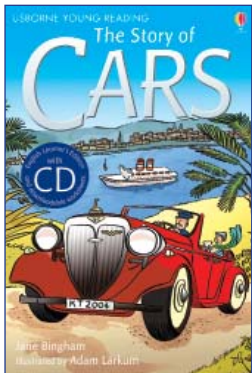


The Story of Cars • Teacher's notes



Author: Katie Daynes

Reader level: Advanced

Word count: 2449

Lexile level: 800L

Text type: Non-fiction (history, transport)

About the book

This book is a light-hearted look at the history of cars, from early dreams of vehicles powered by clockwork or windmills to future plans for pollution-free and even flying cars.

For hundreds of years, people tried to produce powered vehicles. Steam engines offered one answer, but they were heavy and slow, and worked better on tracks, so inventors looked at other suitable fuels. The best was petrol, and in 1886 the petrol-driven horseless carriage – or car for short – was born.

Over the following decades, cars became faster, cheaper and more reliable. With stiff competition between rival car companies, races were organised to put their vehicles to the test. Designs became more varied to meet different demands, from streamlined racing cars to sturdy country cars, and from small and affordable city cars to spacious family ones.

In 1908, mass production made cars more widely available, but roads and regulations needed to keep pace with the demands cars made. Tarmac roads, traffic lights, speed limits and breakdown recovery services all had to be invented and introduced. Meanwhile, motor racing became increasingly popular, and in 1997 the supercar Thrust SSC broke the sound barrier, setting a new land speed record.

Today, our roads are teeming with cars. The challenge is to keep the traffic flowing, reduce emissions and invent cleaner cars for the future.

About the author

Katie Daynes passed her driving test first time at the age of 17. She prefers writing about cars to driving them, though. Other books she's written include titles about racing cars, trucks, cycling and space, as well as underwear, famous people, toilets and chocolate. She lives in the north of England, where she juggles writing books with teaching her own children to read.

Words and phrases of interest, and unfamiliar words

Help your students to develop strategies for unfamiliar words, so that you don't have to interrupt the flow of the story often to explain vocabulary. You might suggest they make a quick note of words as they read, or mark their place on the page with removable sticky notes or index tabs. Encourage them to deduce meanings: are they familiar with any part of the word (e.g. "hand" in "handle")? Can they guess from the context (e.g. "grim" in "grim warning" must mean something serious)? You could look at different strategies for learning new vocabulary, such as making word clouds or thematic lists.

p3 vehicle	p11 carriages	p26 snazzy	p37 to pull over	p44 guzzling
p4 inventor	p18 accelerator	p28 vision	p38 automobile	p46 chrome
clockwork	fuel	p29 identical	p39 patrolmen	p52 wire-spoked
to get around to	p19 handbrake	p30 mass-produced	breakdown	p54 sleeker
p7 wagon	p21 to show off	assembly line	p41 cute	p55 thrill
p8 coach	punctures	p33 hedgerows	p42 inspiration	p57 hurtled
p10 gunpowder	p23 abolished	tar	groovy	p59 fumes
to blow up	p25 pot-holed	p35 junctions	p43 character	p60 pollute

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Before reading

Write some car names on the board for the class to guess what this story's about. Choose ones that feature in this book but don't instantly give the game away, e.g. Silver Ghost, Speedster, Raceabout, Austin Seven, Bullnose Morris, Topolino, Beetle, etc. Does anyone know what these names refer to?

Ask the class if their family has a car. Do they know the make? Do they know any famous drivers? You could talk briefly about motor racing competitions such as Formula One, NASCAR, rally driving, etc. This may be a popular topic for some of the class, but be careful not to lose the attention of other students.

How long have people been using cars to get around? Does anyone know who invented cars and when? What differences have they made to our lives? (Think about positives: being able to travel quickly and affordably, when and where we choose; also maybe some negatives, such as congestion and pollution.)

Show the class the book. You could discuss the fact that books can be fiction or non-fiction. This is a non-fiction book; it tells the real history of how cars were invented and developed.

Reading or listening

You can listen to the story on CD or read it aloud to the students, take turns to read or read together silently. Each double page spread in the book is one track on the CD, so that you can pause between tracks or repeat tracks if your students need it. The first reading is in a British English accent, and it is followed by an American English reading. The words are exactly the same.

During reading: you might like to ask some of these questions.

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| p3 | What kinds of vehicles did people use before cars? What powered them? [Horses, mainly] | p35 | What's interesting about the bus in this picture? Do you know where this is? [The tower, commonly known as Big Ben, is part of the Houses of Parliament in London.] |
| p4 | Do you know what else Leonardo da Vinci did? [Drawings, paintings e.g. the Mona Lisa, architecture and designs for war machines] | p38 | What are the speed limits today, in towns or villages and in the countryside? |
| p9 | Why was it so much faster downhill? | p41 | Do you think it looks like a mouse? |
| p16 | How did people usually travel long distances in those days? [Horse-drawn coaches, trains.] How long would it take? [Hours or even days.] | p48 | Why is one boy dragging a sink? [The phrase "everything but the kitchen sink" means "everything you can think of, whether you need it or not".] |
| p18 | Do we still need to crank up the engine? [No, we just turn the ignition key to start the car.] | p53 | What do you think plane designs and fast car designs have in common? [They need to be streamlined for speed.] |
| p21 | What kind of wheels do we have? [Inflated, but with much tougher designs. The Michelin company still makes tyres today.] | p58 | What is the speed of sound? [It's how quickly sound waves travel – roughly 1,236 kilometres per hour or 768 miles per hour.] |
| p27 | Can you imagine what roads were like before cars? And what people must have thought when they saw a car for the first time? | | |

After reading

Show the class pages 62-63, and explain how the timeline starts with the oldest car ideas and goes forward in time until the more recent designs. Which car or cars do the students like best? Have they seen any of these cars in real life, either on the road or perhaps in museums, or old photos or movies?

How often do students use cars with their families, and for what reasons – getting to school or work, shopping, visiting family or going on holidays? What are the alternatives, e.g. bicycles, public transport?

What are the most important features of a modern car? You might consider affordability and economy, safety, non-polluting design, stylish looks, useful accessories and so on. Challenge the class to come up with their own designs – they could sketch and label them – then ask them to think up a good name for their new car.