Sidetracked



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TCM Teacher Created Materials

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CHAPTER ONE



Railroaded

A pink and purple sky reflected across Lake Erie as 12-year-old Jeremiah coaxed his horses toward the boat's ramp. The horses were used to pulling freight and a few passengers along the Erie and Kalamazoo Railroad. But today, the horses would haul their own replacement—a steam engine

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that would take passengers from Ohio to Adrian, Michigan. People wouldn't need horses to haul things once the new train was up and running. And Jeremiah was *not* happy about it.

"That engine could never be better than you two," Jeremiah whispered to Roman and Belle. The horses snorted and nudged Jeremiah's pocket for a treat. "A *steam engine* they call it. Well, I don't trust it, not for one second. Nothing good can come from it."

A shout resounded. "Just look at this beauty! She's the first steam engine west of the Alleghenies. And, boy, is she gonna be fast!" Daniel's peach-fuzz-covered face peered down from the boat.

Jeremiah shouted back, "My horses are smarter and more trustworthy than that metal beast. I bet they're faster too!"

"You gotta embrace the future, my friend," Daniel said. "Times are changing, and you better get on board

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or you'll be left in the dust."

"'Newer doesn't always mean better' is what my pa says," responded Jeremiah. If only he'd followed this advice before. Why did he insist Pa buy that fancy new wagon? Why did he convince him to go faster? Now everything was different.

Jeremiah shook the thoughts from his mind and pulled Pa's signal horn to his lips. As the mournful sound pierced the air, curious onlookers cleared a path. The horses strained forward, pulling the engine off the boat and onto the road. Daniel fell into step beside Jeremiah and sang:

"A song to the oak, the brave old oak,
Who hath ruled in the greenwood long;
Here's health and renown to his broad green crown,
And his 50 arms so strong."

The wagon wheels rattled a beat as they bounced along the bumpy road, and the percussive sound of the horses' hooves added a rhythmic

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accompaniment to the song.

Jeremiah marched to the music, mulling over his impending unemployment. "I wish I had 50 arms, like the oak tree in your song."

"What d'ya want with 50 arms?"

"A job! Now that this steam engine's arrived, my horses and I are out of work. But with 50 arms, everyone would want to hire me. I could even do a whole bunch of jobs at the same time!"

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CHAPTER TWO



Learning the Job

"If you want a job," Daniel began, "the railroad will be lookin' for workers. You'd likely be manning the engine like me."

Jeremiah sighed heavily. He knew Daniel was right, but he wasn't fond of the idea of working on this new machine. However, he was the

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breadwinner for the family now, and they needed the money.

"Alright, teach me," Jeremiah said in a defeated tone. "I know it runs on water heated by burning wood in the firebox."

"That's only part of the process. Heat forces water into boiler tubes, and steam rises to the dome on top. I control the dome valve by moving this lever." Daniel leapt onto the wagon and pulled a metal rod.

Belle and Roman snorted in protest at the extra weight. Daniel laughed, "That's exactly the sound the pistons make when hot steam gets 'em movin', *chuff-chuff*."

Daniel scrambled down. "Just wait Jeremiah, we'll fly down those tracks, full steam ahead."

"I guess I'll have to find a way to ride with you. I may not have 50 arms, but I'll be as strong and reliable as that old oak, you'll see." Jeremiah rubbed Belle's velvety nose and climbed onto

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