

THE NIGHT TRAIN TO ANYWHERE · BOOK 3

The Fog Harbor Ferry

A story where YOU choose the way



Meet Your Fellow Travelers

Every journey on the Night Train is better with friends. Here's who is riding with you tonight — and how each one sounds when you read them aloud:

Rowan — The hero of every journey — curious, brave, and wearing the orange coat. Rowan's choices belong to YOU.

The Conductor — Keeper of the timetable and the wisdom. Read him slow as syrup, in your deepest, sleepest rumble.

Tick the Ticket Mouse — Punches the tickets, panics the loudest. Read him fast-fast-FAST, squeaky and tremendously official — and tonight, very damp.

Old Nell — Keeper of the Fog Harbor light. Read her croaky and warm, like a kindly old seagull who has seen some weather and made tea for all of it.

Captain Wallow — Captain of the ferry Lullaby. Read him in a huge, slow, foghorn BOOOOM — even his whispers rattle the teacups.





The Night Train came out of the fog the way a bath toy pops up out of the bubbles—suddenly there, as if it had been there all along. Its windows glowed soft and blurry, like candles behind wax paper.

The whole valley had gone white and woolly. Rowan couldn't see the garden gate. Rowan could hardly see the window latch! It was like somebody had wrapped the whole world in a giant cotton ball.

And through all that muffled quiet came a sound from very, very far away. HOOOOM. A foghorn, calling and calling... with nobody answering.

“Alllll aboard,” came the Conductor's voice, slower and softer than ever, as if the fog had crept into it too. “No hurry... no hurry... but the Fog Harbor ferry has lost her way home tonight, and a whole boatful of very sleepy passengers would rather like their beds.”

Rowan grabbed the orange coat. Sleepy passengers? Lost in the fog? This was a job for a brave thinker!

The train is waiting. Turn the page.



Fog Harbor was mostly fog and only a little bit of harbor. The stone dock stopped at a wall of white, and beyond it the sea was just a rumor. Tick reached out one paw and touched the fog. “It’s WET,” he reported, very upset about it.

At the foot of the teal-striped lighthouse waited an elderly pelican in a knitted shawl, wringing her wing-tips. “Old Nell,” she croaked. “Keeper of the light, and gladder to see you than fish for breakfast! It’s the Lullaby—our night ferry. Captain Wallow radioed at moonrise: lost in the Great Fog, engine fine, passengers all snoring like a basket of kettles. And then the fog ate the radio too. Gulp!”

Somewhere out in the white, a foghorn called. HOOOOM. Lost. Asking.

“Here’s the pinch,” said Nell. “Low tide comes with the dawn. If the Lullaby isn’t home by then, she’ll get stuck on the Snore Sands for a whole day—and every passenger will miss every single one of their beds.” Rowan looked out at all that fog. Somewhere in there was one small ferry. But where?

★ How should Rowan find one small ferry in all that fog?

- **Climb the lighthouse and use the great horn:** *If you choose the lighthouse, the great horn can talk to the ferry in blasts — one for yes, two for no — but a horn can only answer the questions you think to ask it. → turn to page 5*
- **Row out into the fog in Nell’s little dory:** *If you choose the dory, you can search for the Lullaby with your own eyes and ears — but fog plays tricks on both, and a small boat in a big white sea is easy to turn around. → turn to page 19*
- **Search the charthouse on the cliff:** *If you choose the charthouse, the tide charts and listening trumpets might reveal where a drifting ferry must be — but paper and trumpets take thinking, and thinking takes nerve when a horn is calling for help. → turn to page 33*



One hundred and twelve spiral steps later—Tick counted every single one out loud—Rowan stood in the lantern room, face to face with the great horn. It was a brass tuba the size of a playground slide, aimed out at the white nothing where the sea used to be.

“She’s simple, the old girl,” puffed Nell, arriving last and flopping onto a stool. “Pull the chain, she shouts. And Captain Wallow knows the keeper’s code: he’ll answer anything you ask—one blast for yes, two for no. That’s all the words the fog allows.”

