

**AGES 9–11**

# NOTES & ACTIVITIES

for Teachers & Librarians

**READ FOR THEMES:**

- UK Geography
- History of the Railways
- How Steam Trains Work
- British Architecture

**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...

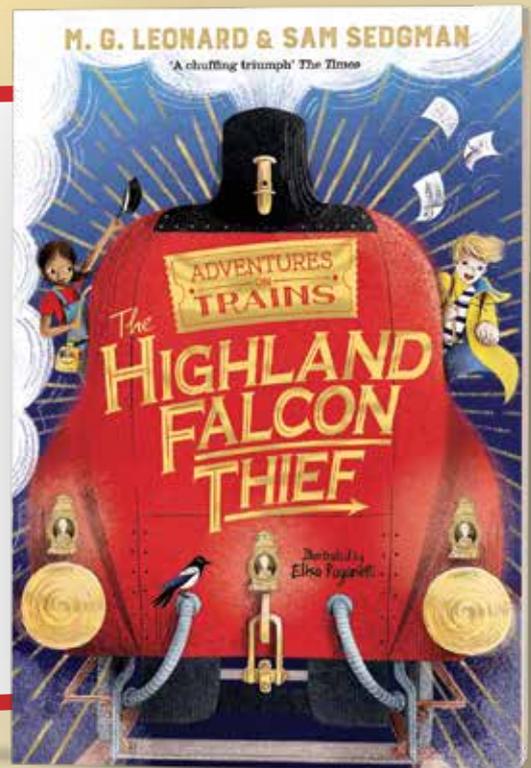
# ADVENTURES ON TRAINS

## JUMP ON BOARD

Harrison Beck and his Uncle Nat are enjoying the final journey of the Highland Falcon, Britain's most famous steam train. But when a precious jewel goes missing, Harrison and his new friend Lenny find themselves at the centre of the investigation. Can they solve the mystery and catch the culprit before they reach the end of the line? Hear whispers in the dining car, find notes in the library, and unknown passengers among the luggage as you help Harrison to solve the mystery aboard one of the world's grandest trains.

**Before reading, take a few moments to look over the cover of *The Highland Falcon Thief*, illustrated by Elisa Paganelli. Make some predictions:**

- What mysterious things or objects can you see on the cover? How do you think they will feature in the story?
- Where do you think the story might be set and why?
- Which characters can you see on the cover? What do you think their relationship might be?



### DID YOU KNOW?

The steam locomotive featured in this story is named 'The Highland Falcon' after the peregrine falcon, which is a bird that can be found in the Scottish Highlands.

