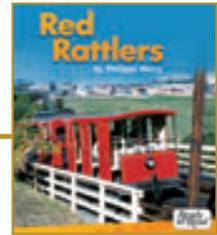


# Red Rattlers

by Philippa Werry



This text is levelled at Gold 2.

## Overview

This report describes the old Wellington cable cars and compares them with the current cable cars. It includes an explanation, supported by photographs and diagrams, of the technology behind how the old cable cars worked. The text concludes with an interview with a present-day cable car driver. Extra information is on the inside front cover.

As well as identifying the changes in the cable cars over time, this text has a strong link to physical science (levers and pulleys) and technology. There is also an underlying theme of the cable cars as a unique tourist attraction. There is an audio version of the text on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2011*.

## Related texts

- Texts that compare the present and the past: *The Way It Was* (RTR, Green) *Pencils and Pens* (RTR, Turquoise)
- Texts that include explanations of how things work: *Bikes, Pencils and Pens*, (both RTR, Turquoise), *Wind Power* (RTR, Orange).

## Cross-curriculum links

- Technology (level 1) – Understand that technological outcomes are products or systems developed by people and have a physical nature and a functional nature.
- Science (levels 1 and 2, physical inquiry and physics) – Explore everyday examples of physical phenomena, such as movement, forces, electricity and magnetism, light, sound, waves, and heat.

## Text characteristics

Key text characteristics as described in the reading standard for after three years at school are shown in the boxes with a solid outline. Other boxes indicate additional characteristics.

Some contexts and settings that may be unfamiliar, for example, the context of cable cars and their links to the scientific concept of pulleys, and the geographical and historical settings

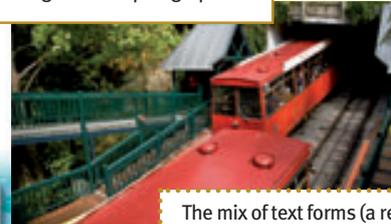
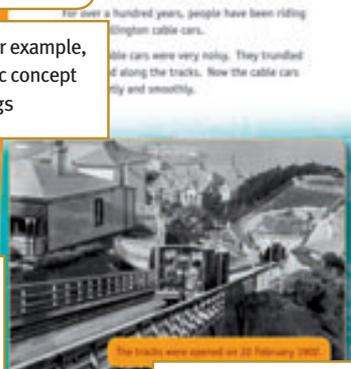
The shifts in time involved in the comparisons between the past and the present

A mix of explicit and implicit content within text and illustrations that requires students to make connections between ideas in the text and their prior knowledge to make simple inferences; for example, that the title “red rattlers” refers to the old cable cars and about the differences between the cable cars now and in the past. Explicit information includes precise descriptive language, indicators of time (including specific dates), numerical references, for example, “For over a hundred years”, “more than a million”, “120 metres”, and the labelled photographs and diagram. Implicit information includes the use of the word “but” on page 3 to clarify that “local people” are not “visitors” or the repeated use of the word “don’t” on page 11 to clarify that the points on this page are a contrast to what happened in the past.

The use of similes and comparisons as contextual supports to clarify descriptions and support visualising, for example, “like train tracks”, “cable (wire rope)”

Some unfamiliar words and phrases, the meaning of which is supported by the context or illustrations, including descriptive vocabulary, (for example, “noisy”, “trundled and rattled”, “winding, muddy track”, “quietly and smoothly”, “glide”) and subject-specific vocabulary, (for example, “Red Rattlers”, “Wellington cable cars”, “passengers”, “visitors”, “local people”, “university”, “wire rope”, “engine”, “gripper”, “steel jaws”, “heavy lever”, “lower”, “clamped”, “attached”, “towed”, “stepped”, “straps”, “Trailers”, “museum”, “electric motor”, “control”, “instructor”, “pedestrians”)

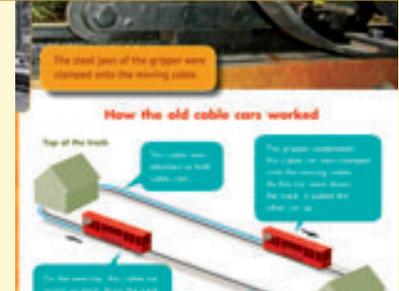
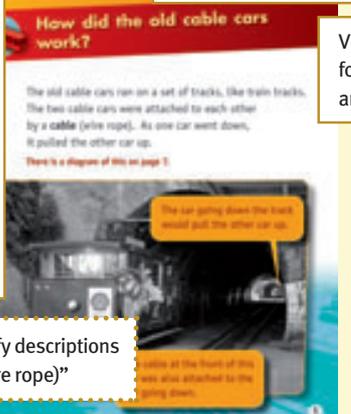
Ideas and information organised in paragraphs



The mix of text forms (a report, an explanation, and an interview)

A variety of sentence structures, including complex sentences with clauses separated by commas and the use of words such as “but”, “to”, “so”, “as”, “when”, “that”, “where”, and “because” to signal the links between ideas

Visual language features, such as headings, text boxes, footnotes, and labelled photographs and diagrams, that are clearly explained and linked to the body text



## Suggested reading purpose

- To find out what the cable cars were like in the past and how they are different now

## Setting a learning goal

*(What opportunities does this text provide for students to learn more about how to “read, respond to, and think critically about” texts?)*

To meet the reading purpose, students need to draw on a range of comprehension and processing strategies, often simultaneously. The strategies, knowledge, and skills below link to *The Literacy Learning Progressions*. Select and adapt from those below to set your learning goal. Be guided by your students’ particular needs and experiences: who they are, where they come from, and what they bring (*Reading and Writing Standards for Years 1–8*, Knowledge of the learner, page 6).

