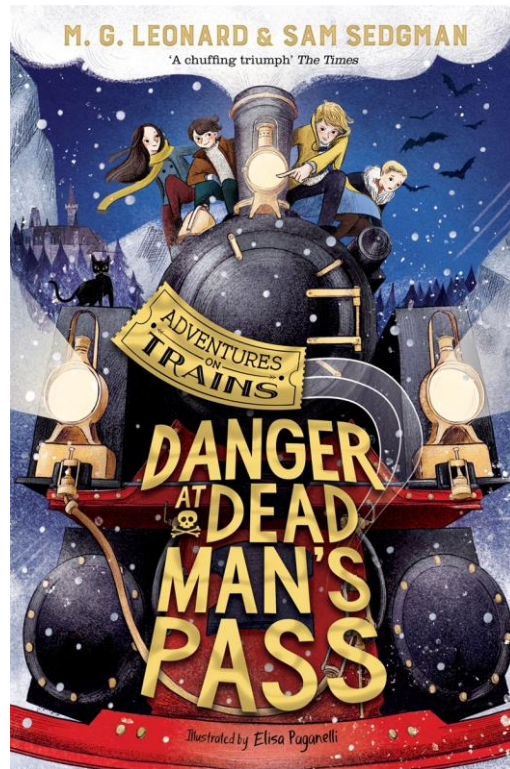


Choo-choo-Whodunnit! – with M. G. Leonard and Sam Sedgeman

All aboard for a rip-roaring quest with
Adventures on Trains: Danger at Dead Man's Pass!



Level:

P4–P7 / KS2

Explore themes of:

✓ Adventure ✓ Travel and Transport ✓ Geography ✓ Mystery and Intrigue ✓ Spooky Settings

Subject Checklist:

✓ Creative Writing ✓ Expressive Arts ✓ English Language ✓ Social Studies ✓ Sciences

At a Glance

Before watching M. G. Leonard and Sam Sedgeman's event or reading the extract!

1. What might you expect from an adventure story set on a train?
2. Have you been on a train? Where did you go? Why is a train a good setting?
3. If you could go on a train journey anywhere in the world, where would you go?

Book Cover Activity: Jump Aboard for an Adventure!

Consider the thoughts and feelings of the four characters pictured on the cover of *Danger at Dead Man's Pass*. In four speech bubbles, write what you think the interior monologues of each character might be. This means, write down what you think the characters might be thinking and feeling here. Consider the following:

- *Where are they heading to and why?*
- *What dangers and challenges may they face?*
- *What can the characters see?*
- *What might be waiting at 'Dead Man's Pass'?*

Roleplay the characters' conversation in pairs, acting out the scene from the book cover.

Read the Extract

Taken from Chapter One of 'Danger at Dead Man's Pass'.

Discussion Questions

1. Who is the 'dark silhouette of a man, just beyond the school gates, cloaked in fog, waiting'? What sort of impression does this description give you?
2. What is Nat's relationship to Hal? Do they have a good relationship? How can you tell?
3. How is the theme of mystery presented in this chapter? What questions do you have? Write them down.
4. Who has written the letter to Nat? What is his request? What does he want Nat and Hal to do?
5. Who 'died suddenly'? Why is this death being treated suspiciously?
6. Where are the Harz Mountains? What sort of setting would you expect to find there?
7. Can you find any clues in the letter or any important pieces of information that you might need to keep in your mind as the story unfolds?
8. What is a 'curse'? Can you guess what the curse referred to in the letter might be?
9. Which train do Nat and Hal need to catch? Where does it depart from and when?
10. How do you think Hal feels about the unexpected visit from Nat and his intention to take him on a train to Germany?



M. G. Leonard and Sam Sedgeman

Get to Know the *Adventures on Trains* Series!

All Aboard for an Adventure!

The protagonist of the 'Adventures on Trains' series is Hal, a young adventurer with a skill for solving clues and revealing crimes. Do you think you could go on an adventure, just like Hal? Before you jump on board, find out what you might need to prepare for your trip...

- Did you know: anyone can complete Hal and Uncle Nat's journey from Crewe to Wernigerode. Carry out some research to find out how – which trains would you need to take? Create a map and sketch your route.
- Hal takes a notebook on his adventures so that he can sketch and keep track of clues. Create your own notebook or 'Suspect Casebook' to take with you. Inside, write down any suspects and their motives. You can add more and more detail as you read!
- Baron Wolfgang Essenbach's letter is written from 'Schloss Kratzenstein'. This is based on the real-life Wernigerode Castle. Have a go at sketching this castle in Hal's style. What sort of setting do you think it is? What dangers will Hal face here?
- Imagine Uncle Nat has turned up at your school gate and asked you to join him on the train. What would you pack and why? In a blank template of a suitcase, draw or write the items you would take with you. Consider the weather and conditions in Wernigerode – and any extra things you might need to help you solve a mystery...

Your Turn: Writing to Create Mystery and Intrigue!

A Mysterious Letter...

In 'Danger at Dead Man's Pass', the fourth adventure in the series, a mysterious letter from an old friend asks Hal and Uncle Nat to help investigate a spooky supernatural mystery. Legend has it the Kratzensteins, a family of rich and powerful railway tycoons, are cursed, but there is no such thing as a curse, is there...?

- What do the words 'spooky' and 'supernatural' mean?
- Re-read the letter from Baron Wolfgang Essenbach in Chapter 1 of the story. Can you find any words or phrases that evoke a spooky or supernatural feeling? Can you find some of the following techniques that help create a sense of mystery?
 - *A frightening or unknown villain.*
 - *Lots of unanswered questions...*
 - *Dilemmas and complications.*
 - *High stakes: the idea that something bad or dangerous is going to happen!*
 - *Time constraints: a sense of 'working against the clock'.*
- Write your own letter to Uncle Nat requesting his help in a spooky or supernatural mystery. The letter could even be the basis of the next book in the series!
- Before you start writing, consider where you are writing from (the setting), the perspective of the writer, and the problem that you are describing. Include any important characters and events. Use the correct format and layout for your letter.
- Try to make your letter as full of mystery and foreboding as possible. Use Baron Wolfgang Essenbach's letter to help you, and refer to some of the features listed above! You might also want to include reference to a family curse, or a secret code...

Reflection and Further Questions

Reflection Activity

Think over all that you have learned. Perhaps you have been inspired to read more stories in the 'Adventures on Trains' series? Or you've thought about a train journey that you'd like to embark on to create your own story...

Design a front cover for the next book in the 'Adventures on Trains' series. Consider what type of train or journey will feature. What is your destination? What mysteries await?

Lastly, do you have any final questions you would like to ask Maya and Sam if you got the chance? Try to think of at least two and make a note of them.

Keep your eye out for more awesome books from M. G. Leonard and Sam Sedgeman, as well as the other authors from the Edinburgh International Book Festival!

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