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National Geographic Readers: Trains

By: Amy Shields

From super-speeders to the world's longest freight train, discover a whole new way of looking at trains!

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Lots of Trains

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Q

What kind of car doesn't have a steering wheel?

A

A train car.

Steam train, freight train,
circus train, cold train.

Grain train, coal train,
people-on-the-go train.



All Aboard!

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Have you been on a steam train ride? Did you hear the wheels **clackety-clack** on the track? Did you hear the **wooooo-woo** whistle? Did the **ding-ding-ding** bell ring at the train crossing?

I'm Gary and this is my train. I am the engineer.



Train Talk

ENGINEER: A person who drives the train

Full Steam Ahead

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Steam trains have noisy, moving parts.

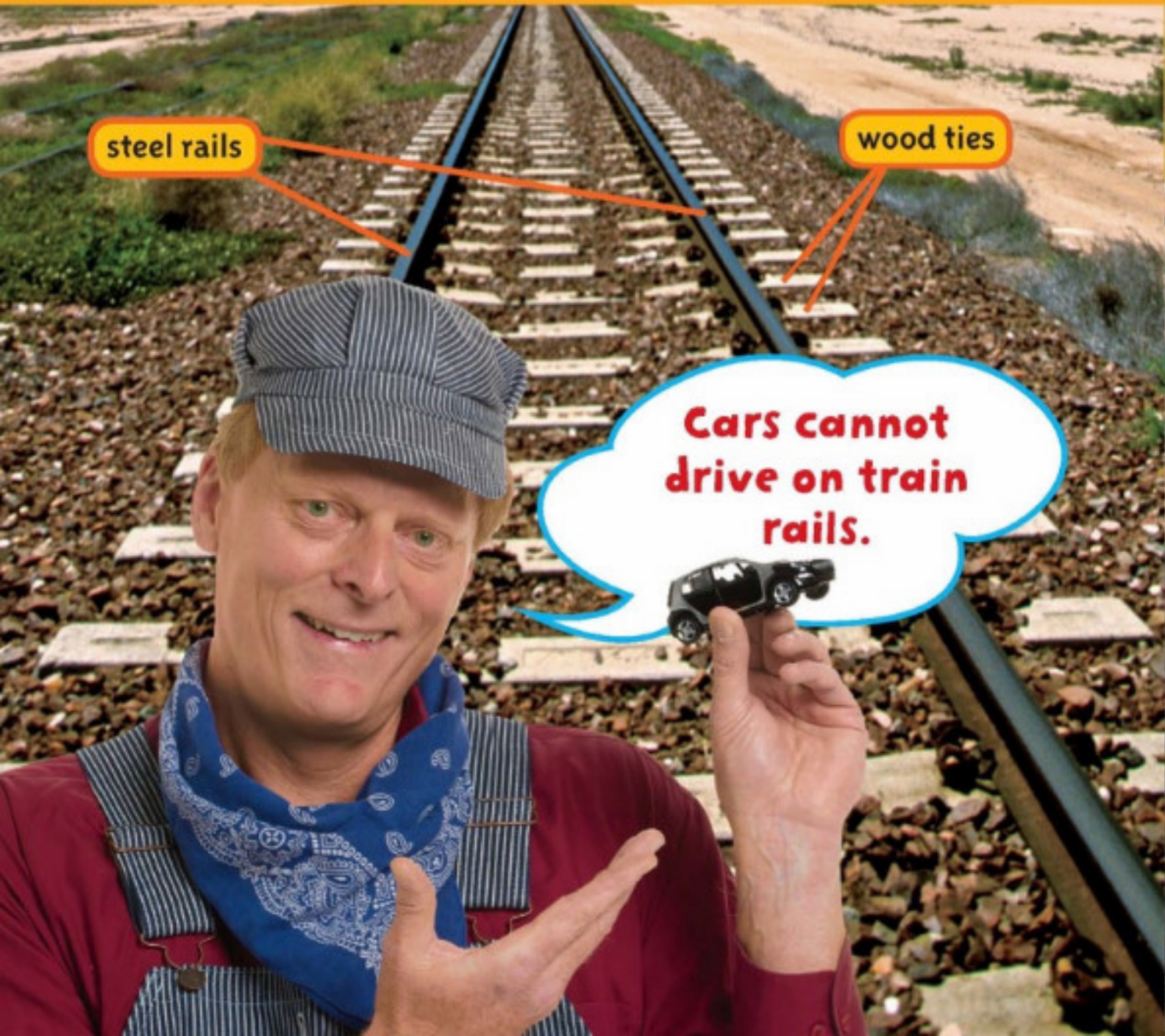
Heat from burning coal or oil turns water into steam.

