicious afoot? It's up to train detective Hal and his new friend Winston to find out.

Before reading, take a few moments to look over the cover of *Murder on the Safari Star*, illustrated by Elisa Paganelli. Make some predictions:

- What animals can you see on the cover? Which other animals might you expect to see on a safari?
- Can you point out which countries make up Southern Africa on a map or globe? What adventures might occur in this new setting?
- Who might be aboard the Safari Star? Describe them.

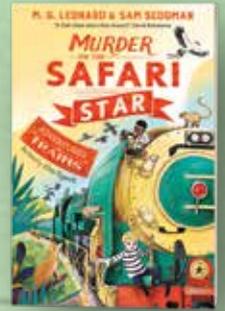


DID YOU KNOW?

The 'Safari Star' is inspired by several famous luxury railway journeys that you can take across Southern Africa. Carry out some research into The Blue Train.

Where does it travel to and from?
What makes this train so luxurious?

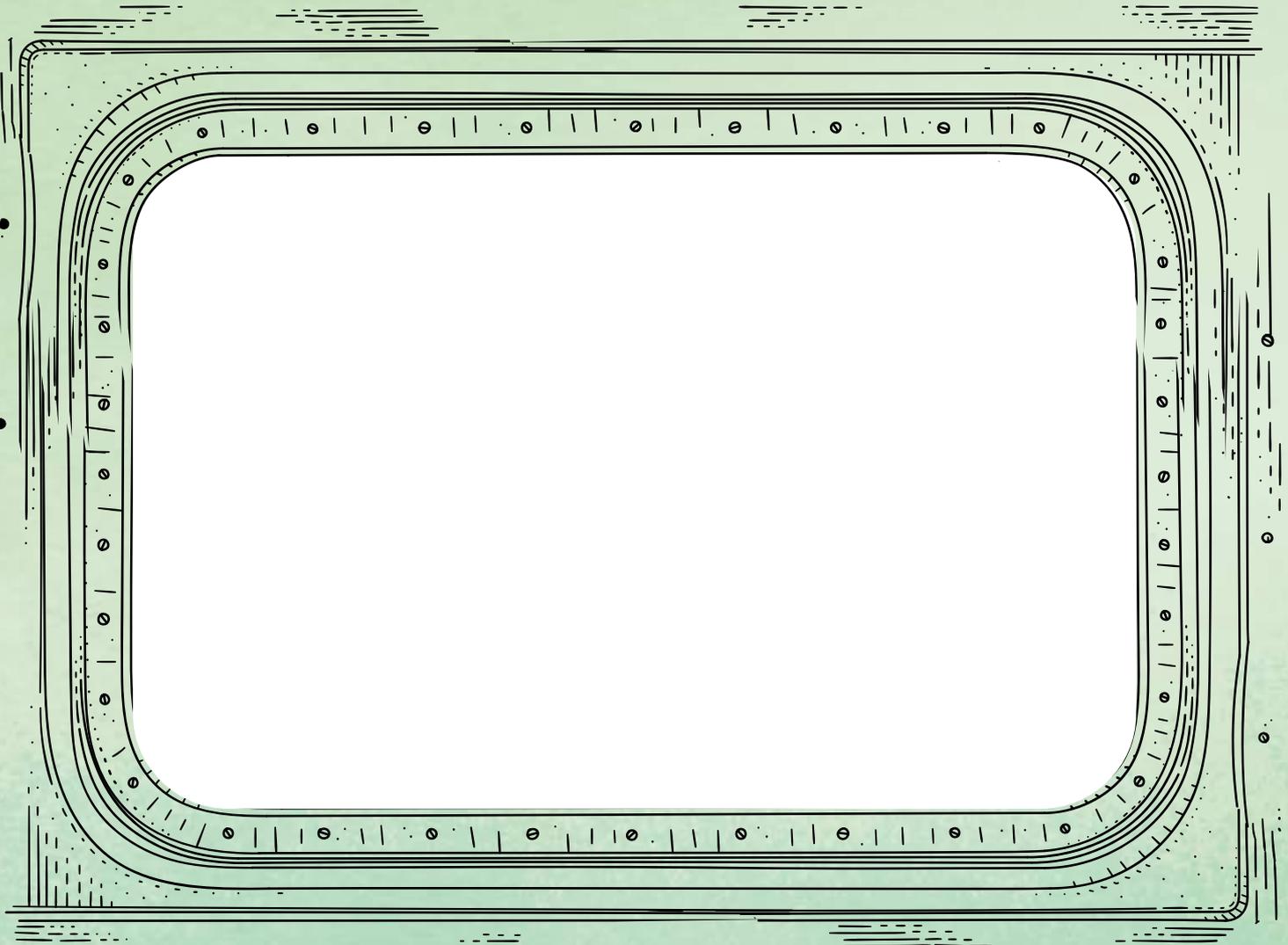
Make a list of things you would need to pack for this trip.

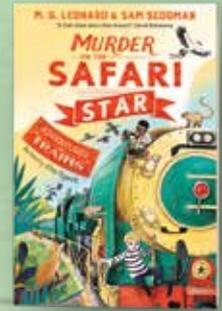


TRAIN WINDOW CHALLENGE

LITERACY, HISTORY, GEOGRAPHY, ART & DESIGN

As you read page 143 when Hal travels across the border into Zimbabwe, underline any key words or phrases that stand out to you. Then, take a leaf from Hal's notebook and **draw** the scene described in the train window.





