

**Engines Adaptation and Abstraction**

**by**

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**Submitted to the Department of Visual Arts  
School of SUNY Purchase**

**in partial fulfillment of the requirements**

**for the degree of Bachelor of Arts**

**Purchase College**

**State University of New York**

**May 2022**

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# Three Little Engines

## By Bob McKinnon

Graduation day was finally here! The three little engines were excited to take their final test of Engine School: making their first solo trip over the mountain.

On the other side of the mountain, their teacher, the Rusty Old Engine, waited to greet them with their friends and family.

Each engine took their place on a different track, waiting for their turn to be called.

On Track 1 whistled the cheerful and plucky Little Blue Engine.

The stationmaster called to the Little Blue Engine, "You're up first. Are you ready?"

"Yes, ma'am!" she replied, and off she went.

The sun was shining brightly as the Little Blue Engine rounded a few bends and continued toward tall green pine trees. When she came to the steepest part of the mountain, she wondered whether she could make it to the top.

Up, up, and up the Little Blue Engine climbed, chugging, "I think I can, I think I can, I think I can." And before she knew it, she did! Merrily, she puffed down the mountain, reaching the village without any trouble.

The Rusty Old Engine met her at the bottom of the hill. "Congratulations!" he said. "You made it." Everyone in the village cheered, and her lights beamed brighter than they ever had before. She was so proud that her hard work had paid off.

On Track 2 puffed the fast and confident Yellow Passenger Engine.

Back at the train terminal, the stationmaster called to the Yellow Passenger Engine, "Are you ready?" "Yes, ma'am!" he bellowed, and off he went.

The journey on Track 2 had more twists and turns. He snaked sharply around big boulders and rumbled over bumpy ground.

As a passenger engine, he was pulling lots of cars behind him. He made it up over several smaller slopes, chugging, "I think I can, I think I can, I think I can," but he grew very tired by the time he got to the steepest stretch near the top of the mountain.

Dark clouds began to cover the sun. Then suddenly, strong winds and heavy rain started to blow the Passenger Engine back.

As he tried to push forward, he chattered, "I, I, I, think, think, I can, can-can't." He could not go another inch.

Exhausted, he stopped in his track, smoke slowly sputtering from his stack.

And finally, on Track 3 chugged the strong and fiery Red Freight Engine

The Red Freight Engine, who had been waiting anxiously to follow her friends, was now up. "Are you ready?" called the stationmaster. "Yes, ma'am!" she chugged, and off she went.

Her journey on Track 3 had a much steeper path to the top of the mountain. She traveled up and down the many slopes, chugging loudly, "I think I can, I think I can, I think I can," the whole way.

As a freight engine, she was pulling cars that were filled with big, heavy machines, and when she came to the steepest stretch of all, she had to puff and puff her way up the mountain. But looking off into the distance, she could see something was in her way.

As she got closer, she realized that a large tree had fallen on her track.

With the Red Freight Engine's path blocked, she came to a full stop. The village seemed so near, but she could not push past the fallen tree. Hissing softly, the Freight Engine sadly realized, "I cannot graduate now."

In the village, the Little Blue Engine waited for her friends. She wondered what was taking them so long. She called out, "What's the matter? Why did they stop? Did they quit?" The Rusty old Engine came up beside her and said, "They aren't quitting. Maybe they have gone as far as they can go right now."

The Little Blue Engine was confused. "But I made it here. Why can't they?" the Rusty Old Engine smiled. "Close your eyes and think back on your journey. How many twists and turns were there on your tracks?" "A few."

"Did you face wind and rain?" "No," she said. "The sun was shining and I guess there was a little wind at my back." "How many steep stretches did you have to climb?" Counting in her head, she remembered, "Just the one." "How heavy was your load?"

A little embarrassed, she said quietly, "Well, I wasn't asked to pull any other cars." "Was their anything blocking your track?" "No, it was clear."

"But I did work hard to get over the mountain, though. I thought I could, I thought I could, and I did."