The steam moves the pistons.

The pistons move the rods. The rods turn the wheels and move the train on the tracks.



Trains have special wheels that roll on tracks. Most train tracks are made of steel rails and wood ties. The rails are nailed to the ties.



Trains follow tracks over valleys.



They roll on tracks through mountains.



A New America



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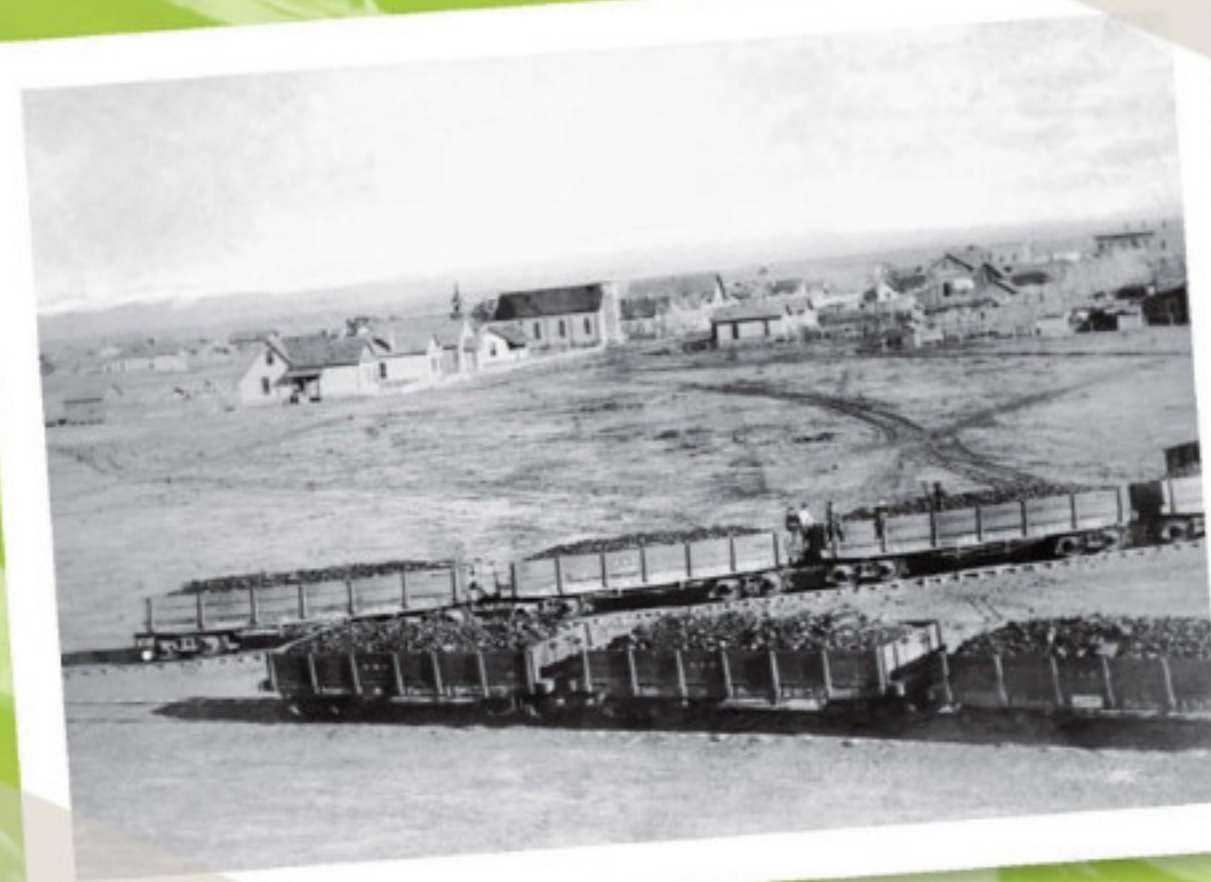
Q

What do you call a train with a cold?

A

An Ah-choo choo train.