This text provides opportunities for students to:

- ask questions and look for answers as they read
- summarise the main points in each paragraph or section of text
- attend to the details (in both written and visual language features) and track ideas within and between sentences in order to visualise the explanations in the text
- make connections between the ideas in the text in order to identify some ways in which the cable cars have changed over time
- think critically about (evaluate) the positive and negative aspects of the old and new cable cars
- use word-solving strategies to decode and/or work out the meaning of unfamiliar words and phrases

## Introducing the text

- Tell the students you have a book about cable cars for them to read. Give them some time to study the front cover and form a hypothesis about the reason for the title.
- Encourage the students to share any knowledge they have about cable cars.
- Have the students look through the book, noticing the layout, headings, and visual language features. *What do you expect to find out from reading this book?* They should be able to come up with the idea that it compares old and new cable cars and includes an explanation of how they work.
- Share the reading purpose and learning goal. Briefly review some of the text features that are likely to help them identify main points (for example, using the headings, photographs,

diagrams, captions, and labels; looking for key statements or topic sentences within paragraphs; noticing connections between ideas; and thinking about what is relevant).

- Alternatively, you could introduce this book by having the students study the cover and generate their own questions. Then they could look through the book (as above) and review and refine their questions. Use your knowledge of the content to subtly guide the students as they do this to help shape their questions towards information you know they will find in the text.

## Reading the text

Below are some behaviours you could expect to see as the students read and discuss this text. Each example is accompanied by instructional strategies to scaffold their learning. Select and adapt from the suggestions according to your students’ needs and experiences.

**The students use both explicit and implicit information to summarise the main points in each paragraph or section of text, and identify the main points that fit the reading purpose.**

**The students make connections between different sections of the text in order to clarify or confirm information.**

**The students attend to the details (in both written and visual language features) and make connections between main points in order to visualise the explanations in the text.**

- Because of the close connections between the main points in this text, these three behaviours (and the instructional strategies you can use to support students) will overlap a great deal. Accordingly, they are combined within the suggestions below.
- Set up a chart with three columns, headed Old, New and Other interesting ideas. Explain that you want them to focus on the overall reading purpose – To find out what the cable cars were like in the past and how they are different now (or to find answers to their questions), so they will need to decide what information is relevant.
- Allow time for the students to study the photographs on pages 2–3 then read page 2. *What have you noticed?* The students should be able to make the connection between “rattled” and the title and notice the contrast in the noise levels of the old and new cable cars. *What information fits with our reading purpose?* Add the relevant points to the comparison chart. For students who may need more support, especially English language learners, ask them

how they know the information is about the “old or the “new”. Discuss the past verb form “were”, the use of “now” and the present verb forms “carry” and “use”.

- Have the students think, pair, and share about the main points on page 3. They should be able to use their knowledge of syntax (the use of the present tense on this page) to infer that this page is about the present day. There is nothing here to say if this situation was different in the past, so the students can either wait to see if they find more information further on or they can add points of interest to the third column of the chart. (As the students read and find more information, they may want to reorganise the notes on the chart.)
- Have the students read the heading on page 4 and then read the text to find the answer. *What sentence is most useful for answering this question? Is there information here that we want to add to our chart?*
- Have the students read the heading on page 5. Prompt them to notice that the word “how” signals an explanation. Tell the students that they will need to read pages 5–7 carefully, stopping often, to keep track of the ideas and try to visualise the explanation. Remind them to use the photographs, the captions, and the diagram.
- Have the students read page 5 and review the information together. Study the photograph in order to clarify the information about there being two cable cars, each running on its own track. Make connections to the cover photograph or the information on page 4 to remind the students that the cable cars run up and down a steep hill.
- Use the diagram on page 7 to clarify that although the cable car tracks ended at the top and bottom of the hill (and each cable car ran up and down the same track), the cable moved round and round in an unbroken loop, under the ground at each end. Have the students run their fingers in a loop around one of the diagrams, then do the same thing with the page 5 photograph (going beyond the page to complete the loop).
- Have them study the photographs, captions, and labels on pages 6 and 7 before reading the text. Read page 6 with the students, thinking aloud as you go. For example, in paragraph 3: *It says “When the cable car at the top of the track was ready to go back down, the driver pulled a heavy lever to lower the top jaw of the gripper...” – that must mean only the one that’s going to go down the hill is attached to the moving cable but the car coming up isn’t. I’ll just check that diagram on page 7 to see if that seems right.*

