

All episodes originally written by The Rev. W. Awdry and adapted by Britt Allcroft and David Mitton, excluding *Thomas' Christmas Party*, written by Allcroft and Mitton.

## **Thomas and Gordon/Thomas Gets Tricked**

The episode that started it all, and a fantastic way to kick off as well! Thomas harasses Gordon while the big engine is sleeping, and the latter gets his own back by dragging Thomas along with the express. What goes around comes around (or is it the other way around?) - it's a simple story with a strong message about being respectful to your peers. Also rather fittingly, it was the very first episode of the show I saw as a young child on *Thomas Gets Tricked and Other Stories*, and, rather indirectly, I'll admit, it sparked my interest in the Beatles and rock music in general.

**Rating:** Excellent (10/10)

## **Edward and Gordon/Edward Helps Out**

A bit more on the mundane side compared to the previous episode, though to be fair, it was adapted from two stories rather than just one. I think adapting both stories individually to fill up the 4:30 timeframe would've made them rather boring on their own, even if they were the first stories ever written for the show, so it's understandable why they were merged together. For me, the *Edward and Gordon* part of the episode is where it truly shines; despite Gordon being rude and dismissive to him earlier, Edward is still willing to help him over his infamous hill. That's the Edward we know and love, not someone who somehow doesn't know how to run a mail service or is outright dismissive of a new crane because... reasons. This Edward is one who will help anyone regardless as to how they feel about him.

**Rating:** Good (8/10)

## **The Sad Story of Henry/Come Out, Henry!**

Awdry was known to state that out of his characters, he had no favorite as, in a sense, they were his "children". But even as far back as 1945, it's obvious that Henry was his least favorite. The fact that he wanted to have him bricked up in the tunnel forever seems to be proof of this. Henry is obviously meant to be someone we're rooting against, especially with Awdry asking his readers if they agreed with him that Henry deserved his punishment, but Henry comes off as more relatable than what Awdry intended; I should know, because I don't like being stuck in rainy weather for a long time, especially if waiting for a bus. (I'm sure at least a few of you out there can also relate.)

Ignoring the fact that it was written at a time when attitudes in handling children were different (something that boneheaded critics refuse to take notice of), the story is very boring with virtually no action taking place, though Sir Topham Hatt's excuses regarding his doctor forbidding him to pull/push are pretty funny. Yes, there's been worse episodes since, but that doesn't excuse the fact that Awdry expects us to agree with how he viewed Henry...

**Rating:** Bad (1/10)

## **Edward, Gordon and Henry/Henry to the Rescue**

...especially since he was asked to write this story to give Henry a happy ending. With hindsight, it did eventually lead to better things (and worse things, but we'll get to those when we get to them) for our favorite number three green engine, but Awdry's grievances with him never stopped there for the next five books. A shame those boneheaded critics I mentioned earlier somehow forget that this episode exists to provide Henry a happy ending, but that's the media for you. Not much to say in regards to the story, though - an adequate finish to the first book as well as Henry's first character arc. Not to mention the start of Sir Topham's trouble with top hats. :P

**Rating:** Good (7/10)

## **Thomas' Train/A Big Day for Thomas**

I've seen a lot of people criticize the fact that Thomas somehow didn't notice the lack of coaches behind him when he first set off, but honestly, that never really bothered me that much. I feel like some people are missing the point; it's not whether or not Thomas can feel the weight of the coaches on his coupling. It's about teaching him to be patient and careful, and I think the story does a good job in teaching that. Fun fact: It's one of Davey Moore's favorite episodes of the series.

**Rating:** Good (8/10)

## **Thomas and the Trucks/Trouble for Thomas**

Considering that he was one of the first engines alongside Edward, it's a shame that Thomas rarely interacted much with him in the books or the classic seasons. He's practically an older brother/father figure to the little blue tank engine, and it shows when he offers to let Thomas take his train while he shunts in the yard. But even the best intentions can have potentially disastrous results as Thomas could've had a nasty accident because of his inexperience in handling trucks. Another solid chapter in Thomas' first character arc in guiding him to be a really useful engine.