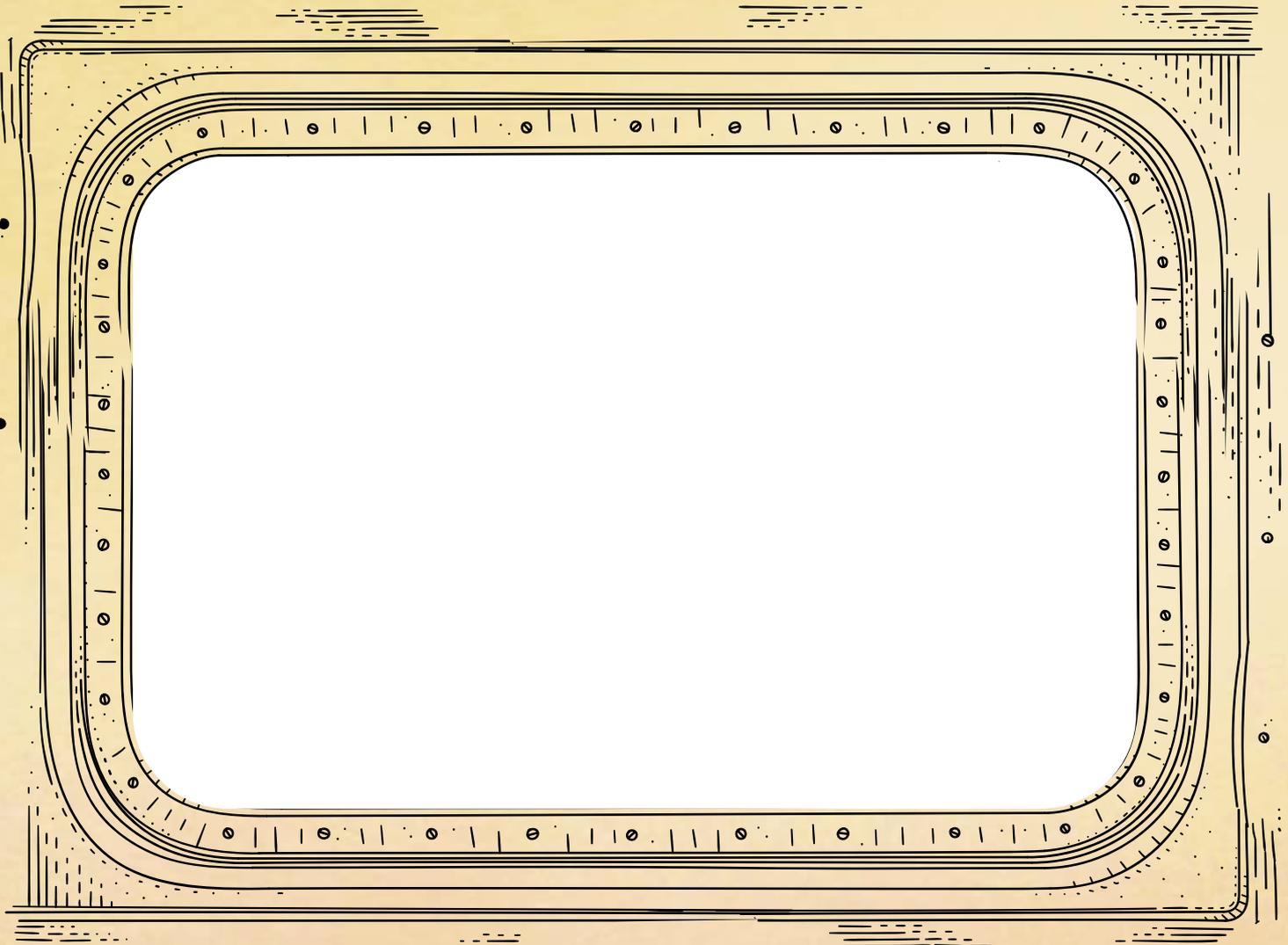
Carry out some research into the peregrine falcon. When you have learned more about it, consider why it is a good name for a locomotive. Can you come up with a name of your own?



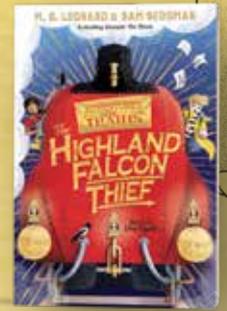
# TRAIN WINDOW CHALLENGE

LITERACY, GEOGRAPHY, ART, MFL

As you read page 48 when Hal travels across the Forth Bridge, 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.



# ADVENTURES ON TRAINS



## TRAIN WINDOW CHALLENGE

LITERACY, GEOGRAPHY, ART, MFL

*'The Forth Bridge!' Uncle Nat whooped. 'One of the greatest railway bridges in the world!' The Highland Falcon blew her whistle, and Hal felt a thrill as the train rocketed across the high bridge, the water shimmering far below. In the distance, the river became the*

*sea, rolling out to meet a bright blue sky. The rhythmic clatter of the train on the rails made the ironwork of the bridge vibrate and ring. 'Over two and a half kilometres long,' Uncle Nat shouted, 'and four thousand men to build it. Blooming marvellous.'* – Page 48

### QUESTION:

What examples can you find of Uncle Nat and Hal's shared passion for trains in the story?

### ACTIVITY IDEAS:

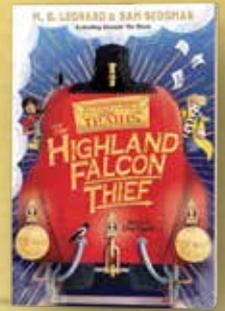
- On page 90, Uncle Nat says that 'railways have changed the world'. Create a chronological timeline of the railways in Britain. Then, make a list of the different ways the railways have changed society.
- Re-read the passage where Lenny, Mr Singh and Joey show Hal how the train works (pages 70–71). Use the information on these pages to write an Instruction Manual for how to run a steam train.
- Many feats of British architecture feature in the story – from the Forth Bridge (page 48), to Bristol Temple Meads station (page 219). Choose one of these stations or bridges – which is your favourite? Draw it, find out the architect, and explain the history of its design and construction to a classmate.

### DID YOU KNOW:

With the exception of the Aberdeen to Ballater section, it is possible to travel most of the Highland Falcon's journey today. Carry out some research to find out how – and map your route.

