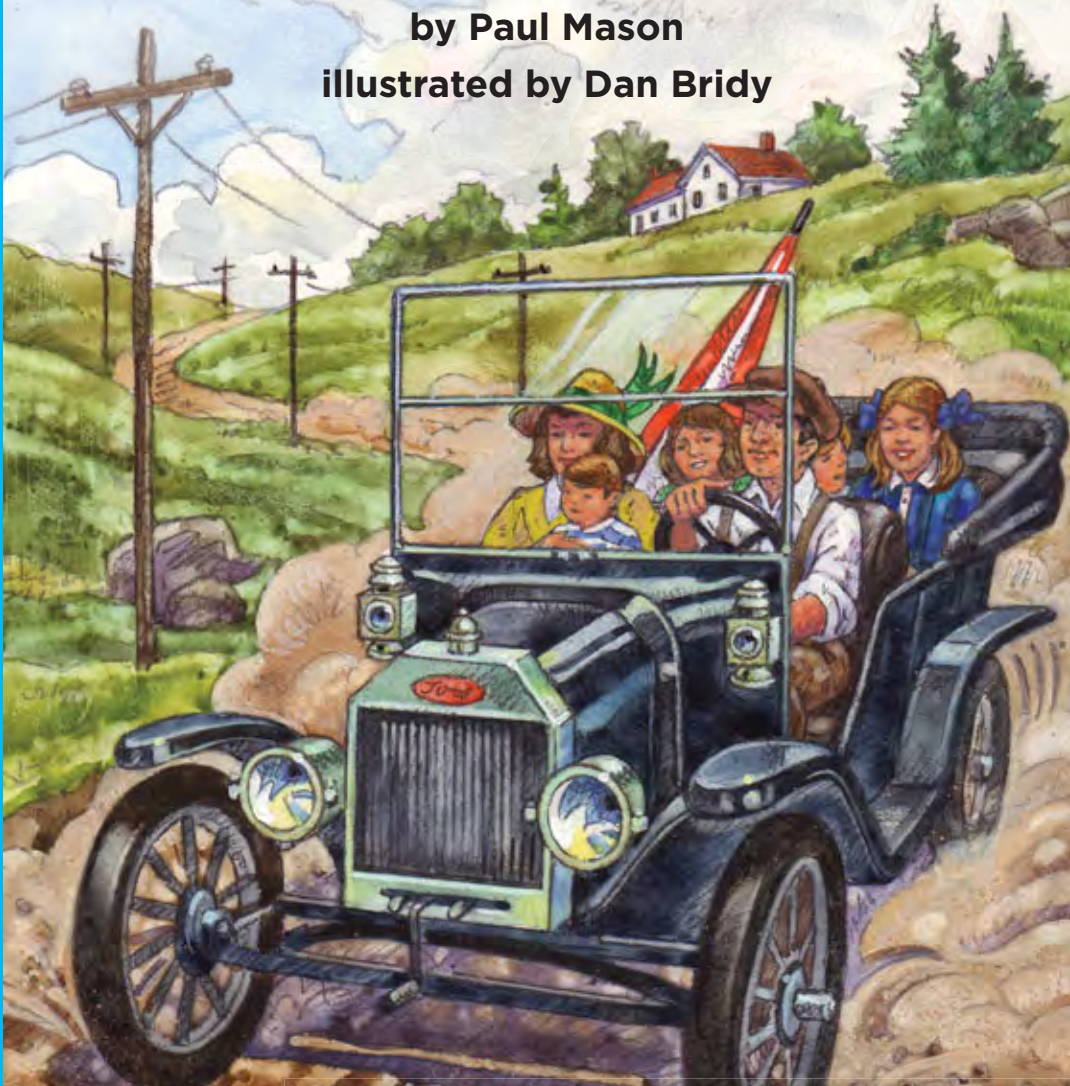


Historical
Fiction

The Freedom Machine

by Paul Mason

illustrated by Dan Bridg



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PAIRED
READ

The Interstate Highway System

STRATEGIES & SKILLS

Comprehension

Strategy: Make Predictions

Skill: Point of View

Vocabulary Strategy

Synonyms

Vocabulary

decades, directed, engineering,
gleamed, scouted, squirmed,
technology, tinkering

Content Standards

Science

Technology

Word Count: 2,004**

**The total word count is based on words in the running text and headings only. Numerals and words in captions, labels, diagrams, charts, and sidebars are not included.