**Rating:** Excellent (9/10)

## **Thomas and the Breakdown Train/Thomas Saves the Day**

And this is where Thomas' character arc comes to its grand conclusion. When James has his accident, Thomas doesn't hesitate to fetch the breakdown train to help him and is properly rewarded for his actions with a branch line and two coaches called Annie and Clarabel. The perfect close to a character arc for the most iconic locomotive in the world; it's only bettered by the CGI version in *The Adventure Begins*.

**Rating:** Excellent (10/10)

## **James and the Coaches/James Learns a Lesson**

Another merger between two stories, and it was probably for the best, especially if you have to work within a 26-episode limit. Interestingly, both stories get roughly equal focus, give or take a

few seconds, and do a good job in showcasing that James has plenty to learn when it comes to handling coaches.

**Rating:** Good (8/10)

### **Troublesome Trucks/Foolish Freight Cars**

You really feel sorry for James being shut up in the sheds following his incident from the previous story, and you feel happy for him when he redeemed himself by handling trucks by himself on Gordon's hill. Not much to say here.

**Rating:** Excellent (9/10)

### **James and the Express/A Proud Day for James**

Out of his books, Awdry claimed that he liked James' the least, saying that it was written to meet a deadline rather than from experience. If he didn't have to meet a deadline back in 1948, who knows what he could've written up for James? But with what we got, I'd say it was fine. Maybe not as compelling as Thomas', but still a good character arc for James and a nice ending with... a rather unusual plot device in the form of a loop line that hasn't been mentioned since.

**Rating:** Good (8/10)

### **Thomas and the Guard/Conductor**

Here's a fun fact for you; growing up, I rarely saw this episode and *Thomas Goes Fishing*, mostly because I didn't have *James Learns a Lesson and Other Stories* for VHS. Even more surprising was that George Carlin's narration was incredibly rare, but thank goodness we have YouTube... if Mattel allows it, that is. Between this and *Thomas' Train*, I think it's the better of the two as a sentient engine leaving their guard behind seems more realistic than leaving their coaches behind. In the books, Henry was somehow illustrated to resemble Gordon (mostly because Dalby was a stubborn simpleton), which frustrated Awdry and he had to invent an explanation as to why Henry had square buffers - he borrowed a spare set of Gordon's. I'm glad Henry being repainted was left out of the TV adaptation, most likely so he'd be easier to identify among the first seven engines.

**Rating:** Excellent (9/10)

### **Thomas Goes Fishing**

"Inspector, can you see fish?" Yeah, it is inevitable that whenever this episode is brought up, this quote and the accompanying music sting are soon to follow, making this a popular meme in the fandom. That aside, it's another near-flawless adaptation of the story with some good humor to boot.

**Rating:** Excellent (10/10)

### **Thomas, Terence and the Snow/Terence the Tractor**

For all the time that Terence had been absent from the series, he was among the characters that I didn't care if he never returned to the show, mostly because I wasn't given much of a

reason to do so. This episode mostly focuses on Thomas being overconfident that he didn't need a snowplough, but the snowdrift he runs into proves why they're important in snowy conditions. It also helps Thomas learn that you shouldn't judge anyone by their looks, a universal message that still holds up to this day, and one that many should take seriously.

**Rating:** Excellent (9/10)

## **Thomas and Bertie('s Great Race)**

I'll always remember this episode while growing up; it was the first story on *10 Years of Thomas and Friends*, and the iconic race between Thomas and Bertie along the branch line always stuck out to me as it also felt like a tour along the line, including the iconic shot of Thomas puffing by the windmill as seen in the classic opening sequence. I've often said it was my favorite of the first season of the show, and to this day, that opinion holds up. No other episode in the classic era will ever top this one in my opinion.

