

In this unit, you'll read from classic children's books and write an opening chapter to a story.

## At the Red-brick-fronted Villa

*The three children in this story live a comfortable and carefree life. Then something happens to change their lives dramatically.*

They were not railway children to begin with. I don't suppose they had ever thought about the railway except as a means of getting to Maskelyne and Cook's, the Pantomime, Zoological gardens, and Madame Tussaud's. They were just ordinary suburban children, and they lived with their Father and Mother in an ordinary red-brick-fronted villa, with coloured glass in the front door, a tiled passage that was called a hall, a bathroom with hot and cold water, electric bells, French windows, and a good deal of white paint, and "every modern convenience", as the house-agents say.

There were three of them. Roberta was the eldest. Of course, Mothers never have favourites, but if their Mother *had* a favourite, it might have been Roberta. Next came Peter, who wished to become an Engineer when he grew up; and the youngest was Phyllis, who meant extremely well.

Mother did not spend all her time in paying dull calls to dull ladies and sitting dully at home waiting for dull ladies to pay calls to her. She was almost always there, ready to play with the children, and read to them, and help them to do their home-lessons. Besides this she used to write stories for them while they were at school, and read them aloud after tea, and she always made up funny pieces of poetry for their birthdays and for other great occasions, such as the christening of new kittens, or the refurnishing of the doll's house, or the time when they were getting over the mumps.

