



A Little Birdie Told Me

Social Studies, Language Arts

Overview

This lesson introduces young students to the safety rules around trains. It helps to underscore the importance of knowing what signs mean and how to obey them. It can be used as a Language Arts lesson or a Social Studies lesson, and it fits well within a unit on civic responsibility. The video-based portion of the lesson provides a way to grab young children’s attention while delivering important safety messages.

Time Allotment

Two 45-minute lessons

Learning Objectives

On completion of this lesson students will be able to:

- Identify signs that direct people approaching train tracks.
- Explain up to five safety rules they must follow when near train tracks.
- Create a safety public service announcement with a do or a don’t rule to follow.

Media Components

- *Sly Fox & Birdie* DVD (2006) available from Elite Promotions or Morton Suggestion: www.elitepromo.com/stores/oli_mortonsuggestioncom.qcommerce.com/mm5/
- DVD player (or VCR), monitor and remote
- ELMO or other document camera hooked up to projector with screen (If use of a document camera is not possible, consider videotaping the Introductory Activity and showing it via a classroom computer.)
- Audio recorder (either cassette recorder with microphone or computer audio recording software with microphone)
- Radio Public Service Announcement (PSA) examples from Operation Lifesaver website: www.oli.org/shark/
- Interactive whiteboard (optional)

Materials and Student Handouts

- Train set for manipulative portions of lesson (such as *Geotrax*, *Thomas the Train*, *Brio*), including small people and cars for the “dramatic play”
- Sign image silhouettes (template attached) - 1 per student, used for grouping students like with like
- 300% enlarged cutout copies of each sign with the words on each one (template attached)
- “Do, Do Not” list, used in Introductory Activity (included at end of lesson)
- “Do, Do Not” cards, one rule per card (see Teacher Preparations)
- (optional) Paper cutouts or props to represent different parts of city for a virtual field trip (Community Connections)

Teacher Preparations

- Preview and cue video and practice pause points.
- Make copies of the four different sign image silhouettes provided with this lesson, one sign per student, evenly divided: Yield, Stop, Railroad Warning and Railroad Crossbuck.
- Prepare one or more of each sign provided at end of lesson, enlarged by approximately 300%. Additional images online at www.oli.org/education_resources/signs.html
- Create “Do, Do Not” cards with one rule on each card for use during Learning Activities. (See list at end of lesson for reference.)

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- Practice manipulating the train set on a board under the document camera so that students will be able to see it projected on the screen.
- For the Learning Activities section, clear out the center of the classroom as best as possible, or make aisles between desks by which students can travel from one side of the room to the other.
- (optional) For the Community Connections, create and/or gather paper cutouts and props that students will visit during their virtual field trip.

Sly Fox & Birdie DVD Log

0:00-1:30	Introduction to the characters
1:31-2:08	Stay off the train bridge: You can't outrun a train.
2:09-2:48	Stay out of the train tunnel: You never know when a train is coming.
2:50-3:49	Trainyards are not good places to play: Stay off the tracks.
3:50-4:32	Do not play in or around train cars: They might move!
4:35-5:29	Do not throw or place objects on the tracks: They could shoot back at you.
6:00-6:57	Music Video: "Stay Off, Stay Away, Stay Alive!"
6:58-end	Birdie talks about the train warning signal and what it tells us.

Introductory Activity

1. Focus: Tell students that they're going to learn some very important safety rules about trains and that many of things they learn will be useful in their lives outside of school. Ask students: How many of you like trains? Who has been on a train? I'm going to introduce you to Sly Fox and Birdie. They are going to help us understand about train safety. Sly Fox doesn't really know very much about trains, but Birdie is very smart around trains. As we watch, raise your hand when you first see something that Sly Fox does near the train tracks that he really shouldn't do.

Activity: View each portion of the video interactively (with remote control in hand, if possible). Pause after each sequence (see program log). Students should raise their hand at least five times for things Sly Fox wants to do that he should not do.

Each time the video is paused, ask students what Sly Fox wanted to do and how we can remember the rule Birdie tells him.

Follow-up: Work together as a class to recall the main messages of the video: "Stop-Look-Listen," and "Stay off the tracks, Stay Away from trains, Stay Alive." (Teachers of early readers might use this opportunity to underscore the *st* consonant blend.)

2. Focus: Use as a reference the "Do, Do Not" list (included at end of lesson) to focus students more on train safety in their own lives. Set up and play out five small scenes under the document camera, projected onto the screen so children can see what's happening in the imaginary world before them.

