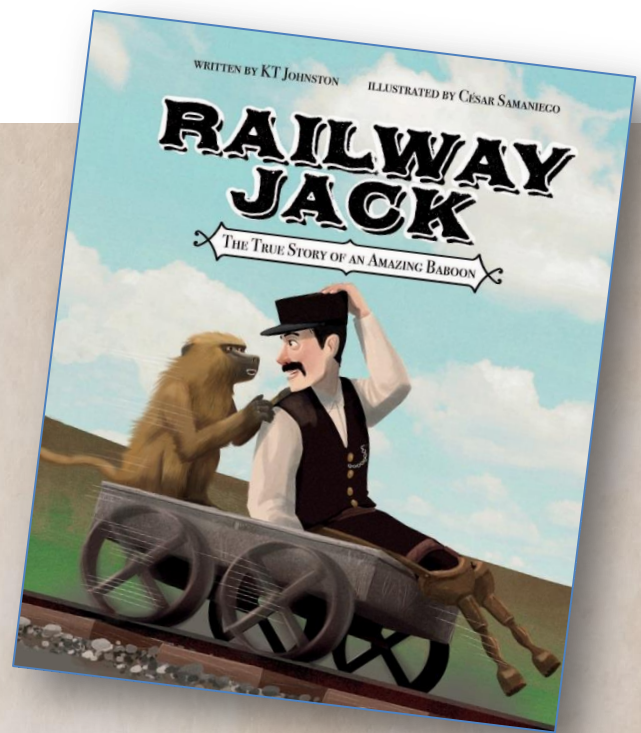


A READER'S GUIDE TO

RAILWAY JACK

THE TRUE STORY OF AN AMAZING BABOON



CONVERSATION STARTERS

1. When we read a book, we notice things in the story that connect to our memories. Those connections help us understand what we're reading and learn new things.
 - What are some things in *Railway Jack* that remind you of things you've seen or experienced yourself? (We call this a text-to-self connection.)
 - Does *Railway Jack* remind you of a different story you've read or heard before? Discuss how the stories are similar and how they're different. (We call this a text-to-text connection.)
 - Does anything in *Railway Jack* remind you of something you've heard about that is happening in the real world? Talk about how a story from almost 150 years ago can be relevant to something happening today. (We call this a text-to-world connection.)
2. What does this story teach us about dealing with unexpected hardships?
3. When Jack and Jim were reunited after a staff meeting, the author could have said, "Jack was happy to see Jim." Instead she wrote, "When Jack was finally let out, he clung to Jim. He squeaked softly while gently touching Jim's face and hands and picking lint off his jacket." How does an author's choice of words create emotion in a story? In this passage, what do you learn about baboons' social behaviors?
4. Look at the photos of Jack. In what ways did he seem human? Why is it important to remember animals are not human?
5. Have you ever seen a service animal working? What were they doing to assist their human?
6. Some people might say Jim took advantage of Jack, and that a baboon should be left in the wild. Do you agree or disagree with their criticism, and why?
7. What might have happened to Jim if he hadn't had Jack in his life?
8. If you were going to look up more information about this story at the library or on the internet, what keywords would you use in your search?

FUN FACTS ABOUT JACK

- In addition to loving vegetables and fruits, Jack liked candles and the grease Jim used to lubricate the rail switches. Jim had a hard time finding places to hide them from Jack!
- Jack once slipped away from home to watch tennis at nearby courts. He chased the balls that were hit out of bounds and returned with them in his mouth. The players called him an expert ball boy.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Railway Jack is the true story of the remarkable partnership between a man and a baboon in 1880s South Africa. When railway inspector Jim Wide lost his legs in an accident, he had to find clever ways to get around and perform his work. He obtained a very unusual helper: a baboon named Jack. But not everyone was happy to see a baboon at the rail yard signal hut, and Jim was fired. He pleaded with the authorities to give Jack a chance and they agreed to a test. Jim and Jack's futures lay in the hands—er, opposable thumbs—of a baboon!

This inspiring story celebrates the history of service animals and a devoted friendship.

ASK THE AUTHOR

Why did you write a book about Jack and Jim?

- After my first few writing projects, I discovered a clarity around the stories I really enjoy telling. I want to tell the true stories of animals who have barely a dusty footnote in history but made a difference in the life of an everyday person. When I saw an article on Jack, there was no question I'd tell his story. He had hold of my heart.

Researching a true story uncovers so many facts. A picture book can't possibly include them all. How do you decide what to include and what to leave out?

- I will leave something out if I can't find at least one source mentioning it that was written in

the timeframe the story occurred (we call this a contemporary source), or if the source does not seem to be trustworthy. The fact also has to fit into the story smoothly without feeling forced. The plot has to flow. A good example of a fact I left out is that many modern articles say Jim had the nickname Jumper. I did not find that in contemporary articles so, whether or not it was actually true, I chose to leave it out.

How do you pronounce "Uitenhage"?

- There are 11 official languages in South Africa. If you want to say it in Afrikaans, one of the primary languages, you would say, "EYE-ten-achhh." If you want to say it in English, another leading language, it is "YOU-ten-ayg."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Railway Jack: The True Story of an Amazing Baboon is one of Bank Street College of Education's "Best Children's Books of the Year"; is a nominee for WLA's 2022 William C. Towner Award; and is an Amazon Editor's Pick "Best Nonfiction for

Kids." KT earned a degree in biology and conducted wildlife behavior studies before settling into a corporate career as an analyst. Her second book, *Jubilee: The First Therapy Horse and an Olympic Dream*, releases Feb. 2022.

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ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR



César Samaniego was born in Barcelona in 1975. He grew up with an artist father, smelling his father's oils, reading his comic books, and trying to paint over his father's illustrations! He attended Llotja Arts and Crafts School and graduated with honors in

2010. Since then he has published many books and provided art for applications, textbooks, and animations. César lives in Canet de Mar, a small town on the coast of Barcelona, with his wife, daughter, five cats, and a crazy dog.