# Railroader-Synopsis

## Chapter 1–The Moonlighter

Twelve-year old Skip Skinner lives beside the railroad tracks in Toronto. As he lies in bed at night he listens to the train as it roars by his house, and fantasizes about working on the railroad when he is older.

# Chapter 2-Late Again

Skip is late for school and is ridiculed by his teacher. He is kept in, but heads straight for the railway crossing where Charlie, the watchman, has a shanty. He watches as Charlie turns the big wheel that lets the crossing gates down so that cars will stop. Charlie must strain to handle the wheel, but he refuses Skip's offer of help and chases him home.

## Chapter 3-A Loose Board

Skip has a secret short-cut to get to the railway crossing. He has loosened a board in his backyard fence. At supper, his parents discuss buying a new washing machine and the prospect of moving within two years. Skip hopes they won't move so he can stay close to the tracks and learn more about the railroad.

# **Chapter 4–Calamity**

On the last day of school Skip and his friend Tom see a train stopped at the crossing near Skip's house. They rush over and join the crowd in time to see that a small boy has been hit by the train.

# Chapter 5–A Time to Think

Skip goes to his grandparent's cottage and takes pictures of the wildlife there as he paddles a canoe on the quiet lake. His grandparents, who are constantly sparring, play cribbage with him, swim, and provide him with warmth and security.

## Chapter 6-Making Friends

Skip and Tom build a sailboat and make stilts to fill the summer hours. Skip visits Charlie and finds that the old watchman is glad to see him. He learns that Charlie has been afraid to encourage him to hang around the shanty because his own son was killed on the tracks many years before. A friendship has begun.

## Chapter 7-Lesson Number One

Skip's friendship with Charlie deepens, and he begins to spend all his spare time at the shanty. He learns railroad terminology, and most important, the lantern signals used for trains.

# **Chapter 8-Beautiful Miss Thomas**

Skip starts Grade 7 and finds his new teacher is young and beautiful. His initial joy fades, however, when he learns she is as strict and demanding as his other teachers have been.

#### Chapter 1—The Moonlighter

- A. Skip hoped to be a railroader, and he knew he had to be 14 years old and a Grade 8 graduate. What do you think the minimum qualifications would be to get work on the railroad today?
- B. These railroad jobs are described in Chapter 1. Fill in the chart below.

Job	Description	Advantages/Disadvantages
Call Boy		
Engineer		
Fireman		
Conductor		

C. When you finish school, you will be looking for a job. Look in the classified ads in the newspapers to find ideas and information and fill in the chart below.

Job you would like	
Education required	
Equipment/Clothing needed	
Pay received	
Most interesting or best aspect of this job	

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#### Chapter 3—A Loose Board

B. This story takes place in 1947. Interview a friend or relative who lived through these years and try to find answers to these questions.

1.	What is an "icebox"?	

- 2. Where did the ice come from?\_
- 3. What things do we consider necessary in our homes that didn't exist in 1947?
- 4. See if your interview subject can help you fill in the blanks for these "old wives' tales"

you will get warts. If you handle a

If you you can get rid of warts.

you will get curly hair. If you eat you

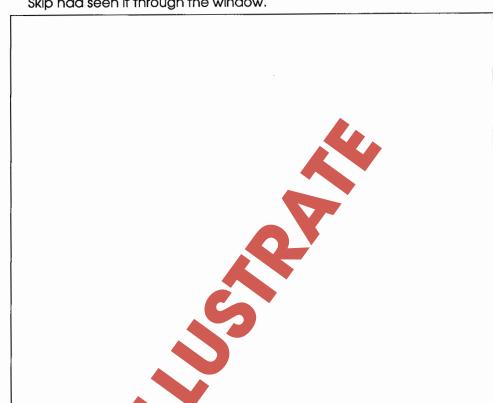
Ask your interview subject if they know any more "old wives' tales" from their childhood.

Compare your answers in class.

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Chapter 2—Late Again

C. Re-read page 12 carefully and illustrate the interior of Charlie's shack as Skip had seen it through the window.



D. Write 10 verbs you find in this chapter and add interesting adverbs for verb adverb each. eg.

	peered balefully		
verb	adverb	verb	adverb
1	6		
2	7		
3	8		
4	9		
5	10	4.5	

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Chapter	6—Making	Friends
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A. Re-read pages 37 to 41 carefully. Choose a partner and write a script to dramatize these pages.

Plan your props and costumes, then practise your play and present it to your class.

B. Check the Guiness Book of Records for any re	cords made at stilt-
walking.	

`	Write an entry in Skin's diany to describe the events in this chanter

- 1	


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#### Chapter 9—Terrible Trouble

A. Skip made a hole in the fence so he could get to the railroad or home faster. When his parents found out about this they were extremely angry. Under these headings explain how each person reacted and how they punished Skip for jeopardizing his sister's life.

	Reaction	Punishment
Charlie		
Mom	C	
Dad		

B. In the chart below tell one wrong thing you have done and fill in the other headings

Wrong deed	Why it was a problem	Reaction	Punishment

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### Chapter 11—Fire

A. Find as many words in this chapter as you can that are contractions. Write each and then write its long form. Give the page number. (Try for at least seven!)

Page	Contraction	Long Forn				
e.g. 77	they'll	they will				

3.	Find these "t	fire word	ds" ar	nd ci	rcle '	then	Λ.								
	fire crackling engine	firebal choke voluni	flames explosion smouldering						smoke orange firemen				burning sparks charred		
		G F G G F F F F G G F	S I L K E X M I X O S I S O S	BORESPARKSPROUK	G F G G G G G G G G G G G G G G G G G G	A E N A R I A U S E F K E L	SANBEOMENSIERT	PGCDNNEFOTRDIE	E F A O G G S M O K E H N J	SKILIOUKMPBEGS	F B U R N I N G F O A P R Q	IRTAEVOLGALECS	TFIOBCRACKLING		

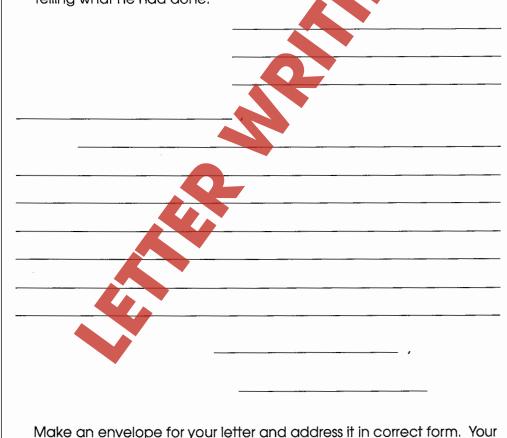
Chapter 10—A Plea For Help

A. In this chapter Skip is very upset and writes a letter to his grandparents asking them to help him.

Think of a person or persons you might write to if you had a problem. Write a letter to them describing your problem, or the trouble you are in and ask them for help. You can use a real predicament that you have been in, or you can make one up.

OR

Write the letter that Skip posted from his mother to his grandparents telling what he had done.



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return address should also be on the letter.

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#### Chapter 16—A Narrow Escape

A. Make a comic strip of the events in this chapter. Begin with Skip at the window watching for the Moonlighter to pass. You can use captions and dialogue bubbles.



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