

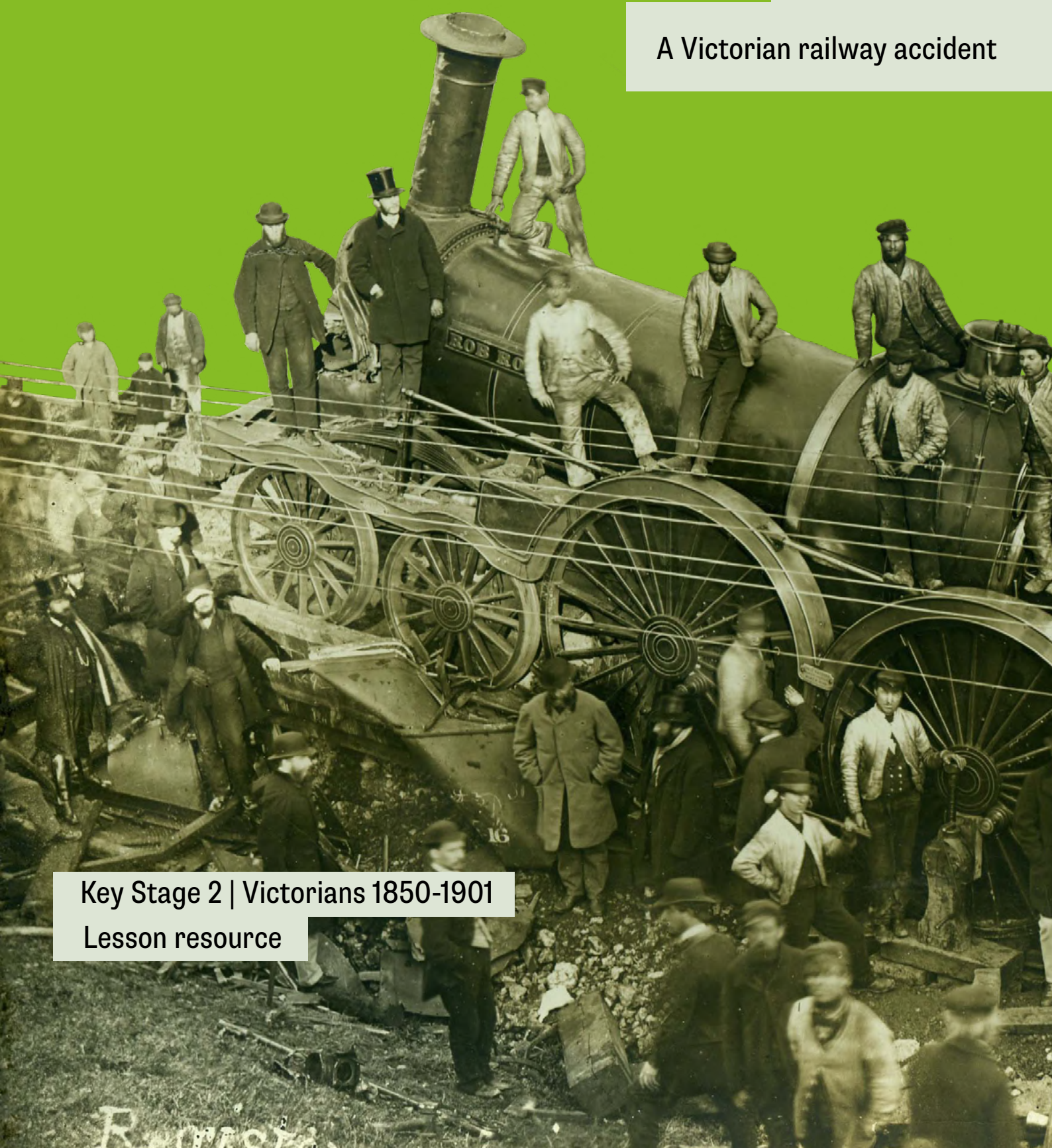
THE

NATIONAL

ARCHIVES

Rob Roy

A Victorian railway accident



Key Stage 2 | Victorians 1850-1901

Lesson resource

Runners

Introduction

This photograph was taken in 1868. It shows a Great Western engine, the Rob Roy surrounded by onlookers and workmen known as navvies. On 5 November, the steam locomotive collided with a cattle train at Awse Junction, near Newnham in the Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire. The men in the photograph are trying to rescue the engine after the accident. The chief engineer, Mr W.G. Owen, is wearing a top hat and standing in front of the smokestack.