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A

**Essential Question****How do inventions and technology affect your life?**

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Chapter 1

The Latest Thing..... 2

Chapter 2

Not a Toy 5

Chapter 3

Steam and an Offer..... 8

Chapter 4

To the Sea 12

Respond to Reading..... 16**PAIRED
READ****The Interstate Highway System**..17**Focus on Genre**20

The Latest Thing

The first time I saw a car up close was when I was walking home with my dad. We were each carrying a big sack of apples. My dad works for Mrs. Williams, taking care of her large house and garden. When she saw me helping my dad pick her apples, she told me to take some home. Mrs. Williams is generous like that.

Suddenly a weird noise came from behind us. It was a rattling, coughing kind of sound. We turned and saw a car driving in the middle of the road. It was just like we'd seen in pictures. The driver waved at us, and we smiled back.



“Wow, if we had a car like that, we wouldn’t have to carry these heavy sacks,” I said. “We could even drive to the grocery store whenever we wanted.”

My father shook his head. “Have you any idea what one of those contraptions costs? We can’t afford a car,” he said. “Besides, I’ve got my bike, and those wonderful things at the end of your legs,” he pointed at my shoes, “are called feet, and they’re made for walking.”

“Oh, Dad!” I groaned.

“And those machines that run on rails that take you places, they’re called trains,” he teased.



“But just think, Dad, we could go wherever we wanted in a car,” I continued enthusiastically. “We could go on a picnic to the river and take an enormous picnic basket.”

Then something else occurred to me. “How about driving to the beach,” I gasped. “I’ve never seen the ocean. Imagine going there in a car.”



My father still wasn't convinced, and he shook his head again. “You're certainly fascinated by cars, aren't you?” he smiled. “They are the latest thing, I guess, but I'm not so sure about how great they are.”

CHAPTER 2

Not a Toy

The following week, I went back to Mrs. Williams's house with my dad. When we got there, I could hardly believe my eyes. There was a black and shiny car in the driveway. My mouth hung open in amazement.

"Mrs. Williams ordered it a while ago," my dad said, grinning. "It's just been delivered. Go ahead, you can touch it."

I ran my hands over the smooth metal. It didn't seem real.

Mrs. Williams was giddy with excitement, too. "You realize that you'll be doing the driving, don't you, Mr. Dawson?" she said to my dad. "I don't know the first thing about driving. You'll be much better suited to it than me."

My dad looked uneasy. "I guess I'll have to learn how to drive," he said, scratching his head.

That night my dad studied the car's instruction booklet, and every day when he arrived home from work, he told me that he had practiced driving on the driveway at Mrs. Williams's place. I wished it were me learning to drive.

One afternoon Dad came home covered in dust from head to toe and looking miserable. The twins and I laughed as Mom beat clouds of dust out of his coat, which she'd hung on the washing line.

“And just how did you get so dusty and dirty?” my mom asked.

“I drove Mrs. Williams to Brownsville, to see her friend,” replied my dad. “It was a round trip of 20 miles on a bone-dry road. These roads are meant for horses and carts, not cars,” he grumbled.

“And you should have seen Mrs. Williams,” he continued. “I’ve never seen her so annoyed before. Her clothes were covered in dust too. Give me a horse and carriage any day.”



The next day, I accompanied my dad to help him clean Mrs. Williams's car after the dusty drive the day before.

We wiped, polished, washed, and brushed every surface inside and out. By the time we'd finished, the paintwork gleamed and the headlights and horn shone.

I ran my hands over the steering wheel, pretending I was driving. I squirmed and wriggled on the leather seat.

"Can you show me how to start the engine with the crank? Can we go for a ride?" I pleaded.

"No, Alice," replied my dad. "The car isn't a toy, and I can't waste Mrs. Williams's gas and oil."

"Maybe one day we might be able to go for a ride?" I asked. My dad shrugged his shoulders in reply.

Steam and an Offer

Just a few days later, I got the opportunity to ride in the car. I was helping my dad pick more apples when Mrs. Williams decided to visit her nephew on the spur of the moment. “Can you please drive me to the station later this morning?” she asked my dad. “I would like to catch the one o’clock train.”

My dad took his watch out of his pocket. “We should leave right away to make sure we get there in time,” he replied.

Mrs. Williams was surprised. “We have plenty of time,” she said. “That car has a top speed of 35 miles per hour.”

“Well, maybe on a good surface, Mrs. Williams,” said my dad, “but the road to the station wasn’t made for cars.”

Mrs. Williams sighed. “If you say so, Mr. Dawson.” Then she winked at me. “I guess we’ll need to take Alice too. I’ve heard how much she likes cars. I’m sure she’d love to come with us.”

