

# Talk about it

SECTION

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## Making decisions

**Objective:** To understand the process of decision making.

**What you need:** Copies of *The Railway Children*, writing materials.

**Cross-curricular link:** PSHE.

### What to do

- After Chapter 12, return to Peter's discovery of the sleeping signalman. Ask: *What will happen if the signalman is reported?* (He may lose his job. The children may be unwelcome at the station.) Emphasise the importance of who finds him asleep and their decision.
- Put the children into pairs, one as the signalman and one as Peter. Let partners improvise dialogue for one to two minutes.
- Signal the children to stop. Leave one pair in character as the other children and question them about their feelings. Ask Peter: *What concerns you?* (The signalman broke railway rules.)
- Invite the pairs to repeat the exercise with the

signalman being found by Phyllis and partners exchanging the role of the signalman. Hot-seat a new pair for the children to question. Continue in this way, with discovery by Mrs Viney and finally Mother. Ask Mrs Viney: *What about his family?* (She may know his dependants.) Ask Mother: *Is he responsible enough?* (Mother may talk about a duty to society.)

- Divide the class into groups of four to discuss what they have heard from the hot-seating and their own conversations. Do they want to report the signalman? Share conclusions.

### Differentiation

**For older/more confident learners:** Ask children to use paired improvisation for a decision-making meeting between Mother and Peter after discovering the sleeping signalman.

**For younger/less confident learners:** Provide useful conversation openers.

## Adventure or mystery?

**Objective:** To participate in whole-class debate, using the conventions and language of debate, including standard English.

**What you need:** Copies of *The Railway Children*, photocopiable page 24, writing materials.

**Cross-curricular link:** Citizenship.

### What to do

- After completing the book, admit that you have yet to decide on its library category. Ask for the children's help to decide whether it should be classed as 'Adventure' or 'Mystery'.
- Give out photocopiable page 24. Explain that the children must prepare an oral case for both categories. Suggest writing notes, listing three or four arguments for each category, and convincing phrases to say.
- Remind the children to be ready to back up a point with evidence by referring to the plot. Point out that the plot references around the page may

be useful, but the children may choose better ones of their own.

- Once the children have completed their notes, divide the class into two groups, assigning the support of one category to each group. Chair the debate formally, listening to arguments from both sides. Limit speaking time so that everyone contributes.
- Sum up the arguments you have heard. Encourage the children to listen carefully to help them make up their minds. Give the children a 'free' vote as individuals, not as part of a group.

### Differentiation

**For older/more confident learners:** Ask children to prepare a case for the 'Historical fiction' category.

**For younger/less confident learners:** Let children work in pairs, or prepare the case for just one category.

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