**Rating:** Excellent (10/10)

## **Tenders and Turntables**

Because *Henry and the Elephant* wouldn't be adapted for another eleven years, the green engine was left with practically no reason to go on strike; the reason he did so was because he had been sprayed by a circus elephant (to be fair to Henry, he did startle it by mistake) and was fed up with being laughed at. Gordon and James' reasons for striking were done well, and very amusing to see, although Henry lacking a motivation to strike kind of weakens the impact of the strike itself a little.

**Rating:** Okay (6/10)

## **Trouble in the Shed**

For those who don't know, Edward being said he had "black wheels" refers to the term "blackleg", someone who continues to work during a strike. I guess it was changed to "gray wheels" in America possibly because of concerns of racism, though either way, it does seem a bit hypocritical of James to call Edward "black wheels" since his own wheels are black, but I digress. This episode marks the introduction of another personal favorite character, Percy, and while he doesn't turn up until the third act, he leaves quite an impact when meeting the rest of the engines for the first time.

**Rating:** Good (7/10)

## **Percy Runs Away**

We get to see more of Percy's character following his introduction in the previous story; not only is he shown to be quite cheeky (not dissimilar to Thomas), but he could also be a bit careless and naive back then. Not much to say about this one either. It has a good lesson about taking care in places that may seem unfamiliar to you.

**Rating:** Good (7/10)

## Coal/Henry's Special Coal

Now we've reached the book where Awdry finally decided to deal with the big green albatross that had been giving him grief for the past few years, beginning with this story. While in previous stories, Henry acted alongside Gordon and James (almost similar to them, in fact), here, he's shown to have insecurities regarding his condition and you feel sorry for him because of it, especially with the prospect that he may end up being replaced. Happily, though, he gets a happy ending when given Welsh coal. For now, at least.

**Rating:** Excellent (9/10)

## The Flying Kipper

So here we go with the most acclaimed episode of the first series, and personally... I don't think it really deserves that title. If it's because of the model and set design and the music, I suppose I can understand. But story wise? There's hardly anything happening until Henry has his accident. And even in the original story, there's no foreshadowing leading to Henry's rebuild into a Black Five (I mean, it might've turned out fine if Henry was also given the option for a rebuild, with Welsh coal being a temporary solution and Henry worrying about what would happen if the supply were to run out), and so it felt like Awdry was forcing a rebuild just so he wouldn't have any more problems with writing Henry. Well, that and so he didn't want to kill Henry off for good. Even then, Henry was nothing but a problem child of sorts to the writers; it's no wonder he barely features in the show these days, even though he and Edward deserve to appear as major supporting characters.

If you want to know what Awdry really thought of Henry, look no further than this or *The Sad Story of Henry*. Yes, *The Flying Kipper* is an iconic story in the franchise, but while mediocre film work can be salvaged by an excellent story, great film work is not enough to cover up a bland, insipid story. I know fans have the right to love the episode; I'm just giving my thoughts on the matter.

**Rating:** Bad (3/10)

## Whistles and Sneezes

Looking back, Henry's story arc was a big mess. *Coal* was the only story to properly deal with his issues, and *The Flying Kipper* simply exists to give him a rebuild. I think *Whistles and Sneezes* can work as a standalone story, and it does. That being said, what was a Gordon story (and a Percy story, later held off for series three) doing in the middle of a book about Henry? It almost felt like Awdry didn't care in writing for Henry. This is the last of the mergers for series one, and it was a good one regardless if it had any relevance to Henry's arc.

**Rating:** Good (8/10)

## Toby and the Stout Gentleman/Toby the Tram Engine

Out of the Awdry Seven, Toby has probably got the most tragic backstory. I mean, think about it; he and Henrietta were enjoying their life on their own little tramway, but lorries and buses were taking over their business, leaving Toby and Henrietta with almost nothing to carry. Luckily, a

chance meeting with Sir Topham Hatt and his family on holiday eventually leads into the next story, giving Toby and Henrietta renewed hope. This episode is unfairly underappreciated and deserves to stand out in the classic era.