One for yes. Two for no. Rowan looked out at the enormous, blank, everywhere-at-once fog and understood the real problem. With only yes and no to work with, a question had to be sharp as a fishhook—or it would catch nothing at all!

Tick climbed onto the chain, ready to swing on it with his whole body. “Ask GOOD,” he advised.

★ What should Rowan ask the fog?

- **Ask sharp halves: “Are you north of the bell buoy?”:** *If you choose sharp questions, each yes or no cuts the whole sea in half, and half a sea is much smaller than a whole one — but it means planning every question before you pull the chain. → turn to page 9*
- **Just blast “WHERE AAARE YOU?”:** *If you choose the big shout, it feels like doing something right now, and maybe Wallow can somehow explain — but where isn’t a yes-or-no question, and the fog is terrible at taking messages. → turn to page 7*



— The Everywhere Answer —

Rowan hauled the chain—HOOOOOM!—and hollered into the horn's big brass mouth for good measure: “WHERE AAAARE YOOOOOU?”

The question rolled out into the fog, magnificent and completely useless.

And Captain Wallow—bless his loyal whiskers—TRIED. He answered with a long, wandering, storytelling sort of honk that went up and down and sideways. HOOM-hoom-HOOOOM-hoo-hoo-HOOOM. It was the sound of a walrus trying to explain a whole entire location through a foghorn.

The fog took his answer, bounced it off the water, folded it around the cliffs, and delivered it back from every direction at once. The ferry was north! Also south! Also, somehow, directly underneath the lighthouse.

Tick spun around three times trying to point at all of them and fell off the chain.

“Aye,” sighed Nell, “that's the fog for you. Ask it everything, and it answers everywhere.” She tapped Rowan's shoulder with a wing-tip. “Small questions, dear. The kind that yes and no can carry.”

🔄 **Go back to page 6 and choose again.**



Rowan borrowed Nell's slate and drew the bay. Then, before touching the chain, Rowan drew one line right down the middle. Think first. THEN ask.

HOOOM! “Are you NORTH of the bell buoy?”

A pause. Then, small and far and beautiful: hoom. One blast. YES!

Rowan crossed out the whole southern half of the sea in one big stroke. Half the world, gone with one question! Tick made a noise like a teakettle whose dream had just come true.

HOOOM! “Are you past Gull Rocks?” Hoom-hoom. No! Another quarter of the ocean, crossed away. Scribble, scribble.

Question by question, the great white everywhere shrank—to a half, to a corner, to a pocket—until Rowan's chalk circled one small curl of coastline shaped exactly like a sleeping whale. “The Whale's Cradle,” Nell breathed. “Of course! The currents tuck everything lost into that cove, sooner or later. Even ferries.”

Now to fetch them home. Turn the page.



Knowing where the Lullaby was and getting her home were two different chores —because the fog had one more trick up its sleeve. It DRANK light!

The great lamp behind Rowan should have thrown its beam clear across the bay. Tonight the fog swallowed the glow a stone's throw out, the way a paper towel slurps up spilled juice.

“The lens is fogged, inside and out,” Nell admitted. “And the clockwork that swings her round wants winding. Two jobs, and my wings are old.”

“Two jobs!” said Rowan. “One for me, one for Tick!” So Rowan polished—round and round, the big lens squeaking like a bathtub duck, SQUEAK-SQUEAK-SQUEAK—while Tick rode the winding-crank around in heroic circles, shouting “WHEEE!” on every turn. And slowly, slowly, the beam sharpened from a smudge, to a blade, to a bright golden road laid right across the water, pointing straight at the Whale's Cradle.

Out in the fog, a horn blasted once. HOOM. Yes, said Captain Wallow. I see it. I see YOU!

Bring them in. Turn the page.



END OF YOUR FREE SAMPLE

Will the Lullaby find the harbor?

You've reached the end of the free pages, and the biggest choice of the night is waiting on the very next page.

Chose "Row out into the fog in Nell's little dory" or "Search the charthouse on the cliff" on page 4? Those paths are in the full book too: 9 choices, 3 friendly dead ends and 7 different endings, so it's a new adventure every time you read it.