### VOCAB CHECK:

Define 'rocketed', 'shimmering', 'rhythmic', 'clatter', 'ironwork' and 'vibrate'.



# DETECTIVE WORK

LITERACY, ART & DESIGN, DRAMA

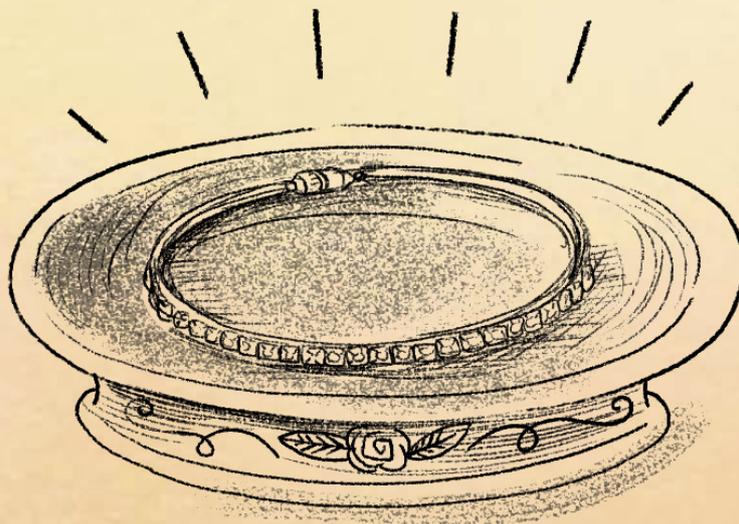
Read pages 177–179, when Lenny sneaks into Milo’s compartment and then proceeds to describe it to Hal, who draws what he hears on the other side of the window.

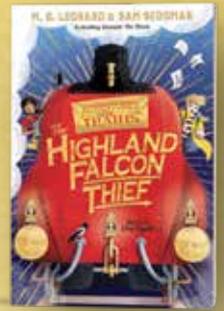
*‘Start in one corner of the room and tell me everything you can see,’ Hal said, his pen finishing off the outline of a duffle bag.*

*‘OK. Above the sofa, dangling from a lamp, is a blue-and-pink spotted silk scarf. Milo’s coat is hanging off the back of the door . . .’ There was another moment of silence, followed by a gasp. ‘The note’s gone from the pocket! . . . Oh, Hal!’ Her head popped out of the window. ‘There’s a bracelet in the soap well by the sink. It looks like diamonds!’*

*‘Don’t touch it.’ Hal said. ‘Describe it to me.’*

*‘It’s a circlet of gold, and embedded in it, one after another, are small diamonds. Why didn’t the police find this when they searched?’ – Pages 177–179*





# DETECTIVE WORK

LITERACY, ART & DESIGN, DRAMA

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Why is it important for Hal to draw rather than write things down? What does this tell you about him?
- Why do you think Lenny has 'another moment of silence'? What is she doing or thinking?
- What causes Lenny to 'gasp'? Why?
- Why do you think Hal advises Lenny not to touch the bracelet?
- What do Lenny and Hal learn in this chapter? What or who do they suspect?

## ACTIVITY IDEA:

Draw what Lenny describes. Is your drawing as accurate as the illustration on page 178?

**SPY CHALLENGE:** Create your own crime scene and describe it to a classmate. Can your classmate then draw what you describe? Even better, can your classmate spot any clues that you have left behind?

**DRAMA IDEA:** When Hal unveils the true jewel thief on page 249, he recreates the scene at Balmoral where the Princess's Atlas Diamond was stolen. In groups of six or more, create a dramatic freeze-frame to show what happened. Use body language and facial expressions to show each character's thoughts and feelings.



# HAL'S POCKETBOOK CHALLENGE!

On page 200, Ernest White shows Hal his small black book of notes about the train journey. Follow Ernest's example: as you read each chapter of *The Highland Falcon Thief*, make a note of key events and anyone you suspect might be the Magpie. Use the small black book template to record your ideas...

*'I was hoping you might have heard something on your recorder that would help clear Lenny and Mr Singh – a clue, maybe.'*

*'I don't think so.' Ernest pointed to a small black book on his desk. 'That's where I write everything down. You can borrow it if you like. You're welcome to listen to the recordings, but it would take days.'*

*Hal picked up the book and opened it. Each page was divided into four columns: Date, Time, Route and Notes. – Page 200*



# SMALL BLACK BOOK OF NOTES



<del>Date</del> Chapter	<del>Time</del> Page	Route	Notes