TRAIN WINDOW CHALLENGE

LITERACY, HISTORY, GEOGRAPHY, ART & DESIGN

'As they ate their breakfast there was a blast of steam, and the Safari Star pulled her carriages out of the siding at Musina. From the window of the dining car, Hal watched the train roll on to the Alfred Beit Bridge high above the snaking Limpopo River, its

currents churning up the silt to make the water brown. The river marked the border of South Africa, and their entry into Zimbabwe. Hal felt a shiver of pleasure at the thought of entering a new country' – Page 143

LITERACY CHALLENGE:

Track Hal's emotions in the story by creating an Emotions Map. When does he feel anxious? When does he feel excited? When does he feel fear or trepidation?

DID YOU KNOW:

Today it is uncommon for a steam engine to make the entire journey from Pretoria to Victoria Falls without stops. Research why, mapping this route and calculating its distance.

ACTIVITY IDEAS:

- On page 32, Uncle Nat says that 'Janice is a South African Class 25NC' locomotive. Research the history of the real Janice; how was she engineered to survive grueling temperatures in the desert? How was she shipped back from Africa? Report your findings.
- On page 187, the guests visit Hwange National Park – the largest nature reserve in Zimbabwe and home to the 'Big Five'. List these animals – which would you like to see the most? Create a fact file for your chosen animal. Include a sketch, key facts, habitat, and what can be done to protect it.

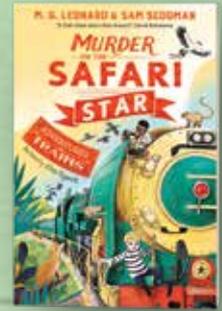
VOCAB CHECK:

Define 'siding', 'snaking', 'churning', 'silt', 'border' and 'shiver'.

GEOGRAPHY CHALLENGE:

What do you know about the Alfred Beit Bridge and the Limpopo River?

ADVENTURES ON TRAINS



MURDER, MYSTERY AND DANGER!

LITERACY, ART & DESIGN, DRAMA

Read the extract from page 241, when Hal is in a race against time to prove Ryo Sasaki's innocence before they cross the border into Zambia.

'Without giving himself time to think, Hal stepped out on to the ladder. He stared at the strip of tarmac sliding past the train, and, gritting his teeth, he jumped, slamming into the bridge with a thud, scraping his knee. He threw himself up on to his feet, pushing forward as fast as he could, running alongside the train. The

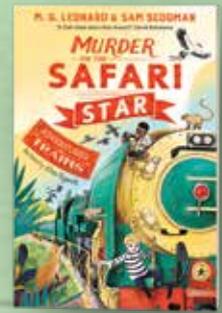
enormous locomotive was charging ahead, pouring black smoke into the sky. Hal sprinted as hard as he could. The hissing pistons and roaring waterfall deafened him. He advanced on the towering tender, his muscles burning, his lungs filling with smoke and steam.' – Page 241



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What is Hal trying to do in this extract? How does he show bravery?
- Which **powerful verbs** has the writer used? How do they create tension?
- What is 'the towering tender'? What does it contain?
- How are **the senses** used to describe this important moment in the story? Give examples.
- Why is Hal convinced that Ryo Sasaki is innocent?

ADVENTURES ON TRAINS



MURDER, MYSTERY AND DANGER!

LITERACY, ART & DESIGN, DRAMA

ORIGAMI CHALLENGE:

Just as Hal draws to make sense of things, Satsuki creates origami to feel 'calm' and 'see solutions'. Have a go at creating your own origami model of a swan like the one on page 226.

ACTIVITY IDEA:

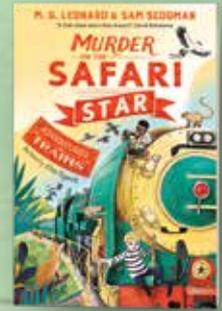
Sketch the train grinding to a halt just in time before it reaches the Zambian border.

DRAMA IDEA:

In small groups, re-enact the scene in which Mervyn Crosby's murderer is confronted on pages 252–257. Write a short reflection from the perspective of your character, stating how you feel about these revelations.



ADVENTURES ON TRAINS



HAL'S POCKETBOOK CHALLENGE!

With the future of Ackerman Rail thrown into doubt, Hal and Nicole have an idea to save the Safari Star on page 261. Create an advertisement for the the launch of the rebranded Safari Star!

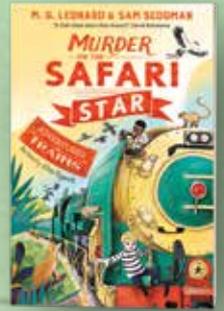
*'What if I buy it?' said Nicole. Everyone looked at her with surprise.
'The Safari Star is a bit old-fashioned, but with a makeover it could be kind of cool. Beryl's right. Crime pays!'*

Beryl beamed.

'Liana, you can run the safaris and look after the animals at the station,' Nicole continued, getting excited. 'Flo can run the train stuff, and Mom and I could do the rebrand and handle the marketing. With our media connections, it'd be huge.' – Page 261



HAL'S POCKETBOOK CHALLENGE!



Create an advertisement for the the launch of the rebranded Safari Star!

A large white rectangular area with a thick orange border, intended for creating an advertisement.