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Next in this file: The Grown-Up's Ticket, your parent guide to Book 3.

Books that branch. Minds that grow.

HOOOOM! The night ferry Lullaby is lost in the Great Fog — with a boatful of sleeping passengers, and low tide coming at dawn.

Tonight, every choice belongs to YOU. Talk to the fog in foghorn code — one[★] blast for yes, two for no? Row out into the white in a tiny dory? Ask the tide charts where a drifting ferry must go? The fog answers everything — but only if you ask it right.

Storybranch books are parent-guided choose-your-own-adventure-style stories for kids 3–8, made to be read together. You read, they choose — and every fork in the story builds the core skills of smart thinkers for the next AI revolution.

- ★ Read together · ages 3–8
- ★ 9 choices · 7 endings · a new adventure every night
- ★ Book 3 of 30 in The Night Train to Anywhere series

THE SKILLS IN THIS BOOK

Every Storybranch adventure practices two of the seven skills of smart thinkers. This book builds Ask Sharp Questions — the fog only answers yes or no, so every question must cut like a fishhook — and Think First, Then Ask — the best questions get drawn on the slate before the horn ever sounds.

Storybranch

Books that branch. Minds that grow.

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★ ADMIT ONE GROWN-UP ★

The Grown-Up's Ticket

Your guide to reading *The Fog Harbor Ferry* together

Tonight the Night Train stops at Fog Harbor, where the night ferry has lost its way in fog as thick as porridge. The lighthouse keeper's great horn can reach the captain out there — but the fog only carries one blast for yes and two for no. Your child — as Rowan — is about to learn the harbor's great secret: "*where are you?!*" is not a question the fog can answer, and the right ask can cut the sea in half.

And here's the fun part: **your job isn't to teach.** You're the Conductor — you set the pace, do the voices, and ask one good question at the forks. Your child drives. This guide gives you everything you need: the two skills hiding inside the story, two signature "parent moves," a few tricks for making every choice feel like an event, a tracker for the nights ahead, and an observation log for noticing how the thinking grows.

★ PRIMARY SKILL

Ask sharp questions

Giving an ask context and constraints — the difference between "*which way?*" and "*which way to the harbor, from the red buoy, in fog?*" The quality of every answer your child will ever get depends on the quality of the ask.

✦ SECONDARY SKILL

Think first, then ask

Forming your own idea *before* reaching for help — the anchor habit that keeps kids the authors of their thinking instead of passengers of whatever a tool (or a foghorn keeper) offers first.

9

CHOICES TO MAKE

7

DIFFERENT ENDINGS

3

FRIENDLY DEAD ENDS

∞

WAYS TO READ IT AGAIN

★ **The one golden rule: never pick for them.** Ask, then wait — even when the silence stretches, even when they're clearly about to pick the "wrong" one. The pause is where the thinking happens, and the wrong turns are where the learning happens. Everything in this book is safe to get wrong.



PRIMARY

Ask sharp questions

The habit: a better question beats a louder one.

Every helper your child will ever meet — teachers, wizards, and one day the machines they'll direct — runs on the same rule: vague in, vague out. The child who learns to say what they need, why they need it, and what kind of answer would actually help will get treasure from the very same helpers who hand everyone else mush. In this story the fog only clears for good questions, and every dead end is what happens when guessing — or hollering "HELP!" into the grey — takes the place of asking. At ages 3–8 this looks wonderfully simple: adding one *who*, *where*, or *why* to the ask.

PARENT MOVE №1

The "Vague vs. Specific" Upgrade

When the story offers to ask a character for help, **pause before the asking**. Try: **"Wait — what EXACTLY do we need? If we just holler 'where are you?' into the fog, Captain Wallow's answer comes back from everywhere at once."** Then upgrade the ask together: shrink it to something a yes or a no can carry. Read what the sharper version earns — then marvel at it, loudly. (Use it at least once a night.)

✓ TRY SAYING

✗ INSTEAD OF

"What exactly do we need to know?"