Activity: For instance, a train may be approaching on the tracks, and a person might start to run across the tracks the split second before it passes. You might say, "Oh, I see the signal flashing for the approaching train. I better be alert and stay away!" Move the little character back from the tracks. As each action is played out (by the teacher) on the document camera, encourage students to raise their hands and participate in the discussion of what was right and wrong.

Follow-up: Commend students for their good work. One of things Sly Fox and Birdie talked about was the train warning signal (video time cue:6:58). In order to be safe, we have to know what signals and signs mean. Let's see if we can figure out some common signals and signs so that we can be safer around the tracks.

Learning Activities

1. Focus: Give each student a card with a silhouette sign image on it. Tell students they must find people in the class with the same sign they have, and they should get together in a group. Provide chairs in four separate areas in the room in which each group can congregate. Once the groups are together, each group's job is to figure out what the sign the group is holding is called, and what it tells them to do. Some children will be very familiar with the cutout images; others may need some assistance. Circulate around the groups to offer suggestions and ask probing questions, as needed, allowing the students to figure out the information for themselves.

Activity: After about five minutes, post on the whiteboard (or other flat wall surface) the four large cutout images of the signs with the words on them indicating what they are. Tell the groups, one at a time, to come to the front of the room to match their image to the correct image on the wall.

Have the STOP sign group come up first, match its image, then remain standing to discuss with the rest of the class what the group has discovered. Involve the rest of the class in discussion: What sign did that group have? Did the group know its proper name? (For younger children learning letters or learning to read, you might ask what letter the name of the sign begins with, how to pronounce letter sounds phonetically, etc.)



Ask the entire class: Where might we see this sign? When we see it, what should we do? If we're in a car, what should we do? If we're on a bicycle, what should we do? If we're walking, what should we do? (The answer may be the same for each mode

of transportation.) Continue this procedure for the YIELD sign group, followed by the RR TRACKS WARNING sign group and the RAILROAD CROSSING (CROSSBUCK) group.

Follow-up: Use the follow-up to address issues all students need to know and understand. Ask: What do you do if you are at a yield sign and you see a car? (Wait until it goes by and then look both ways again – underscore the part about looking both ways

Operation Lifesaver Safety Notes

A yield sign means that you can only go if no one else is there. If you see another car, you have to stop, wait until it passes, and then look both ways again. The railroad sign, which is called a “crossbuck”, means the same thing as a yield sign, but instead of looking for cars, you have to look for trains. If you see a train, you have to WAIT until it is gone, and then look both ways again before you cross.



again.) What do you do if you are at a crossbuck and you see a train? (Wait until it goes by and then look both ways again – underscore that they need to check BOTH DIRECTIONS, *again*.) What if the train looks like it is really far away and you have plenty of time to cross the tracks? What if you thought you had plenty of time but you slipped or got caught on the tracks? What if the train was actually coming faster than you thought? (Tell them that trains might look like they are further away than they really are. Even adults have trouble guessing how fast a train may be traveling when they are standing on the tracks. A person could be right about how far away the train is and how fast it is going, but he or she could trip or slip. So, no matter what, they should wait for the train to pass.)

Explain that students need to remember these signs and help their families to remember what they mean and how to obey them. This is just one part of the responsible actions that we will be discussing in today's lesson. Have students take their regular seats.

2. Focus: Learning about signs is one part of safety around trains. Does anyone recall the other rules? Discuss some of the other rules presented in the video (use DVD log on page 2 as a reference).

Activity: Students will now get to learn some other important rules using a game. Use as a reference the “Do, Do Not” page (attached) and gather the “Do, Do Not” cards to hold up one by one. The game is based on a classic children's party game, “Mother, May I?” Each group of students starts by sending one person into the game. The first set of players, made up of one person from each group in the class, lines up at the end of the room opposite the conductor (the teacher). The rest of the class has the job of saying “Do! Do!” or “Don't! Don't!” from the sidelines.

Hold up one of the “Do, Do Not” cards for the first player and read it aloud, e.g., “Look both ways before crossing the tracks.” Each player, one at a time, must state “Do” or “Don't.” (Players on sidelines can tell him/her what to say.) For each right answer, the player moves forward one step closer to the conductor. For each incorrect answer, the player must move back two steps.