"Of course you did," the Rusty Old Engine agreed. The Little Blue Engine sat quietly for a moment, thinking about how her journey might be different from that of her friends.

And then a little light went on in her heart. "My friends worked really hard, too. But they got stuck. Just because you think you can, doesn't always mean you will, does it?" "No, it doesn't," replied the Rusty Old Engine.

"Some engines make it here, and others have things that get in their way-no matter how hard they try," continued the Little Blue Engine. "I wonder, is there anything we can do to help them?"

Smiling at each other, the two engines chugged, "I think we can, I think we can, I think we can." And so they did.

Over the hills...

Into the rain... And past the trees...

Until, finally, all three engines came rumbling down the mountain.

This senior thesis is about the comparison between two children's stories: one building off of the other, using adaptation and abstraction. The original book was titled, "The Little Engine That Could" by Watty Piper. The subsequent book is titled "The 3 Little Engines" by Bob McKinnon. The first book is about the singular titular engine believing in itself, helping itself forward to climb a mountain. The second book expands on the idea of achievability by illustrating 3 engines which seek to achieve the same goal of getting across the mountain.

These two words, abstraction and adaptation, are partners in this thesis, because they both translate the concept of taking something familiar and remaking it into a new form. When something becomes abstracted, the properties of the object are changed, added to or removed while still retaining its recognizable elements. When something is adapted, it is recreated to be used with a new purpose. Both of these concepts together can be used to expand on the ideas and functions of an original object. For example, the spoon. It is a round tool made to hold food and liquid, a cut sphere attached to a rigid handle to keep it stable. From this idea can be changed into a larger size to carry more food or be given holes to hold food and release liquid. The components of the original spoon's shape are abstracted to different forms but is still recognized as a spoon. The function of the spoon is adapted from the original to serve different purposes. When the spoon is altered in this fashion it reveals the potentiality of its details.

In "The Little Engine That Could", an engine breaks down while bringing toys and food to children in a village on the other side of a mountain. Many strong looking trains pass by. The toys repeatedly ask for help but are unable to gain any more assistance as the trains see themselves as above carrying the toys and food, and one of them is tired and does not think they could climb the mountain. It is only once the blue engine passes by that they are able to get help. She doesn't believe she is strong enough at first, but she repeats the phrase, "I think I can" to motivate herself to get up the mountain.

In "3 Little Engines", three engines are taking a final test to graduate. They are each to cross to the other side of a mountain. The blue engine is able to get past the mountain by repeating her phrase "I think I can". However, the yellow train is unable to get up the mountain due to his heavier load and the poor weather. The red engine is also unable to get past the mountain due to a tree blocking the way. Both of these trains also repeated the phrase "I think I can", but it is not enough to get past the obstacles. When the blue engine realizes this, she wonders if they didn't try hard enough. Talking to the rusty old engine, she realizes that thinking you can do something isn't always enough to do so and goes back to help her friends pass their test.

The first book has the recognizable elements of the mountain that has to be overcome and the repetition of phrases such as the toys begging for help and the engine believing she can climb the mountain. The lesson of this story is about determination and persistence; that you can accomplish any goal if you don't stop and keep trying.

The second book takes the most established properties and lesson of the previous book and uses them to tell a new but still recognizable tale with them. The purpose of these themes is changed to fit into the story and deliver a new lesson; not everyone can do anything by trying to repeatedly, they may need help to overcome the obstacles in their way.

"3 Little Engines" abstracts the plot of climbing up a mountain to accomplish a goal, and the idea of repeating a phrase as an indication of determination. While they still remain recognizable, they are utilized in a different way, adapting them into a new story.

The combined book adapts both books by uniting them into a new form, creating a parallel structure to convey the relationship between the two stories. It abstracts the two works by taking away the visual properties (the illustrations) and relies on the textual and color elements to point out the themes present within each individual story, as well as those in common between them. The 3 Engines is contained deeper within The Little Engine That Could, tying in how one is an adaptation of the other. The two books use fonts that contrast each other in their intent, as well as shifts, or lack thereof, in color.