"Let's just ask for help." (help with what? even the foghorn wonders)

"Who would know — and what should we tell them first?"

"Just guess — any direction could be right."

"Hmm, that answer didn't help. How could we ask it better?"

"That character is useless." (the ask was mushy, not the helper)

SECONDARY

Think first, then ask

The habit: my own hunch comes before anyone's answer.

Underneath every sharp question is a quieter move: knowing what you think *first*. Fog rewards the sailor who looks before steering — what do we already know? which way was the wind? what did we hear a moment ago? A child who forms a hunch before consulting the keeper stays the captain of the trip; one who doesn't just follows the loudest voice on the pier. The best questions in this book are built from a hunch that wants checking.

PARENT MOVE №2

The Blind Pitch

When a problem appears, **cover the choices with your hand** before reading them aloud. Ask: **"If you were standing in that lantern room right now, what's the very first thing YOU would try?"** Let them pitch their own plan — then reveal the options and see if the book thought of it. Their idea comes first, before anyone's menu can bias it.

Showtime: making every choice a moment

THE GROWN-UP'S TICKET

A choice page is a tiny stage play, and you're the stage manager. You don't need all six of these — pick two that fit your kid and make them *yours*. Rituals are the point: by Book 3, your child will be doing them to *you*.

1 The Conductor's Whistle

When a choice is coming, give a long, low, sleepy "**whooooo...**" — the signal that a Big Decision is pulling into the station. Slow everything down. Decisions get drama; page turns don't.

2 The Finger Hover

One finger hovers over each option while you think out loud together — but **no touching until the choice is made**. The hover makes the pause physical (and very hard to rush).

3 The Ticket Punch

Decision made? Your child "punches the ticket": two firm taps on the chosen option and a squeaky "**Tickets, please!**" No punch, no page turn — Tick the Ticket Mouse insists.

4 Freeze the Picture

On each full-page painting, stop before reading on: "**What do you see? What's about to happen?**" Predict, then read, then check. Wrong guesses are cheered — that's a scientist at work.

5 Ask the Cast

Stuck between options? "**What would the Conductor do? What would Captain Wallow do?**" (Wallow can only answer one blast for yes, two for no — so "**what would Wallow do?**" really means "**what question could he actually answer?**" Even a 3-year-old can tell a yes-question from a where-question.)

6 Swap the Chooser

On re-reads, flip the roles: you choose, your child holds **veto power** — but a veto must come with a reason. Or let a stuffed animal choose, and audit its judgment together. (Be a deliciously bad chooser. Getting overruled is the goal.)

THE VOICES — YOUR FIVE-MEMBER CAST

Rowan

Warm and wondering — but mostly, Rowan speaks with your child's voice. When Rowan decides, hand the line over: "*what do we do?*"

The Conductor

Slow as syrup, deep and sleepy, with looong pauses. The easiest voice in children's literature — and the one they'll beg for. "*No hurry... no hurry at all...*"

Tick the Ticket Mouse

Fast-fast-FAST, squeaky, tremendously official. Sit up straight when he speaks. He is very busy and everything is an emergency.

Old Nell

Keeper of the Fog Harbor light — an elderly pelican in a knitted shawl. Read her croaky and warm, like a kindly seagull who has seen some weather: "*Aye, that's the fog for you.*"

Captain Wallow

Captain of the ferry *Lullaby*, lost out in the white. Read him in a huge, slow, foghorn BOOM — even his whispers rattle the teacups — and answer every question with one blast or two.

Performance note: you need exactly *one* voice you love — the Conductor is the beginner's choice — and the Train needs no voice at all: whistles, hums and rumbles are your child's job. Consistency beats talent. Nobody is grading you, and the reviews in that bedroom are already five stars.

Punch your ticket: the re-read tracker

THE GROWN-UP'S TICKET

One night is one path — but this station holds **seven endings and three secret dead ends**, and no single read finds them all. Keep this page by the bed. After each ride, check off where you landed and give the ending a name of your own invention. Completing the whole card usually takes a week or two of bedtimes ... which is rather the idea.