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Follow-up: (Typical pick-up point for Day 2) See what students remember from the day before. If desired, show the music video portion from the *Sly Fox & Birdie* program. Ask for students to offer rules they recall. Today, students will be making recordings of their voices telling about responsible actions around railroad tracks in their city.

Culminating Activity

Focus: Students will be making a radio Public Service Announcement (PSA). A radio PSA allows shy students to participate more readily and it allows children with restrictions on photography to remain engaged throughout the assignment. Explain that a PSA helps people to learn something about how to be healthier or safer. Play sample PSAs from the Operation Lifesaver website, www.oli.org/shark/ Ask: What things do you think we'll want to teach people for their own safety?

Ask students to repeat some of the rules to remember around trains. Tell them that in their group, they need to decide which rule they want to say, and then they need to work together to figure out the best way to say it. They can tell a story and end with the rule, or they can just say the rule(s) all by itself. They can play parts of different people that talk to one another. They can sing, hum or make sound effects for the PSA.

Activity: Determine whether students need to write out their PSA. Most young children will prefer to do it from memory, since it will most likely not be more than a few lines long. Allow students time to practice. Then record their radio PSA using available equipment.

Follow-up: As a class, listen to the PSAs and discuss both form and content. Make copies on CD/DVD to send home with each child.

DO, DO NOT

- DO** look both ways before crossing the tracks.
- DO** stand back away from the tracks.
- DO NOT** cross the tracks before you look both ways.
- DO** cross only at designated crossings.
- DO NOT** cross the tracks if the gates are down (another train might be coming).
- DO** double check. Trains might be closer than you think or moving faster than they appear.
- DO NOT** pass between or around parked trains.
- DO** mind all traffic and warning signals.
- DO** stay alert. Trains can come from either direction.
- DO NOT** trespass on train tracks. They are a dangerous and an illegal place to walk or play.
- DO NOT** rely on your hearing to tell you if a train is coming. Passenger trains can be very quiet.
- DO** stand away from the edge of the platform.
- DO NOT** try to outrun a train.
- DO** be aware and listen to instructions given during your ride.
- DO** hold firmly onto the straps or seats if you must stand.
- DO** mind all signals (including "doors closing").
- DO NOT** "horse around" on platforms or near tracks.
- DO** be careful getting on and off trains.
- DO NOT** skateboard or ride bikes down tracks.

Teacher's Note:

Refer to this Do, Do Not list during the Introductory Activity, and use it as a reference to make cards for the Learning Activities, one rule per card.

Assessment

- Assess student involvement in discussion and “Do, Do Not” activities.
- Grade the Radio PSA using both a group effort and an individual effort assessment.

Community Connections

Create a room-size town with aspects similar to your own town, using a passenger rail stop as the city center. Add roads, traffic signs and train crossings. Use the 300% enlarged signs as part of the scene. Role-play a walk through the city and to the train station to further explore signs, rules and safety. Discuss safety rules as students walk through.

Cross-Curricular Extensions

- **Language Arts:** Have students create a book with a title like, “A Little Birdie Told Me” or “Train Safety” or the like. Have them draw a picture on each page of something they remember from the lesson and from their virtual field trip.
- **Math:** Have student groups each use a form of measure to calculate distances between the school or bus stop and the train station. When the students return to the classroom, they can plot their different calculations on a line graph.
- **Communications:** Have students work from their radio PSA to create a television PSA that can be videotaped and shown at school.

Adaptations

- Use online activities to substitute for some of the classroom activities, or add to them if time is available. “Safetyville” on the Operation Lifesaver website is fun and interactive. www.oli.org/safetyville/safetyville.html

National Standards

Civics

Standard 3. Understands the sources, purposes, and functions of law, and the importance of the rule of law for the protection of individual rights and the common good.

Level Pre-K (Grade: Pre-K)

1. Understands rules and the purposes they serve.

Standard 27. Understands how certain character traits enhance citizens' ability to fulfill personal and civic responsibilities.

Level I (Grade: K-2)

1. Knows that a responsibility is a duty to do something or not to do something.

Health: Safety and Injury Prevention

Standard 5. Knows essential concepts and practices concerning injury prevention and safety.

Level Pre-K (Grade: Pre-K)

4. Knows safe behaviors around vehicles.

Self-Regulation: Risk Prevention

Standard 3. Considers risks.

Level IV (Grade: K-12)

Benchmark 2. Knows potential safety hazards, and knows common strategies to avoid hazard or injury.

Source: mcrel.org

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