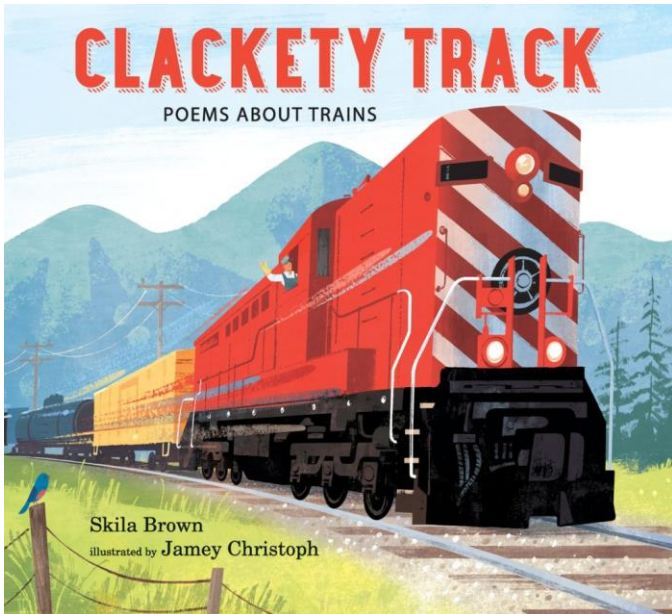


# EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

## Clackety Track: Poems About Trains

by Skila Brown      Illustrated by Jamey Christoph



ISBN 978-0763-69047-2    Candlewick, 2019    Grades 1-4

### About the Book

Queue up for a whistle-stop tour of trains of all kinds, narrated in lively verse and featuring dynamic retro artwork.

*Rows of grooves, cables, and bars.*

*Graffiti rockin' out the cars.*

*A badge of rust. A proud oil stain.*

*There's nothin' plain about a train.*

Trains of all shapes and sizes are coming down the track — bullet train, sleeper train, underground train, zoo train, and more. All aboard! Skila Brown's first-class poems, as varied as the trains themselves, reflect the excitement of train travel, while Jamey Christoph's vintage-style illustrations provide a wealth of authentic detail to pore over.

### About the Author and Illustrator

[Skila Brown](#)'s first job was working on a train. She sold hot dogs through the window of a shiny red caboose in the coal-filled hills of eastern Kentucky. Now she writes books for readers of all ages from her home in Indiana.

[Jamey Christoph](#)'s illustrations have appeared in the *New York Times*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and elsewhere. He lives in Ohio with his two dogs, Owen and Jack.

### Before Reading

Who's ridden on a train before? What do you know about safety around trains?

The illustrator is a dog lover. See if you can find proof of that as we read this book together.

### New Vocabulary

boulevard, pallet, graffiti, endure, cuisine, belching, cascade, pantograph, tethered, fondue, throng, smog, shoulder, ballast, opulent, regal

### Reading Aloud

“Morning in the Yard”

Did you know there are different types of trains? What kinds of trains do you think we'll see in this book?

“Freight Train”

What do you think this train is hauling? What words and symbols do you see in the train's graffiti?

### “Tracks”

Some people think it’s good luck to hold your breath while you watch a train pass. See you if you can hold your breath while I read this poem as fast as I can!

### “Bullet Train”

*Faster than a cheetah/racing down a hill* is fast! What other things are fast that the poet could have used as a comparison?

### “Steam Engine”

The poet compares the steam engine to an animal. What words in the poem give us clues about that?

### “Train Snow Plow”

Trains have to keep going, even when there’s bad weather. Have you ever thought about how tracks get cleared? Watch a cool video of this train in action [here](#).

### “Zoo Train”

Can you find all the animals mentioned in the poem? What animals do you see that aren’t mentioned?

### “Electric Train”

Can you guess, using context clues, what the word *pantograph* means? Hint: turn to the last page of the book if you’re still stumped.

### “Dinner Train”

What new food would you like to try on a train? Was there ever a time you bravely tried something new and interesting?

### “The Underground Train”

The poet uses poetic sound tools in this poem. Can you find examples of repetition and alliteration?

### “Shoulder Ballast Cleaner”

After you learn what ballast is and why it’s important (hint: see the last page), can you guess why it needs to be cleaned? Watch a video of a shoulder ballast cleaner in action [here](#).

### “Whistle-stop Tour”

I see lots of musicians on this page. What instruments can you name?

### “Sleeper Train”

Have you ever slept on a train? What do you think *sleep straps* are and why would we need them?

## Wrap Up

Which train was your favorite? Why? What’s one new thing you learned about trains? If you could ride on one type of train, what would it be?

## Extensions

Show the class a map of US time zones and discuss why they’re needed and how trains were instrumental in creating them long ago.

Cabooses aren’t often seen on trains anymore. But we could add one to this collection of train poems! Write a poem as a class about the *caboose* car and have students create an illustration to match.

The author wrote a poem about a bullet train, comparing it to something fast. Can you think of something that moves slowly and write a poem about that?

Practice mapping skills by downloading a map of your nearest zoo and asking students to draw in a route for a train that would enable passengers to see the most animals.

## Further Reading

*Steam Train, Dream Train* by Sherri Duskey Rinky. Illustrated by Tom Lichtenheld. Chronicle, 2013.

*How to Train a Train* by Jason Carter Eaton. Illustrated by John Rocco. Candlewick, 2013.

*DK The Big Book of Trains*. 2016.