- Explain that the cable cars worked on a pulley system – the cars were attached to one another and as the downward car (attached to the moving cable) went down, the other car was pulled up. Prompt the students to have another look at the diagram on page 7 clarify this.
- *Can we add any more information to our chart yet?* Prompt the students to realise that it would be better to wait and find out more about how the cable cars have changed so that they can just pick out the main points of difference.
- Similarly, pages 8 and 9 have information about the old cars but no explicit information about how the new cars are different. As they read, ask the students to think, pair, and share hypotheses about any aspects (from pages 8–9) that they think will have changed. Encourage students who have been on the cable cars to make connections to their experience.
- Before reading page 10, ask the students what they notice about the heading. They should realise that from this point, they will be finding out about the new cars and therefore be able to make comparisons (and meet the reading purpose).
- Have the students think, pair, and share about the points of difference on pages 10 and 11. Encourage them to refer back to what they have already read, including the diagrams and other visual language features to clarify information. Together, add the information to the appropriate columns on the chart.
- Have the students use the information they have gathered so far to make some simple comparisons between the cable cars in the past and now. To support your students, especially English language learners, you could use a speaking frame to show a way they can make comparisons. Model a sentence, for example, *In the past, people could sit outside, but now you can only sit inside.* Then write your sentence into a speaking frame like the one below. Take out the optional parts of the sentence and have the students create their own sentences.

	Past		Now
seats	In the past, people could sit outside,	but	now you can only sit inside.
number of cables			
noise			
number of tracks			
levers			

- You can repeat this process for page 12 as part of the lesson, or you can set it as an independent task for pairs of students to do after the reading. Ask the students to use the driver's comments to help them make inferences about what it would have been like to drive the old cable car.
- Revisit the learning goal and support the students to track how they met it. Ask the students to describe an example of how they made connections between different parts of the text in order to clarify or confirm a piece of information.

**The students make connections between the (explicit and implicit) information and their own experiences to think critically about the text.**

- See After reading

**The students use word-solving strategies (for example, using grapho-phonetic information, and knowledge of word structure and context or looking for synonyms or definitions) to decode and/or work out the meanings of unfamiliar words and phrases.**

- Prompt students to break multisyllabic words into recognisable chunks or syllables, for example, “Well-ing-ton”, “smooth-ly”, “pass-en-gers”, and “uni-ver-sity”. You can model this on a whiteboard. Remind them to use context to confirm their decoding attempts.
- Remind the students to look out for clues to the meanings of unfamiliar words within the same sentence or close by, including in the visual language features. For example:
  - There are strong contextual clues to the meaning of “trundled” on page 2 (the idea of noise, the word “rattled”, and the contrast to “quietly and smoothly”). Students may also recall the word “trundling” from the Ready to Read big book *Is That an Earthquake?*
  - On page 3, the word “but” in line 4 is a clue to the contrast in meaning between “visitors” and “local people” and the word “Students” helps to confirm the word “university”.
  - On page 5, a synonym is provided within parentheses to clarify the meaning of “cable”.
  - On page 8, the explanation within the sentence (“so people didn’t slide into each other”) and the photograph on the facing page are supports for the meaning of “stepped”.
- Have a dictionary available to confirm or clarify word meanings.

**After reading**

- Students can reread the story as they listen to the audio version of the text on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2011*.

- Have the students use the diagram on page 7 to explain to a partner how the old cable cars worked.
- Encourage the students to think critically, for example, **“The students make connections between the (explicit and implicit) information and their own experiences to think critically about the text.”**
  - Have the students refer to the summary chart and the text to form opinions about (evaluate) the positive and negative aspects of the old and new cable cars, including safety considerations. Encourage the students to visualise and make connections to any relevant experiences. They could also talk with family members who remember the old cars. To support your students, especially English language learners, you could use a speaking frame to show the students a way they can give their opinions. Model a sentence, for example, *I think the old cars were fun to ride on because you could sit on the outside*, or *I think the new cars are good because you can't get wet when you ride on them*. Then write your sentence into a speaking frame like the one below. Take out the optional parts of the sentence and have the students create their own sentences.

Give your opinion	I think the old cars were _____
Give a reason	because _____.

- Alternatively, you could have the students reread page 9. *Why do you think so many people wanted to have a last ride on the cable cars? Why did they put the cars in a museum?* Encourage discussion, then have the students work in pairs to find information (explicit and implicit) to identify why the cable cars were so popular. They could also use other reference sources, such as Wellington city publicity information. You may need to clarify that cable cars are a rare form of transport in New Zealand.
- The students could make inferences about the author's point of view.
- Have the students share with a partner any words they found difficult and the strategies they used to work them out. Listen to the discussions. Do you need to follow up on any decoding strategies, particular words, or features of words?
- Explore the author's use of descriptive language, for example, “red rattlers”, “very noisy”, “trundled”, “rattled”, “smoothly”, “quietly”, “glide”. *What are some other words the author could have used to describe the contrast between the old and new cable cars?*