Use this lesson to find out about a Victorian railway accident.

Suitable for:

KS 2

Time period:

Victorians 1850-1901

Connections to the Curriculum:

Key stage 2: Literacy

Writing strategy:
Composition: writing narratives about personal experiences and those of others (real and fictional) & writing about real events

Key stage 1 & 2: History

A study of an aspect or theme in British history that extends pupils' chronological knowledge beyond 1066.
Changes in an aspect of social history, such as crime and punishment from the Anglo-Saxons to the present or leisure and entertainment in the 20th Century.

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Teachers' notes

This lesson can be used with pupils at Key stage 2 to support the teaching of literacy in Year 5. It focuses on a photograph of a railway accident in 1868, and supports the National Curriculum literacy strategy. Students can explore approaches such as changing point of view, for example, describing a situation from the point of view of another character or perspective or in composition, experimenting with different ways of opening a story through description, action or dialogue. In addition students could 'freeze-frame' sections of the photograph, and 'hot-seat' each other on their chosen person.

Students could work in groups to discuss the photograph and draft a story outline as preparation for a short piece of oral storytelling. They could also use the photograph to write and perform their own script for a drama.

Of course, the lesson could be used in the history classroom for exploring changes in aspects of social history such as a thematic study on the history of transport, the development of the railway network and decline of steam travel for example.

Finally, the lesson could be used in a general introduction about the use of historical sources in history and how we can use old photographs to find out about the past.

External links

[Victorian Web – Victorian Railways](https://www.victorianweb.org/technology/rrov.html)¹

The Victorian Web again comes up trumps with maps, links to further reading and railway museum sites and a large number of articles.

¹ <https://www.victorianweb.org/technology/rrov.html>

Background

Britain's first steam railway lines opened in the 1820s. In just a few decades they had grown to cover most of the country, employing thousands of people and covering thousands of miles of countryside with track and signalling. The coming of the railways in Victorian England meant that for the first time people could travel by train to different parts of the country. People were able to travel outside of their village or town. Day trips and seaside holidays started to become popular. Also, many Victorians started to travel to football and cricket matches. It was now possible to transport newspapers and books more easily to different parts of the country. Fresh milk, and butter from the countryside and fish from the coast could be delivered to the towns.

Although Victorian railways were generally safe and reliable there were a number of very serious accidents in the 1850s and 1860s. In 1868, the same year as Rob Roy's accident, there was an even worse rail disaster at Abergele in Wales. Three years earlier in 1865 a train to London full of passengers including the author Charles Dickens came off the tracks in Kent. Ten people were killed and many more hurt.

Tasks

Task 1

Source 1: Photograph: Rob Roy goes off the rails, 1868. Catalogue ref: RAIL 1005/132

Look at Source 1 and answer the questions below:

- Can you spot chief engineer, Mr W.G. Owen, wearing a top hat and standing in front of the smokestack (chimney)?
- Why do you think he is in the photograph?
- How are the men trying to rescue the engine after the accident?
- What other things do you notice in the photograph?
- Why do you think this photograph was taken?
- How can you work out when this photograph was taken? Give two points.
- What do you think happened before the photograph was taken?

Task 2

Pick a person in the photograph (source 1). Describe the situation from their point of view. What can you hear, see and smell? How are you feeling? What thoughts are going through your mind?

Task 3

Use this photograph to write an opening scene for a story.

There are different ways starting a story. Use one of the following ways to start:

- description
- action
- dialogue

Source 1: Photograph: Rob Roy goes off the rails, 1868.

Catalogue Ref: RAIL 1005/132





Why do our hyperlinks come with footnotes?

Our resources are designed to be printed and used in classrooms, which means hyperlinks aren't always accessible digitally. We include the full link at the bottom of the page so that you can type in the address without distracting from the main text of the lesson materials.

Did you know?

The National Archives Education Service also offers free workshops onsite in Kew and online in your classroom.

Our [Onsite Workshops](#) are available for free here at The National Archives and allow students to experience genuine original documents reflecting over 1000 years of history. From Elizabeth I's signature to the telegrams of the sinking Titanic, students love the wow-factor of being able to see real history on the desk in front of them.

Our [Online Workshops](#) allow our Education Officers to teach through your projector, leading discussions and guiding students through activities based around original documents. All you need is a computer with a projector, webcam and microphone. We'll arrange a test call before your session to check the tech is working.

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