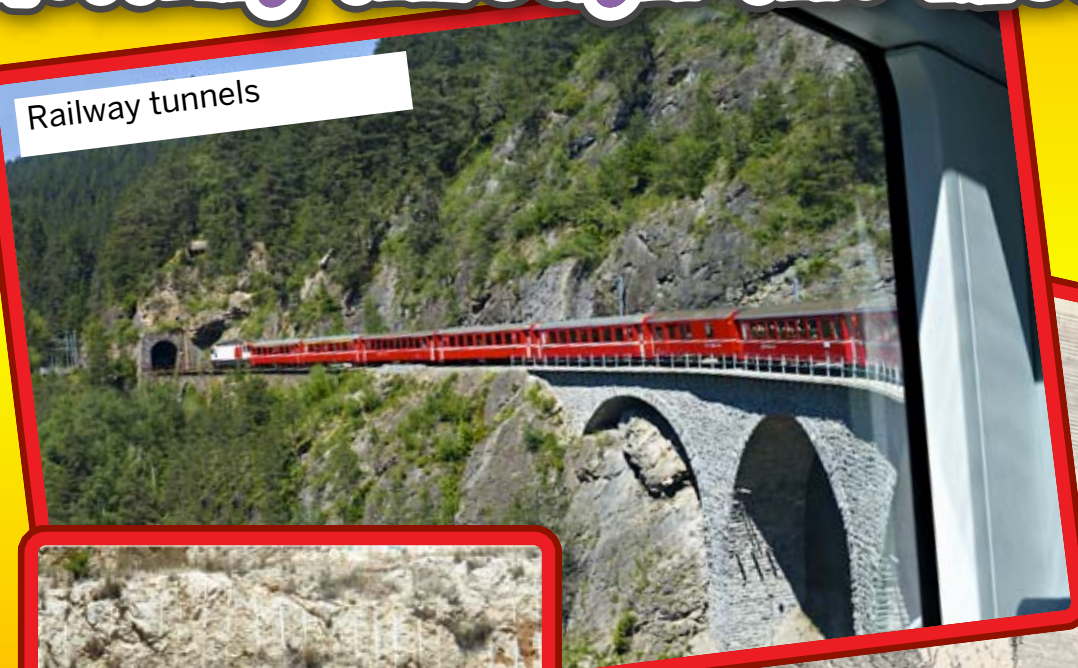


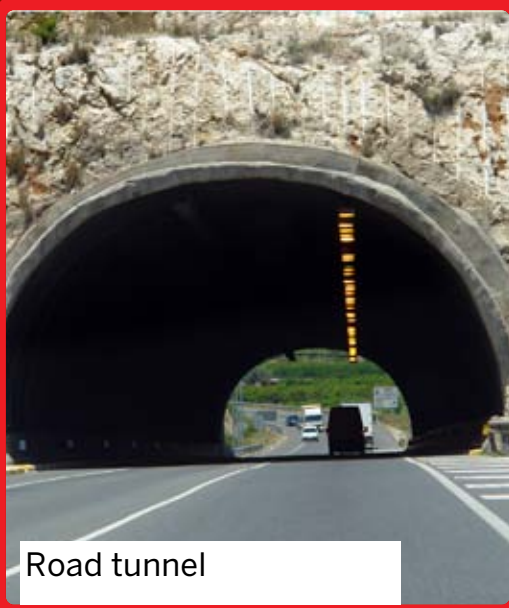
Tunnels

Getting through the mountains

Railway tunnels



Road tunnel



Victorian tunnels



Find out about the meaning of stories and articles

Tunnels

Mountains have always stopped people moving easily across the land. In the past, people would trudge up to the passes between the summits and then trudge down the other side, pulling their laden ponies behind them.



In the early days of trucks, the engines were not powerful enough to pull loads up the mountain roads. For six months of the year the passes were also blocked by snow.

For all of these reasons, people looked for ways of going under the mountains. The answer was – tunnels. But tunnels are very, very expensive to make. The cheapest tunnels are railway tunnels because they can be small enough for just one train at a time. But road tunnels need at least two lanes. For this reason, the first tunnels were for railways.

