

THE POLAR EXPRESS

Train Ride

Character Descriptions

Hero Boy – The Hero Boy is the main protagonist of the story which is narrated by his adult self. His character possesses the will to believe, but is full of doubt surrounding the existence of Santa and the magic of Christmas. Filled with curiosity and out to debunk the existence of the North Pole and Santa, he conducts research into these subjects only to find some disheartening information. This doubt is tested many times by multiple characters until he is finally convinced and accepts the magic of Santa into his heart while at the North Pole. It is at this very moment that Hero Boy first hears the beautiful sound of the ringing Silver Bells and clearly sees Santa for the first time. Throughout the journey he is helpful, self-sacrificing, and willing to disobey the Conductor's orders to assist fellow children in their time of need. He is influenced by several characters throughout the storyline. In the end, he learns to have faith in both the people around him and his own beliefs. While childish and initially doubtful of the train ride and what it could represent, the Hero Boy is otherwise very mature for his age. His delivery is somewhat hesitant at times, indicative of his internal doubt and feelings of disbelief. This doubt is wiped away for the final time as we see the Hobo waving from the train and disappearing into the snowy night, signifying the Hero Boy's commitment to believing in the magic of Christmas.

Hero Girl – The Hero Girl the deuteragonist of the film. She is a young girl with looped braided pigtails and appears to be between eight to ten years old. She is rather independent and mature for her age and a very confident person. Hero Girl befriends Hero Boy and Billy and leads them on their adventures on the Polar Express and North Pole. She seems unsure of herself at first, but gains confidence towards the end of the film and becomes a leader. She is the first to befriend Billy the Lonely Boy, bringing him hot chocolate and singing "When Christmas Comes to Town" with him. Hero Girl is shown to know the true meaning of Christmas, for she could hear Santa's bells at the end of the movie. When they re-board the train, the Conductor finishes punching into her ticket the word, "LEAD." On this journey to the North Pole the Hero Girl will be the one to provide the confidence that Santa does exist. She is the level headed character who aids the characters to each experience.

Know-it-all Boy (KIA) – Often speaking before thinking, the Know-It-All is quick to impart knowledge into any situation, even when not requested by those around him. He feels knowledgeable about many subjects and is quick to correct another passenger if he feels they may have the incorrect information. He does show compassion and understanding toward the Hero Boy during the return trip when he learns that the first gift of Christmas has been lost. Generally chipper and quick to interject a comment, the Know-It-All has a skeptical and omniscient demeanor. His dialect is more advanced than the other children on board the train. The delivery is quick with a nasally tone.

Billy – Billy is a character who can be added on board the train, at the North Pole, or in a small scene on the return train ride home. As seen in the film, the train drops him off at his house which has a large red and white striped present waiting for him on the front porch.

Conductor – The Conductor is a seemingly all-knowing character who has made the round trip to the North Pole many times. He is punctual, follows the rules, and provides assistance to each and every child aboard the train. His character admires and respects Santa. He works to impart knowledge and self-improvement onto each and every child on board the train. The Conductor establishes faith and belief, and is content with unanswered questions. He uses his magic to spread excitement about the Christmas season while giving each child a characteristic to better their life. Acting as a father figure, or guardian, and as the counter voice of the Hobo, he provides the positive reinforcement necessary to convince the Hero Boy to maintain his belief in both Santa and himself. As the manager of the train, the Conductor acts in a responsible, mature, and organized fashion. He is strict, but also helpful and understanding. His tone of voice is very stern when addressing the children after they have been mischievous, but calming and soft when issuing advice and imparting knowledge. As this character is predominantly found within the film all dialogue conveyed should match that of the film. His dialect is that of a father figure, using words and concepts that are appropriate for children, but sophisticated enough for adults to appreciate as well.

Chefs & Waiters – Upbeat and cheerful, these characters bring the Hot Chocolate service scene to life. They are quick to serve the children on board the train, imparting flair and fanfare into the serving of the warm beverage. Using the film as inspiration, we see these characters smiling in the performance of their duties. They act in a joyful and playful manner while dispensing Hot Chocolate. Chefs and Waiters do not have

speaking parts within the film however, there are some lines of dialogue that can be incorporated into the event to help them converse and interact with passengers in the spirit of the story.

Steward – The Steward does not appear in either the book or the movie, however is needed at The Polar Express Train Ride for a multitude of reasons. The Steward is an upbeat and cheerful character. Drawing inspiration from the Chefs, Waiters, and Know- it-all Boy of the film. This character will interact with passengers both before the ride begins, during the ride, and after the ride in the spirit of the story. Stewards assist with passenger boarding, and even act as an emcee during the event.

Hobo – The Hobo is a magical and ghostly character who inhabits the roof of the train and understands the true meaning of Christmas. He plays Devil's Advocate to test the strength of the Hero Boy's skepticism about Santa throughout the film. Carrying the voice of doubt, he verbalizes the Hero Boy's internal feelings of disbelief. His ability to magically appear at key times throughout the journey saves the Hero Boy and the other children from certain danger. Invisible to adults, including the Conductor and Santa, he often mocks them to further instill disbelief within the Hero Boy. The Hobo character is only found within the storyline of the film. His dialect reflects that of a simpler time and his delivery is crass, frank, and direct. He is quick to act, not afraid to contradict the Hero Boy, and can be somewhat startling as he voices the marionette scene found in the film. The Hobo's demeanor reflects that of doubt and disbelief while also representing a willingness to help others in a time of need. Every effort should be made to present this character as that of the Hobo from the film and not a generic hobo more common to folklore.

Steamer and Smokey – Steamer is THE POLAR EXPRESS™ engineer and Smokey is the fireman. If they are visible to the passengers, the actual train crew might dress as these characters. They might also be represented in steam locomotives on static display, interacting with the passengers. Steamer and Smokey should be costumed in correct costumes from the film.

Elf/Elves – Employed by Santa at the North Pole, Elves assist in the annual Christmas Eve ceremonies and celebrate the stroke of midnight with the children and Conductor. They are responsible for informing Santa of those children who have been naughty or nice, and are quick to respond to potentially disastrous moments as they unfold. Generally cheerful and helpful, yet sometimes harsh, the Elves demeanor is greatly improved by the significance of this special evening. As elves do not have much of a speaking part within the film, dialogue conveyed at the event should be in a supporting role. Their dialect represents that of a working class New York accent. Delivery is at a slightly higher pitch than other characters, and often much faster.

Santa – Santa is a wise and magical character who spreads Christmas spirit throughout the world. He lies at the center of the story, and carries great importance to all characters within the plot line. Santa is calm, patient, and contemplative while imparting knowledge upon those who truly believe. Often backlit to add intrigue, Santa towers over the thousands of Elves that inhabit the North Pole. He is honored by the Conductor and mocked by the Hobo. Before the clock strikes midnight, he flies away in his sleigh to give presents to children all over the world. Santa's dialect is that of the Victorian era, and does not include many modern day references. The delivery is very calculated while his cadence is a bit slower than other characters. He talks to the children, congratulating Hero Girl for her confidence and Christmas spirit and applauds Billy for making new friends, while also scolding Know-It-All for his impatience and lack of humility. His character is more subdued than most traditional impressions of Santa. He should engage passengers in a sincere and mystical manner, making a special impression upon each child in just a few seconds time.