

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Railway Mechanic Jim

By Rebecca Besser



Five days a week, I start my big white truck and get ready for work. I don't know what I'll be doing each day, because I never know what might break.

My name is Jim, and I am a heavy equipment mechanic for an Ohio railroad. I fix machines needed to keep the railroad running, and keep the

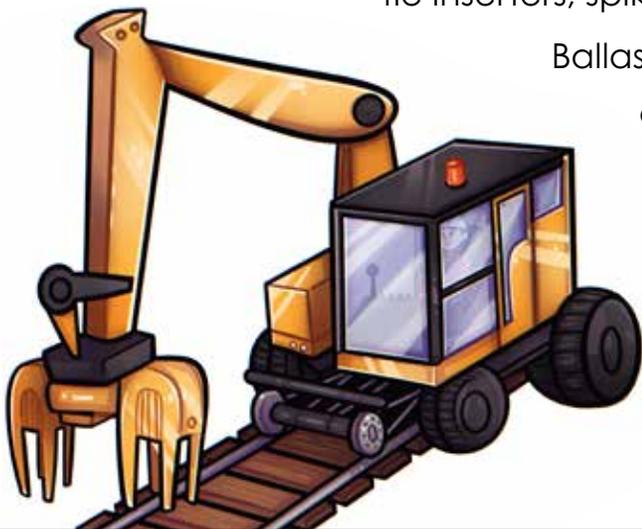


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machine moved to a safer location, where I have the tools to do big jobs.

I work on different types of machinery that do many different jobs. I have worked on ballast tampers, ballast regulators, tie cranes, bulldozers, backhoes, tie inserters, spikers, spike pullers, and air compressors.



Ballast tampers and regulators maintain ballast or a bed of gravel underneath the railroad tracks. Tampers line the tracks and push the gravel back under the ties to keep everything tight and level. Regulators broom the gravel back between the ties and plow gravel up the sides of the ties to keep them tight in the ballast.

Taking good care of the tracks lessens the chances of a derailment, which is when a train jumps off the tracks. This can cause damage to the train, train cars, and track. Derailments cause an expensive loss in goods, and can cause injuries.

Tie cranes pick up railroad ties and put them where they need to be when replacing old or damaged ties. Tie inserters are used to remove and replace ties under the track. The ties hold the railroad tracks in place for the trains to run on.

Spike pullers and spikers pull out and replace the spikes that hold the metal rails to the wooden ties.

Bulldozers and backhoes have many jobs that help the railroad workers



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do their job, and keep the trains going. I am just one worker, but I'm an important piece to the big puzzle that is the railroad.



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## Glossary

**ballast** – layer of gravel below a railroad track, used to keep the track smooth and drain water from the tracks

**rail** – metal part of a railroad track; part of the track the train rolls on

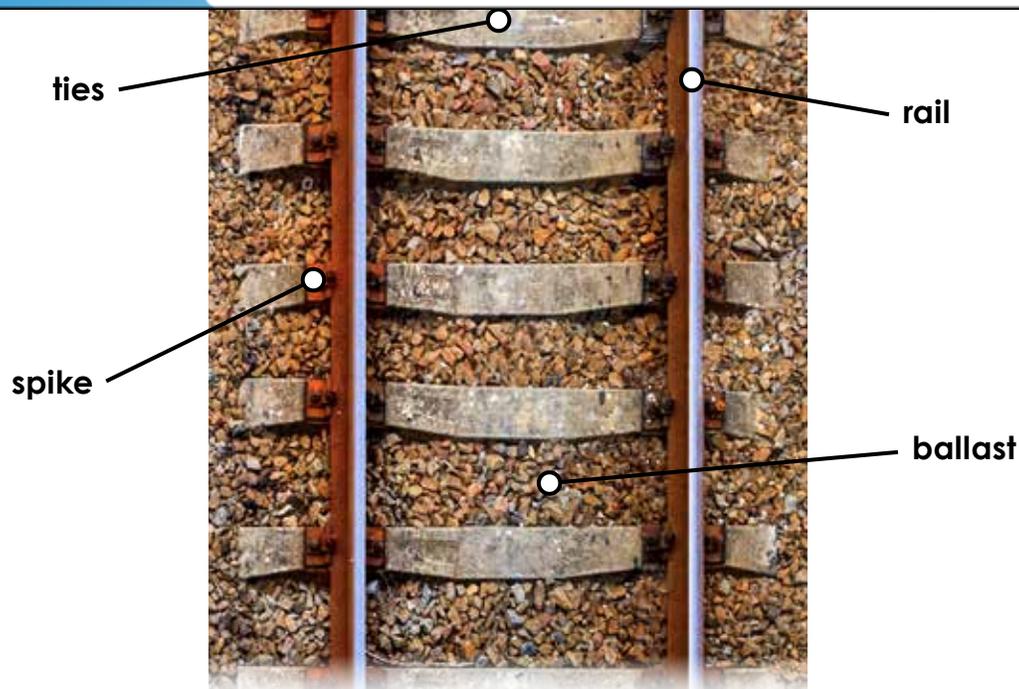
**ties** – wooden base for railroad tracks; metal rails are attached to the wooden ties

**spike** – metal nail or stake used to attach the



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1. What is Jim's job?
  - a. to drive the trains
  - b. to build new railroad tracks
  - c. to fix machines and maintain railroad tracks



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4. Which two machines would be used to clear ditches and help replace ties?  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. What does Jim have to do before he orders expensive parts?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## ANSWER KEY

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5. What does Jim have to do before he orders expensive parts?

**Jim has to ask permission before he orders parts.**

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10. Cassie put gravel in the bottom of her fish tank.
11. Caitlin loves to fix stuff. She wants to be a mechanic when she grows up.
12. The railroad mechanic adjusted the switches on the tracks so he could change the train's direction.