★ THE SEVEN ENDINGS

☐ Ending 1 _____	☐ Ending 2 _____
☐ Ending 3 _____	☐ Ending 4 _____
☐ Ending 5 _____	☐ Ending 6 _____
☐ Ending 7 _____	

Write the name YOU gave each ending on the line.

• THE THREE DEAD ENDS — A BADGE OF HONOR, NOT A RECORD OF FAILURE

☐ Wrong turn 1 _____	☐ Wrong turn 2 _____
☐ Wrong turn 3 _____	

What did each one teach you? Jot the lesson.

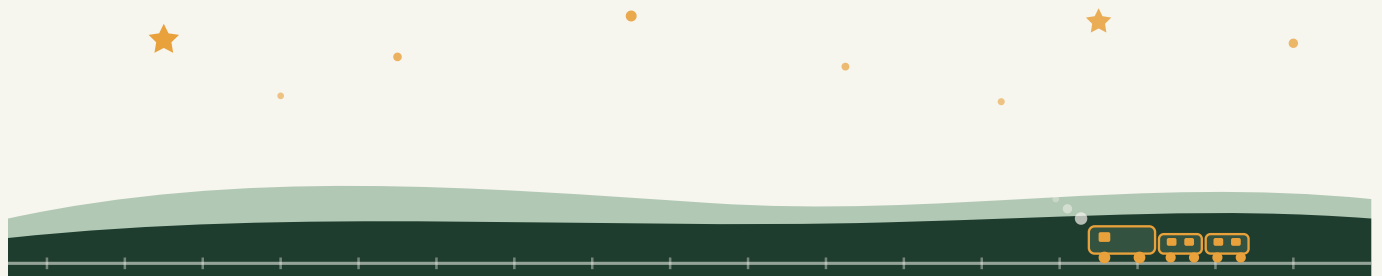
AFTER THE LAST PAGE — THREE LIGHTS-OUT QUESTIONS

1. "Which choice was the hardest tonight — and what made it hard?"
2. "What was the best question we asked tonight — and what made it work?"
3. "Was there a time we guessed when we could have asked?"

Sixty seconds, lights low, no quiz energy. If you only have time for one, ask the second — it's the whole book in a single question.

Same station, different night.

Every reader who boards makes different choices — which means the book your child read tonight isn't quite the book they'll read tomorrow. When you've collected every ending, leave the card in the book: it's the story of how your child learned to think, one fork at a time. Next month, a new station.



The observation log: what you noticed tonight

THE GROWN-UP'S
TICKET

Page 4 tracks **where the story went**. This page tracks **how your child thought** along the way — the part that carries over to homework, playgrounds and every station still to come. After each read, take a quiet minute to score the six behaviors below. It isn't a test, and "not yet" is honest, useful information: over a few weeks, the *pattern* is what matters.

0 Not yet tonight 1 With a nudge from you 2 On their own *Write the date in the top box of each read.*

WHAT TO WATCH FOR	READ 1	READ 2	READ 3	READ 4	READ 5	READ 6
DATE						
Paused before choosing Waited, thought, or offered an idea before picking an option.						
Went back after a dead end Chose to return to the fork and try a different path.						
Named what went wrong Could say, in their own words, why a wrong turn was wrong.						
Accepted an outcome they didn't want Stayed with the story after a disappointing turn, without a meltdown or a demand to undo it.						
Kept track across pages Remembered something from earlier in the story and used it at a choice.						
Stayed with the story Attention held from the first page to the ending, without needing a break.						
Found choosing stressful tonight Tick if the forks felt like pressure rather than fun. If this gets ticked often, read one path straight through and choose only at the final fork — fewer decisions, same story.						

NOTES — ONE LINE PER NIGHT

READ 1

READ 2

READ 3

READ 4

READ 5

READ 6

Scores aren't grades, and no single night means much. What you're collecting is a picture of a growing mind at work — the same six behaviors, book after book, station after station. Keep the page with the book and compare it to next month's.