On the other hand, railways cannot go up steep slopes. That means railway tunnels have to be lower down the mountains and so longer than road tunnels. Inside some mountains the tunnel is like a corkscrew so the trains can wind round and round, gradually gaining height.

One of the most famous road tunnels is the Mont Blanc Tunnel that runs under the Alps between Italy and France. But it was so difficult to dig that for many years it was beyond what engineers could do. That is why it was only started in 1957 and why it took until 1965 to finish. It is nearly 12 kilometres long, with two lanes of traffic, It is nearly 9m wide and just over 14m tall, so it is shaped like a squashed hosepipe.

It is especially important to Italy, and nearly a third of all the goods that leave Italy for the rest of Europe go by this tunnel.

But many local people are not happy. They say the huge amount of traffic brings fumes that spoil the mountain air and kill the plants. That is why it has never been made bigger.



Understanding words

Before we can understand a story we have to know what all of the words mean. Let's try one...

- a Write the sentence in which you found the word 'corkscrew'.
- b From that sentence, suggest what 'corkscrew' means.
- c Write a new sentence using the word 'corkscrew'.
- d Use a dictionary to find words with a similar meaning (synonyms) to 'corkscrew'.
- e Draw a small picture showing what you think 'corkscrew' means.



Finding key words

Next, we need to find the key words that tell us what the story is about...

Read the story and underline the key words. Write the most important of these key words in a list like the one below. Write next to it a word that means a similar thing (a synonym). You don't have to use all the spaces, but you should not use more.

| Key word | Synonym (similar word) |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| Example: especially | very |
| | |
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3

Summarising

(the gist of the story)

To summarise means to rewrite the story in a shorter version using as many of our key words from Task 2 as needed.

1 Write a heading for your summary.

2 Now write the main idea in one sentence.
e.g. "This story tells us..."

3 Now add some detail to the main idea by writing more sentences after it.

**Finally,
can you rewrite your
summary to make it better?**

1. Look out for errors such as using the same word too often – use alternatives.
2. Make sure you have summarised the author's purpose in your OWN words.
3. Make sure your summary is in a logical order.
4. Is your summary informative AND interesting to others?

**There is
nothing wrong
with rewriting; even
the best authors
rewrite their
work.**



Sequencing

Sequencing means getting the events in the right order. Write these sentences in the correct order, so they make sense.

People have become very worried that more traffic could spoil the air in the Alps.

The Mont Blanc tunnel was not finished until the 1960s.

For thousands of years people crossed the mountains on foot, taking their goods on the backs of donkeys.

Railway tunnels were built before road tunnels.

Nobody could dig such a huge tunnel until the 1950s.