When the tracks were done, they stretched across America. More people moved west. Towns were built along the rail tracks. Banks and stores were built. Trains brought them money and gold.

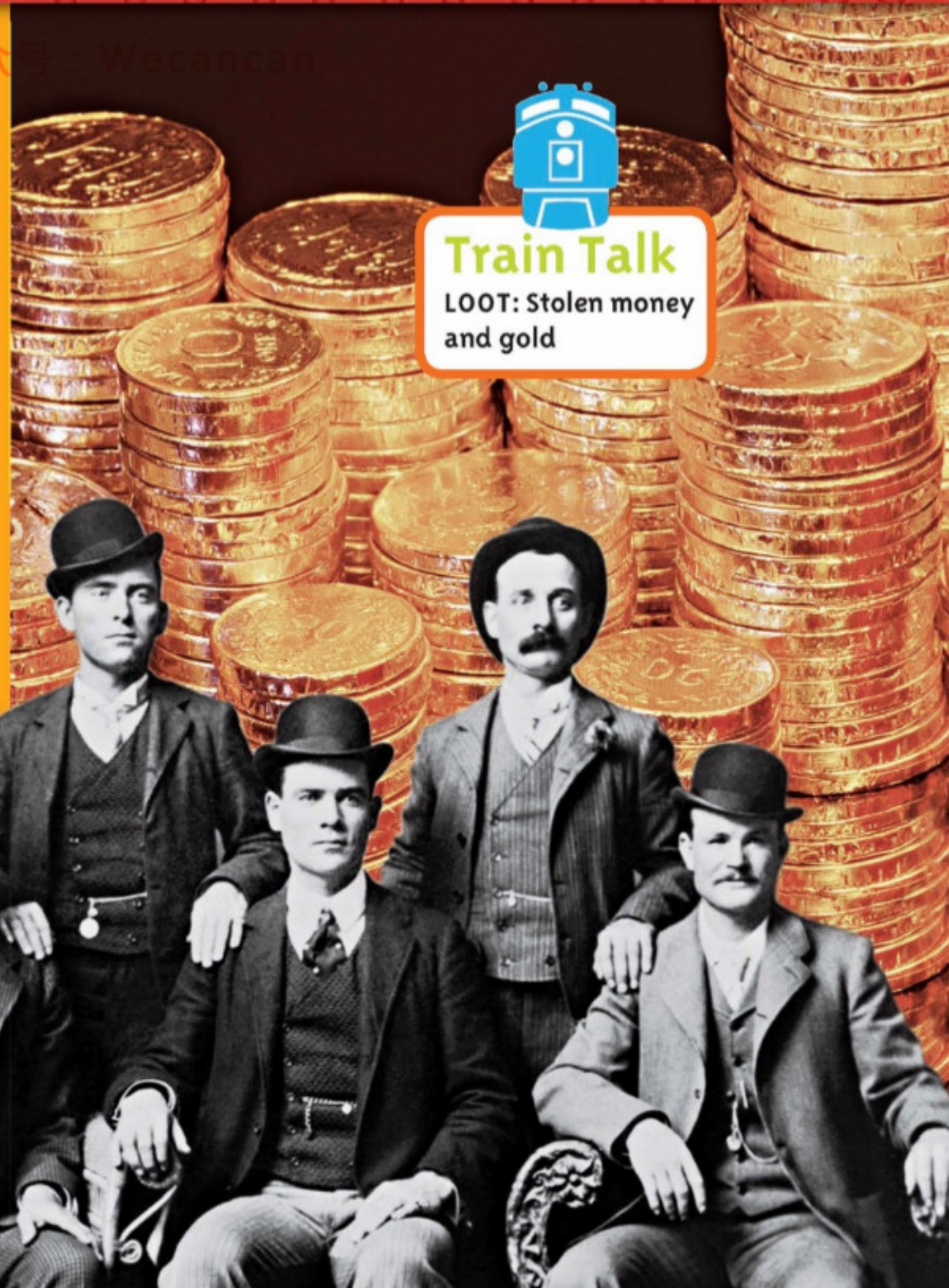


About 150 years ago, Chinese and Irish people helped build the train tracks. They became new Americans.



Many trains got held up by robbers.

Robbers wanted to steal the money and gold. Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid were robbers. They robbed trains with their gang. Then they rode off on their horses. They split the loot at their hideout, the Hole-in-the-Wall.



