

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

Around the World in Eighty Days

by
Jules Verne

Book Information

Jules Verne, Around the World in Eighty Days

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Book Level: 9.6

Interest Level: MG

Phileas Fogg and his servant make a breathless world tour, overcoming wild misadventures and rescuing a beautiful Indian maharani.

Topics: Adventure, Travel; Adventure, Trials/Tribulations; Classics, Classics (All); Transportation/Vehicles, Balloons

Main Characters

Aouda a beautiful young Indian woman whose life is saved by the Fogg party

Captain Andrew Speedy the captain of a steamer, who is imprisoned on his own ship when he refuses to take the Fogg party to Liverpool

Colonel Stamp Proctor an American who insults Fogg and is challenged to a duel

Detective Fix a London police detective who suspects Fogg of robbing the Bank of England and pursues him across the globe

Jean Passepartout Fogg's house servant, who gains respect for his master and proves himself indispensable as they make their way around the world

Phileas Fogg a mysterious, resourceful, and unflappable British gentleman who coolly makes his way around the world to win a bet with his club cronies

Vocabulary

'Change the business/ financial district of London

apoplectic consumed with rage almost to the point of having a stroke

equilibrist a performer who does balancing feats

fakir a Hindu religious holy man, often a beggar

funeral pyre the site of the burning of a dead body in the Hindu and other traditions

mackintosh British term for raincoat

palanquin simple cart pulled by one or two people

phlegmatic cool and difficult to arouse to anger or any emotion

rajah a ruler or chief in India

sledge a sleigh used for transportation over ice and snow

suttee the Hindu custom whereby a widow throws herself on her husband's funeral pyre

whist a card game that is the forerunner of bridge

Synopsis

As the story opens, the mysterious, but meticulous and precise Phileas Fogg hires Jean Passepartout, a Frenchman, as his new servant. Then, following his daily routine, he sets out to play whist at his London club. There the conversation turns to travel, and an interesting challenge is put forth: Phileas Fogg will circumnavigate the globe in eighty days or lose his fortune to his Reform Club cronies. Fogg, cool and unflappable, returns home to tell his new servant to prepare to leave London in ten minutes. Passepartout, seeking only a regular schedule, is chagrined but compliant, and the two depart on the evening train.

In the meantime, Fogg's abrupt departure from London makes him a prime suspect in a London bank robbery. Detective Fix requests a warrant for Fogg's arrest and prepares to follow him to serve it. Thereafter, the hapless detective trails Fogg around the world, becoming involved in the party's adventures and fortunes while he waits for arrival of a warrant that never seems to come.

In India, the party detours to save a young lady destined to die as a human sacrifice. She, too, joins the party and, like Passepartout, becomes attached to the gallant and confident Fogg.

At each adversity, the resourceful Fogg finds a way out of the dilemma, often using his roll of English bank notes to buy his way out of trouble. He buys an elephant, charters a sledge, kidnaps a steamer captain, and burns a ship's seats for fuel, while carefully entering the party's progress in his log.

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Meanwhile, Passepartout keeps his watch set on London Time, insisting that foreign timekeeping is flawed.

In the end, the group arrives on English soil, and Fix is finally able to detain his suspect. All seems lost as Fogg is unable to reach London at the appointed time. Released from the Custom House after the real bank robber is found, he returns home to put his affairs in order and pay off the bet. In the meantime, Aouda, profoundly grateful for Fogg's protection, offers to marry him. Fogg, betraying emotion for the first time, sends Passepartout to make arrangements. It is then that the Frenchman discovers their mistake--they have gained a day and can still win the bet. Though Fogg has literally spent a fortune to win his wager, he feels the trip was worthwhile since he gained Aouda as his bride.

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Initial Understanding

Describe Passepartout's feelings after Fogg and the volunteers from Fort Kearney rescue him from the Sioux.

For the most part, he feels guilty for costing his master both time and money in securing his rescue. Although Passepartout's bravery in disconnecting the engine from the train likely saves many lives, he is surprised that Fogg would risk both his life and his wager to save him.

Literary Analysis

The story *Around the World In Eighty Days* is told by a third-person narrator. Closer examination of the narration reveals that the narrator is not "omniscient," or aware, of the thoughts of all the characters. Which character's thoughts are NOT known by the narrator, and how does this device aid in telling the story?

While the narration is focused on Passepartout's point of view, little is revealed about the inner thoughts of Phileas Fogg. He remains aloof and mysterious, masterfully overcoming every obstacle placed before the party. This point of view helps establish Fogg as a resourceful and enigmatic character, and allows the reader to appreciate each new surprise and narrow escape with the rest of the party.

Inferential Comprehension

At the time this book was written, both India and Hong Kong were part of the British Empire. From reading the portions of the book involving these locations, what can you infer about the narrator's attitude toward British imperialism?

The narrator appears to believe that Britain provides a helpful, civilizing influence in the countries under her dominion. In India, the narrator decries the fact that the British have not been able to eliminate the influence of the regional rajahs and thus stop certain Hindu practices, such as offering human sacrifices, that they found objectionable. In Hong Kong, the narrator discusses the "colonizing genius" of the British, which has allowed the port and city to develop in the Western manner.

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Constructing Meaning

Phileas Fogg is described several times in the book as a "phlegmatic" gentleman. A "phlegmatic" person is one who is not aroused easily to emotion. In what way is this an apt description of him?

Phileas Fogg represents perhaps the classic, stereotypical British character. Cool, stoic, and unflappable, Fogg reveals his personality early in the book when he declares, "The unforeseen does not exist." Throughout the book, he meets adversity with a calm appraisal of the situation and his ever-ready roll of British bank notes.

interesting concept and perhaps a bit difficult to conceptualize. Using any large-format world atlas, obtain a map of world time zones. Review international time zones with the class, including the location of the Greenwich meridian and how time in each zone varies (+ or -) from Greenwich Mean Time. Then, using a portable clock, set the time for twelve noon GMT and trace the route of the Fogg party eastward, changing the clock as each time zone is passed. The students will be able to confirm that, at the international date line, twenty four hours must be subtracted from the time.

Teachable Skills

Recognizing Setting Fogg's around-the-world journey offers an opportunity for students to gain a better understanding of world geography. As a class activity, use a globe to trace Fogg's voyage around the world. Assign each student to review one or two chapters in the book and become the "travel expert" for the countries discussed therein. During group discussion, ask the "experts" to trace the route of the party through their areas.

Understanding Literary Features While *Around the World In Eighty Days* is a somewhat realistic travelogue/ adventure, author Jules Verne is well known as a visionary writer of fantastic and futuristic tales. As a class assignment, ask students to research the author's bibliography using books, encyclopedias, and the Internet. Assign a one-page writing assignment on the subject, "Why Jules Verne is known as the 'Father of Science Fiction'."

Responding to Literature Initiate a class discussion on the subject of Phileas Fogg. Is he someone most people would like? Is his reserved character an admirable asset or a stumbling block to happiness? Is it still true, as implied in the book, that the British are cool and unemotional, while Americans are bold, forthright, and loud?

Understanding the Main Idea The final surprise in this book involves the concept of international time, and the gaining of a full day by the party on their eastward trek across the globe. It is an