I practically fell over with surprise and excitement. I was going to ride in a real car!

At first the drive to the station went well. I sat up front with my dad, watching his hands gripping the wheel, listening to the growl of the engine, and feeling the wind in my face. I couldn't believe how fast we were going, even uphill.

Then suddenly there was a giant hiss, and clouds of steam started billowing from the engine. My dad steered the car onto the grass at the side of the road and got out. He opened the hood and began tinkering in the engine. "I think the car has overheated," he muttered. "We'll need to put some water in the radiator."



“But there’s no water around here,” said Mrs. Williams with a worried frown. There was only dry grass and a few small bushes along the roadside. “What are we going to do? I don’t want to miss the train, and there isn’t another until tomorrow.”

My dad looked concerned, too. “You’d never have this problem with a horse,” he said under his breath.

Mrs. Williams sighed. I watched her as she reached inside her bag and removed a bottle and a cup. She unscrewed the lid and was about to pour herself a drink.

“Mrs. Williams, is that water?” I asked.

“Why, yes,” she replied. Then it hit her. “Water!” she exclaimed. “Of course. What good thinking, Alice!” she said, getting out of the car and handing my dad the bottle.

“We need to wait for the radiator to cool before I put the water in it, otherwise it will crack,” he said.

We sat and waited for a while until the radiator was cool again. “Cross your fingers, Mrs. Williams,” said my dad as he poured in the water and grabbed the crank.

My dad wound the crank vigorously, and with a cough, the engine spluttered into life. He climbed back in and soon the car bumped and rattled along the road again. My dad drove as fast as he dared. My heart was in my throat.

We arrived at the station just as the train was pulling in. My father grabbed Mrs. Williams's suitcase from the car and carried it to the train.

"Thank you, Mr. Dawson," said Mrs. Williams. "You were quite right to allow that extra time. And if it weren't for your quick thinking, Alice," she smiled at me, "I would have missed that train altogether."

Mrs. Williams smiled. "I would like you to borrow the car for a day as a thank-you," she said to my dad.

For the second time that day, I almost fell over. Even my father was whistling as we drove back into town.



CHAPTER 4

To the Sea

That night my dad told the rest of the family about Mrs. Williams's offer. "You know, I'm starting to get used to this new technology, and I think we'd enjoy a day at the beach," he said, grinning.

The twins jumped up and down, saying, "The beach! The beach! A car! A car!"

That Saturday my mom directed me in the kitchen as I helped make a picnic lunch. Then my dad crammed the picnic basket under the seat. The twins and I squeezed into the backseat. Mom sat in the front beside Dad with Baby John on her lap.

I grinned at the twins. "You're going to love this," I said.

My dad turned the crank, and the engine burst to life. He climbed in, put the car in gear, released the brake, and we were off.

Once we got out of town, my father gave the car some gas. Even with tires that were full with air, the car shuddered and rattled on the rutted roads. But we didn't care how rough the ride was.





The beach was even better than we could have imagined. The ocean sparkled, the sun shone, and the sand was almost white.

My mom sat with Baby John at the water's edge while he played in the water. My dad showed the rest of us how to jump over the waves.

Later the twins and I explored the rock pools, where we scouted for treasures. We found different-colored shells, starfish, and tiny fish that darted everywhere.

And we got to see it all because of the car—our own freedom machine.

No one wanted to go home, but eventually, we gathered everything up and piled into the car. We were all so tired. John slept in my mom's arms in the backseat. It was cooler now, and my dad spread a blanket over them before starting off. I was allowed to sit in the front beside him.

As we got closer to home, we passed some people picking apples, and they waved at us.

"I guess they think this is our car," said my dad.

"I wish it was ours," I sighed.

My dad thought for a while. "You know what," he said finally. "I think you might be right about these cars, Alice. They really can take you places. Now they just have to figure out how to improve these roads!"



Respond to Reading

Summarize

Summarize how the car affects Alice's family in *The Freedom Machine*. Use your graphic organizer to help.

Details

↓

Point of View

Text Evidence

1. What features of *The Freedom Machine* tell you it's historical fiction? **GENRE**
2. Reread Chapter 1. What does Alice think about the invention of the car? **POINT OF VIEW**
3. Find a synonym for *crammed* on page 12.
SYNONYMS
4. Write about how the story would be different if it was told from the point of view of Alice's father. **WRITE ABOUT READING**



Compare Texts

Read about the effect of the interstate highway system on people in the United States.