Train Talk
LOOT: Stolen money and gold

Cool Things About Trains



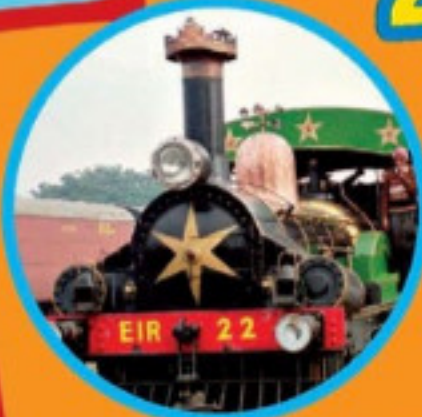
1

Some bullet trains float magnetically above the rails.



4

The longest train tunnel in the world is 35 miles long. It goes through the Alps mountains. It will open in 2017.



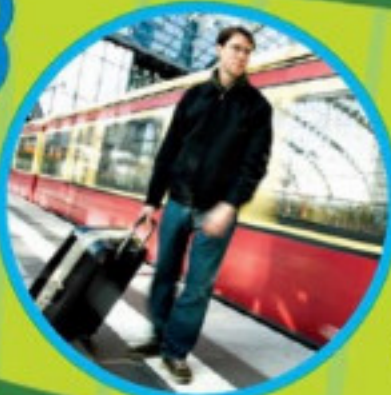
2

The Fairy Queen in India is one of the oldest running steam trains.



5

Many train stations are called Union Station. These are stations used by different train lines.



3

People who love trains are called railfans. They take vacations to go trainspotting.

6



A puppy was found on a mail car in 1888. The mailmen named him Owney. He rode the mail trains and became their lucky charm.

Train Tricks

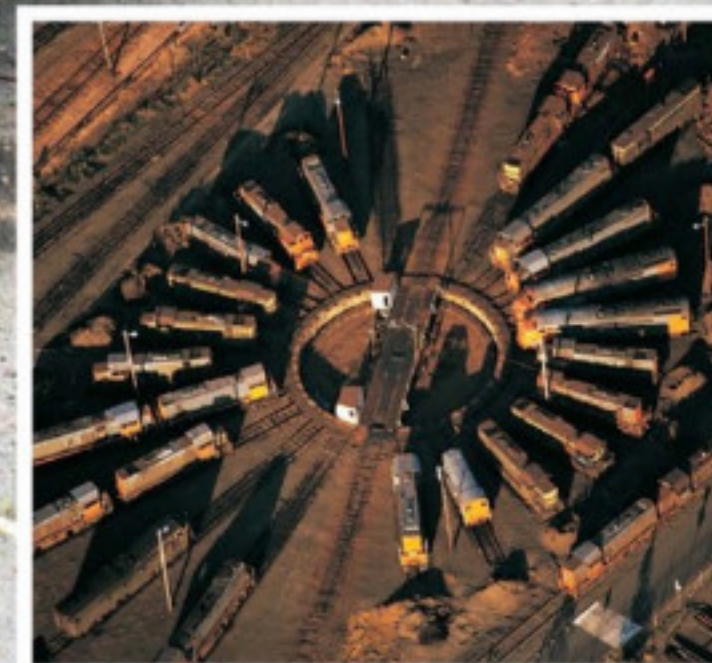
What happens when trains reach the end of the track? Tracks in a rail yard lead to a turntable. The locomotive rolls onto the turntable.

Whirrrrr. The turntable turns. The locomotive rolls off in a new direction.



Train Talk

TURNTABLE:
A piece of train track that can be turned



Q

What do mom trains say to kid trains at mealtime?

