

# We're On Our Way

Kick off your year with this magical, musical poem that captures the wonder, excitement, and promise of each new school day.

## Reading Tips

- By bike, by bus, perhaps by sleigh—how do your students get to school? Before reading the poem, take a quick survey. Then ask your students to imagine millions of children around the country and the world doing just what they do each day—eagerly making their way to school using all kinds of transportation. Read the poem aloud in a brisk, animated voice, accentuating the poem's strong rhythm and relishing its repeated sounds.
- Ask students if they were surprised by any of the forms of transportation mentioned in the poem. In what parts of the country or world might these kinds of transportation be necessary? What would the weather or landscape be like?
- With its strong rhythm and six-stanza structure, this poem lends itself well to a choral reading. Divide the class into five groups, and assign each group one of the first five stanzas to read aloud. Allow groups to practice their stanzas a few times to build fluency. Encourage children to read with spirit. They may even want to stomp their feet to echo the beat and underscore the poem's energetic tone. The entire class can join in on the final two-line stanza of the poem for a rousing culmination to the read-aloud performance.
- This poem is rich in *alliteration*, the repetition of the initial consonant sound. The letters *b* and *w* are repeated the most frequently. Ask students to find all the words beginning with these letters. List these words on chart paper. Have students hunt for other examples of alliteration in the poem (for instance, *trolley* and *train* in the first line, *cab* and *car* in the third line, and so on).



## Language Arts Boosters

**Create a Word Web:** Use the poem as a springboard for creating a class word web that lists and categorizes different forms of transportation. Begin by writing the word *transportation* at the center of the chalkboard. Draw three spokes around the word and write the words *land*, *water*, and *air*. Ask students to find all of the forms of transportation named in the poem. Where do they belong on the web? Challenge students to think of other forms of transportation not mentioned in the poem. Add their ideas to the web.

**Word Scrambles:** Scramble the letters for each of the transportation words mentioned in the poem: *trolley*, *train*, *foot*, *sleigh*, *cab*, *car*, *boat*, *bridge*, *bike*, *bus*, *wheels*, *wings*. List all of the scrambled words on several sheets of paper. Divide students into small groups, and provide each group with a list of words. Challenge groups to unscramble the words. Which group can unscramble them the fastest? Have students use the poem to check the spelling of each word they have unscrambled.

## Writing Prompts

**Pockets Full of Dreams:** What dreams have your students brought with them for the new school year? What would they like to learn, see, and do during the year ahead? Provide each child with a sheet of paper and invite him or her to respond to the following prompt in words and pictures:

My dream for this school year is . . .

Next, provide each child with a simple pocket pattern. Have children write their names on the pockets and decorate them. Paste or tape the bottom and sides of each pocket onto a sheet of butcher paper, leaving the pocket tops open. Children can fold up their “dreams” and slip the sheets into their respective pockets. Title the poster “With Dreams in Our Pockets . . .” and display. Make sure students have easy access to the poster so that they can share and compare their dreams for the school year with those of their classmates.

# We're On Our Way

By trolley, by train,  
by foot, by sleigh,  
                                  by cab, by car,  
we're on our way —

by boat, by bridge,  
                                  by bike, by bus,  
on wheels, on wings,  
each one of us,

has dreams in our pockets  
and stories to share  
                                  as we open up doors  
to school everywhere ...

and a rain might mist,  
a wind might blow;  
the sun might shine  
on our morning hello,

and a storm might brew  
in the sky, let it try,  
but the magic of wonder  
won't pass us by,

we're on our way  
                                  to school.

— *Rebecca Kai Dotlich*