The Interstate Highway System

In the early twentieth century, cars became more common in the United States. Back then, most roads weren't paved and were more suitable for horses and carts. Driving on these roads took a long time and travel was bumpy and uncomfortable.

People began to explore the idea of a highway system a few decades later. These highways would be expensive to build, though. Who would pay for them?

Poor roads made travel difficult. Cars often got stuck in the mud.



Dwight D. Eisenhower became the President of the United States in 1953. He realized that people needed highways to get around and to transport goods across the country.

In 1956, Eisenhower persuaded Congress to pass the Federal-Aid Highway Act. More than 40,000 miles (64,373 kilometers) of highways would be built, and they would run through every state. The government would pay the costs of building most of the interstate highway system.

The new highways would have at least two lanes going in both directions.

How Interstate Highways Are Numbered

Every interstate highway has a number. Major routes have one- or two-digit numbers. Interstate highways with odd numbers run north and south. Those running east and west have even numbers.

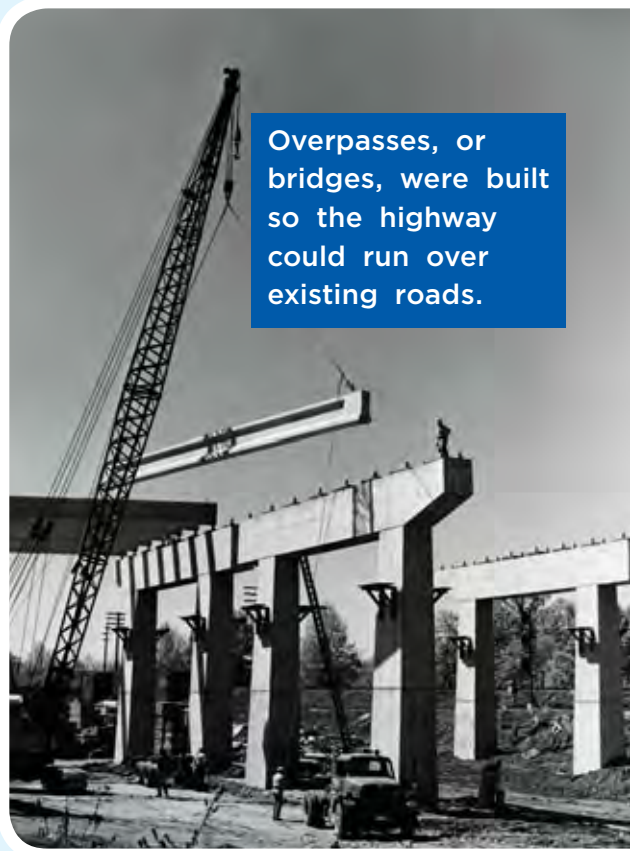
Three-digit numbers are used for highways around a city and for routes joining different interstate highways.



Construction of some sections of the highway presented enormous engineering challenges. It was difficult to build highways over or around big hills, so engineers blasted through them.

When the new system was built, goods could be transported across the country more directly in trucks. People could travel long distances much more quickly.

Building the interstate highway system helped make people's lives easier, but it also changed the shape of the landscape. Suddenly people could live farther away from the center of towns and cities.



Overpasses, or bridges, were built so the highway could run over existing roads.



Make Connections

How did interstate highways affect people's lives?

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How would cars and highways change the lives of ordinary people like Alice? **TEXT TO TEXT**

Focus on Genre

Historical Fiction tells a story that is set in the past. It often gives information about a real event or is based on real facts. Historical fiction gives the reader an understanding of life in the past.

Read and Find A story that is set in the past usually includes dates, events, or other objects that help show the reader when the story is set. Find details from the story that tell you *The Freedom Machine* is set in the past, for example the dirt roads.

Your Turn

Work on your own or with a partner to think of another event involving the car and the Dawson family. For example, Mr. Dawson might borrow the car to attend an event in a nearby town.

Draw a “photograph” for the family album. Use details from the story to help you and think about the point of view you will show. Write a caption for the photograph.

Literature Circles

Fiction

Thinkmark

Characters

Who are the main characters in *The Freedom Machine*?

Setting

Where did *The Freedom Machine* take place?
When did it take place?

Sequence of Events

List the events in *The Freedom Machine* in the order they happened.

Conclusions

What conclusions can you make about how cars have changed family life?

Make Connections

What connections can you make between this story and the attitudes of people today toward new inventions?

Breakthroughs

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Grade 4 • Unit 4 Week 3

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