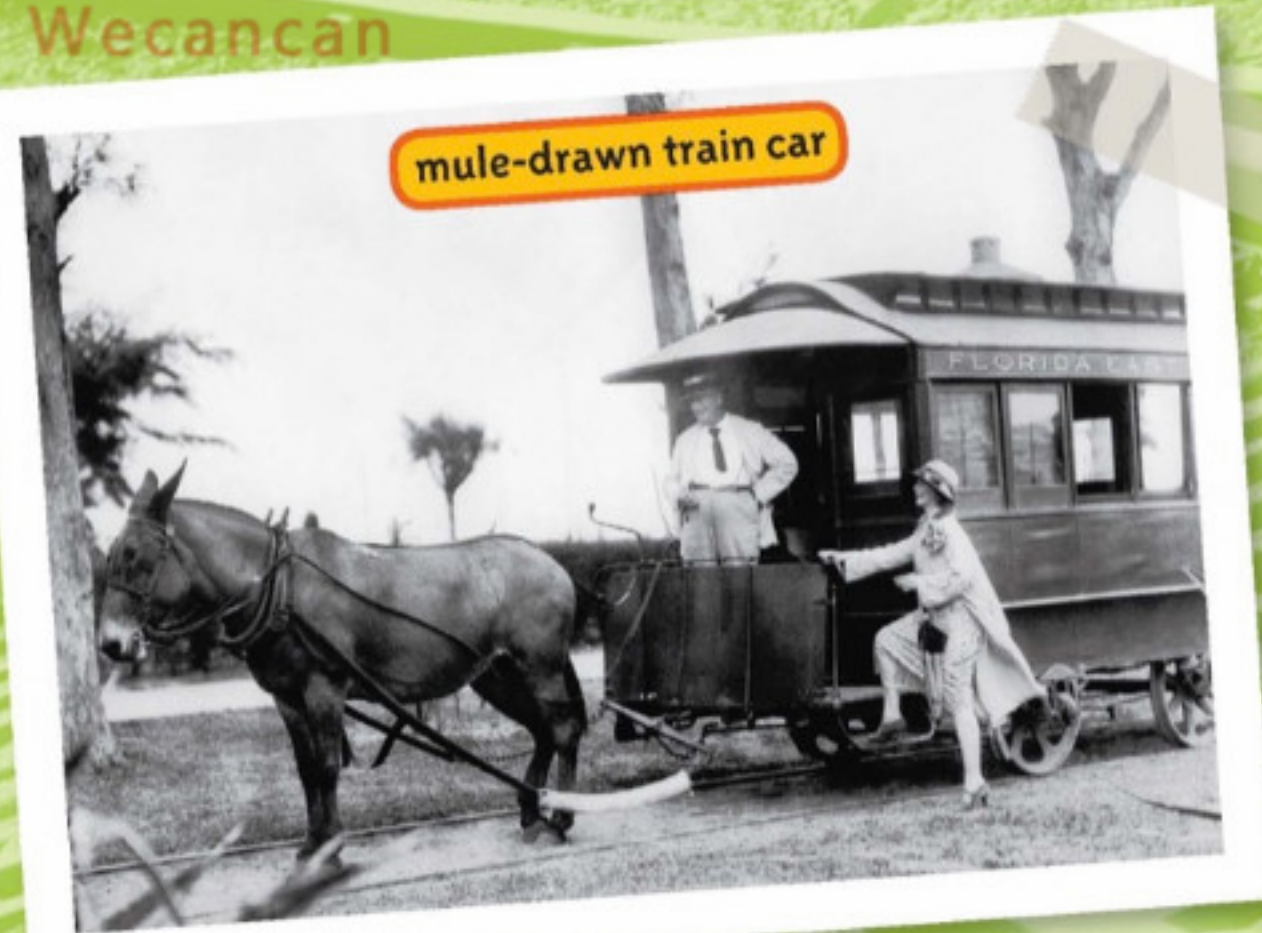
Chew! Chew!

A

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A turntable is a cool train invention.
Here are more cool inventions.
People thought of ways to ride
train tracks even
without trains.

Look at some of
these inventions.



mule-drawn train car



handcar

Passenger Trains

Now there are
train tracks all over
the world.

People take trains
to get to work.
They take train ride
vacations, too.

The Maharajas'
Express is a train in
India. It is called a
palace on wheels.



Wecangan
Say ma-ha-RAH-jas

It was built for royalty.
People take vacations on
this train. It is a nice, slow
ride through the country.



Want a faster ride? Bullet trains are fast like bullets. These trains go more than 275 miles an hour. Bullet trains run on train tracks.

Some bullet trains are pulled by locomotives. Some have motors for each car. Bullet trains are passenger trains, for people.



What do you call a train that likes to dance?



A tutu train.

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Bullet trains are electric. They have pantographs on top of some of the cars. Wires overhead pass electricity to the pantographs.