**Rating:** Excellent (10/10)

### **Thomas in Trouble/Thomas Breaks the Rules**

It's a bit mundane, but a nice way to give Toby and Henrietta's story a happy ending. Plus, the start of a running gag with Sir Topham Hatt and that bothersome telephone.

**Rating:** Good (8/10)

### **Dirty Objects/James in a Mess**

I easily prefer this to *The Flying Kipper* by a long shot. For one, there's more of a story than just an engine pulling a train until he crashes; James is rude to Toby and Henrietta regarding their looks, but Toby gets his own back by reminding the red engine of his bootlace incident (how he knew about it, I don't know either) which only gets James angrier. Secondly, the crash doesn't happen because of plot convenience; it happened because James was being careless and didn't check his trucks at the hill, resulting in the crash, probably the best in the show. It also provides a great message about karma coming back to bite hard when it wants to. Side note: The recreated crash in *Chucklesome Trucks* just looks underwhelming in CGI. You know it's sad when the crash filmed in the model series is better.

**Rating:** Excellent (10/10)

### **Off the Rails/Gordon Takes a Dip**

With just three episodes left in the first series, it's a bit underwhelming that Gordon's book only had two stories adapted for it whilst the others were held back for later seasons - *Leaves for series three*, *Paint Pots and Queens* for series four. I think they should've done the latter as the series finale rather than holding it back since it provides a solid conclusion to Gordon's story arc. Not a lot to say in regards to this episode; it's another solid adaptation teaching the target audience to do what their parents tell them instead of throwing a tantrum and refusing to do so.

**Rating:** Good (8/10)

### **Down the Mine**

Originally filmed as a pilot for the show (the only known evidence of its existence is the shot of Thomas' original model puffing past Knapford on his way to the lead mines), it was reworked to become the penultimate episode of the series, and a solid follow up to *Off the Rails*. If an area is unsafe, don't be naughty by ignoring the warnings. Parents will likely complain about Thomas being a "bad role model for children", but the purpose of Thomas' character in episodes like this is to teach children not to do stupid things (this episode and *Sodor's Legend of the Lost Treasure* are two solid examples of this).

**Rating:** Excellent (9/10)

## Thomas' Christmas Party

Not an ideal choice for the first series finale; if not *Paint Pots and Queens*, then they probably could've done *Mrs. Kyndley's Christmas* and hold this off either for series two or as a standalone special. Or combine both Christmas stories to form a mini- special running at about ten to fifteen minutes. It's not a bad episode overall, but a lot of it felt rushed like a snowstorm happening from out of nowhere and the rescue not having as much detail put into it. Good thing we have a Ladybird book of the same story to expand upon it a little.

**Rating:** Good (7/10)

## Episode Rankings

1. Thomas and Bertie - Excellent (10)
2. Thomas and the Breakdown Train - Excellent (10)
3. Dirty Objects - Excellent (10)
4. Thomas and Gordon - Excellent (10)
5. Toby and the Stout Gentleman - Excellent (10)
6. Thomas Goes Fishing - Excellent (10)
7. Thomas, Terence and the Snow - Excellent (9)
8. Down the Mine - Excellent (9)
9. Troublesome Trucks - Excellent (9)
10. Thomas and the Trucks - Excellent (9)
11. Coal - Excellent (9)
12. Thomas and the Guard - Excellent (9)
13. Off the Rails - Good (8)
14. James and the Coaches - Good (8)
15. Edward and Gordon - Good (8)
16. Whistles and Sneezes - Good (8)
17. James and the Express - Good (8)
18. Thomas' Train - Good (8)
19. Thomas in Trouble - Good (8)
20. Percy Runs Away - Good (7)
21. Trouble in the Shed - Good (7)
22. Edward, Gordon and Henry - Good (7)
23. Thomas' Christmas Party - Good (7)
24. Tenders and Turntables - Okay (6)
25. The Flying Kipper - Bad (3)
26. The Sad Story of Henry - Bad (1)

**Final Season Rating:** Good (8/10)