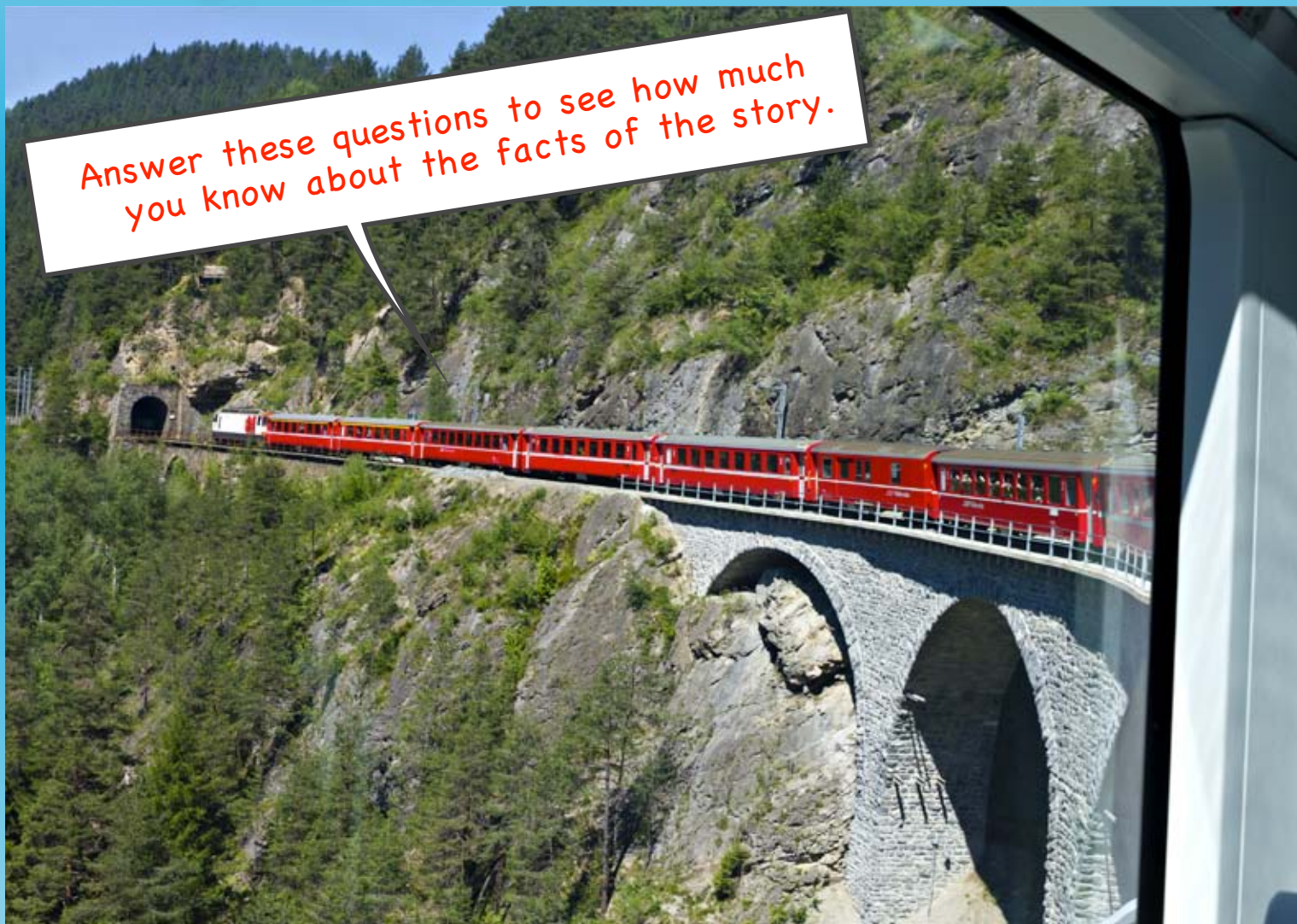
The problem is that many passes are close all winter.

A third of all goods from Italy now use the tunnel.



Get to the facts

Answer these questions to see how much you know about the facts of the story.



1 Which year was the Mont Blanc tunnel started?

2 How long is it?

3 How many months are passes blocked for?

4 Were road or railway tunnels built first?

5 Which countries does the Mont Blanc tunnel link?



Whys and wherefores

Answer these questions to see how much you know about the meanings in the story and how it was written.



1 Why did people want a tunnel under the Alps?

2 Why did it take so long to build road tunnels?

3 Why were people in Italy keen on a tunnel?

4 Why are some people unhappy about tunnels?



Opinions matter

Answer these questions to give your views and to develop the story.

- 1 What was wrong with using donkeys to carry goods across the mountains?
- 2 In the past, people did not worry about pollution in the Alps and now they do. Why do you think views have changed?
- 3 What are some people trying to protect about the Alps and why?
- 4 Do you think it matters that the passes are blocked for half the year?
- 5 Would it be a good thing or a bad thing if all the tunnels were closed?





Talking it through

It often helps if a group of people get together and discuss a problem.

Hairpin roads to mountain passes.



Discussion topic: More tunnels?

Do you think there should be lots more tunnels under the Alps? Do you think it would make life quieter for those who want to use the hairpin bend roads over the passes in summer. But what about winter? What would you do?



Make a story...

When you read a description it often gives you ideas about how the event might be described differently.



Tunnel of silence...

It has been a long journey up the mountain and now you come to the final tunnel that will take you under the summit. But wait, there is no traffic coming out of the tunnel. In fact, it is eerily quiet. You start to drive in and then ... Now continue the story.

The tunnel problem

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