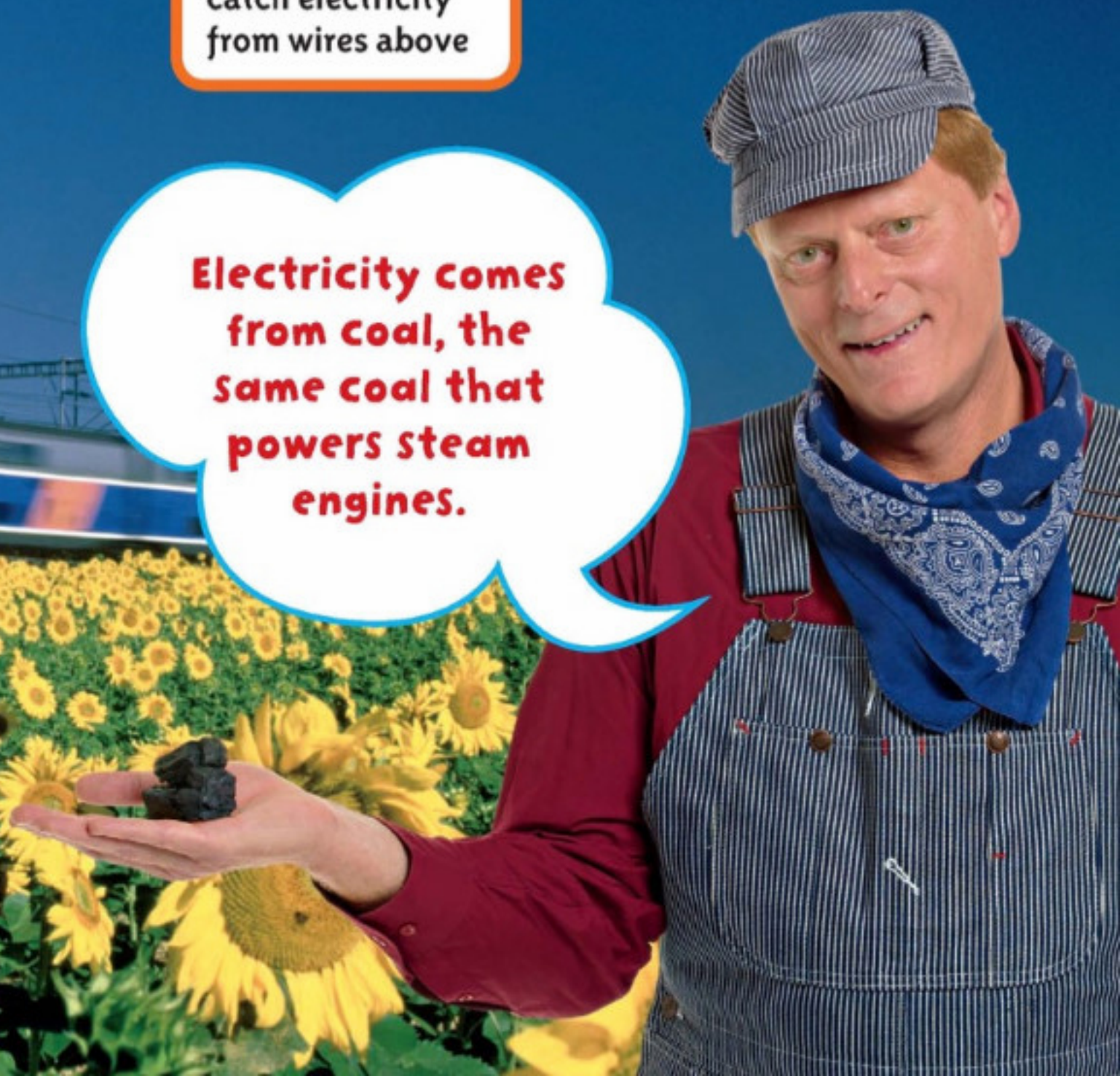
Train Talk

PANTOGRAPH:
Metal arms on a train's roof that catch electricity from wires above

Say **PAN-toe-graf**

pantograph

Electricity comes from coal, the same coal that powers steam engines.



Freight Trains

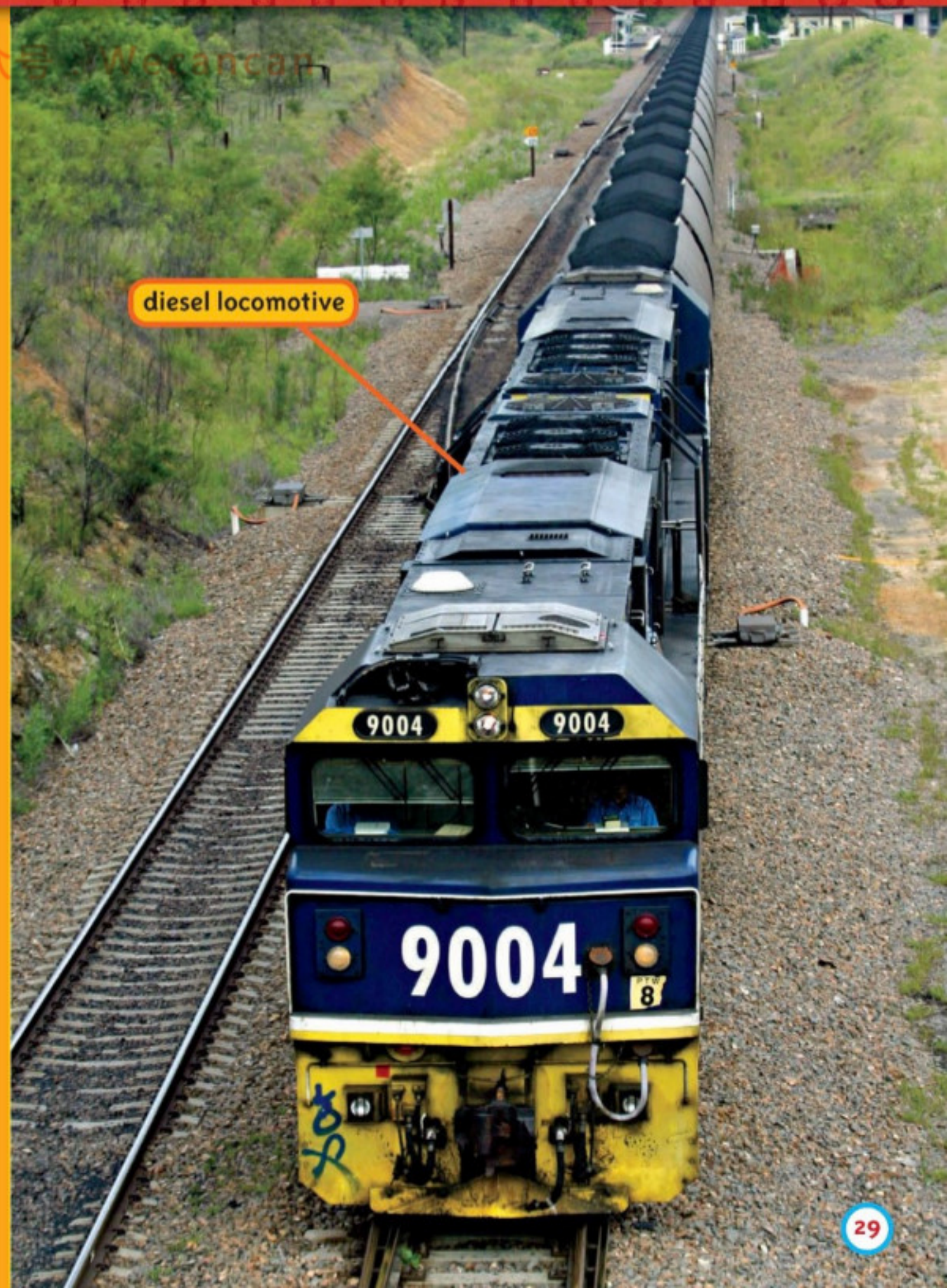
Freight trains carry stuff, like sneakers and cell phones. The longest freight trains are two miles long. These trains have diesel locomotives. The locomotives in front pull. The locomotives in back push.



**Most of the stuff
in your house
rode on a train at
one time.**

Say DEE-zul

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When trains roll past, railmen stand aside and watch. Next time a train passes you, wave hi to the mighty train rolling **clackety-clack** down the track.





ENGINEER: A person who drives the train



LOOT: Stolen money and gold



PANTOGRAPH: Metal arms on a train's roof that catch electricity from wires above



TURNTABLE: A piece of train track that can be turned