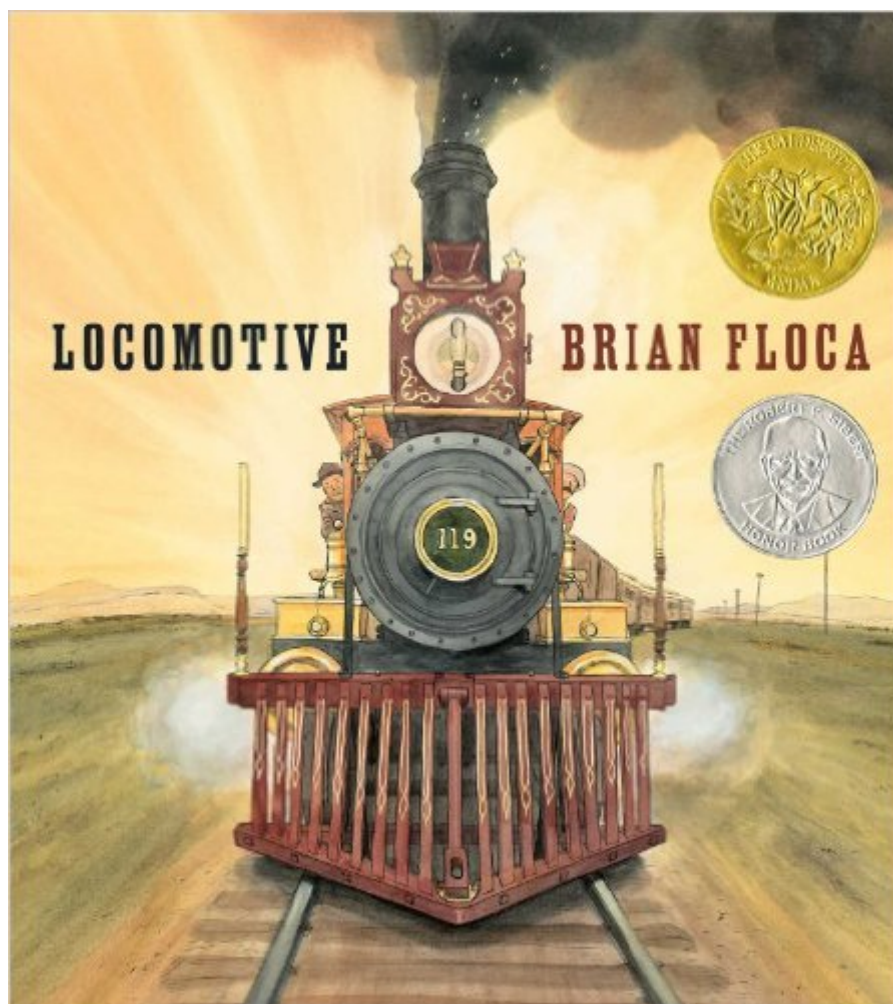


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Locomotive (Caldecott Medal Book)



Synopsis

The Caldecott Medal Winner, Sibert Honor Book, and New York Times bestseller *Locomotive* is a rich and detailed sensory exploration of America's early railroads, from the creator of the stunning • (Booklist) *Moonshot*. It is the summer of 1869, and trains, crews, and family are traveling together, riding America's brand-new transcontinental railroad. These pages come alive with the details of the trip and the sounds, speed, and strength of the mighty locomotives; the work that keeps them moving; and the thrill of travel from plains to mountain to ocean. Come hear the hiss of the steam, feel the heat of the engine, watch the landscape race by. Come ride the rails, come cross the young country!

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 840L (What's this?)

Series: Caldecott Medal Book

Hardcover: 64 pages

Publisher: Atheneum/Richard Jackson Books; First Edition edition (September 3, 2013)

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Product Dimensions: 10.5 x 0.6 x 11.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.5 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars • See all reviews • (342 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #5,903 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #1 in Books > Children's Books >

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Science, Nature & How It Works > Heavy Machinery #13 in Books > Children's Books >

Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > United States

Age Range: 4 - 10 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 5

Customer Reviews

I saw this book at our library on the "new books" shelf and grabbed it for my 5-year-old train-loving son. I just finished reading it to him... I didn't time it, but it took over 20 minutes to read, I am sure. maybe a full half hour? the time went by fast for us, though. we both really loved it. and my 3 year old and 8 year old daughters listened to the majority of it as well. What can I say that hasn't been said in the previous thorough review... I don't have much to add, since I agree with everything in that

review. The pictures were amazing. Very simple, yet at the same time, detailed. I can't explain it! Just right to hold the attention of my three kids through all of the text. And the text itself was also captivating. There was a rhythm to it, but it wasn't at all sing song-y. I don't particularly care for the sing song-y rhyming books. I loved the cadence of this book... it was just the right rhythm to correspond to the rolling rumbling train. The imagery was so wonderful and you really felt like you were there on the long trip. The fact that this book held the attention of my kids despite its length says it all. I do plan to purchase this book... but I wanted to throw my review in the pot immediately! so glad I stumbled on this book!!

This is a wonderful picture book for kids who think they are too old for picture books. It is about the height of mid-nineteenth century technology, the steam locomotive. Two kids and their mother taking the train from Omaha, Nebraska to San Francisco. As they travel, we see what they are seeing out the train windows, we learn about the building of the railroads and the functions of each part of the train. We learn about the jobs of the conductor, the engineer and the fireman and how they keep everything running smoothly. Every part of this book, even the endpapers will have kids pouring over the details. It is part narrative, part geography and part technology. A worthy successor to the author's previous work, "Moonshot".

Many childhood obsessions come down to sheer scale. Whether it's dinosaurs or trucks (the modern, smog belching dinosaur equivalent) or even princesses (adults are large, no matter how you approach them), size matters. But the kids who loves trains hold a special place in every children's librarian's heart. Train lovers are the nerds of the toddler world. They revel in complexity. And as with all obsessions, some kids grow out of them and some become even more enthralled. What sets Brian Floca's Locomotive apart from the pack is the simple fact that not only does his book speak to these older children who never quite let go of their love of the choo-choo, but there is enough unique text in this book to rope in readers both young and old who've never given two thoughts to the train phenomenon. Couching his unique work of history in a you-are-there framework, Floca gives context to a slice of American history too often glossed over. The results, quite frankly, surpass any nonfiction work for children that has ever dared to try and bring to life the power and grandeur of the railroad system."Here is a road made for crossing the country, a new road of rails made for people to ride." As we read these words we are standing in the center of some railroad tracks staring on a beautiful sunny day at the horizon where they disappear. A couple pages cover the creation of those tracks that were part of the transcontinental railway system, and

then we meet our average family. In Omaha, Nebraska, 1869, a family waits for their train. When at last it arrives they board, bound for San Francisco. From here, Floca takes you through every step of this trip. He introduces people like the brakemen or the conductor. He discusses what makes the train run and the places you pass along the way. Everything from toilets and food to sleeping arrangements and rickety bridges are discussed. By the end the family arrives in one piece in San Francisco, grateful to the train but relieved to be off it once more. Backmatter includes an extensive "Note on the Locomotive" as well as a useful listing of various sources. I suspect that on a first glance *Locomotive* appears to be intimidating. Not just in terms of the scope of the outing but also the fact that when you first lift the cover you are presented with two packed pages of information (and those are just the endpapers!). Before your beamish eyes is a map of where the Pacific Railroad ran in 1869, some post-Civil War context, and background on the golden spike. Lift the bookflap and you'll discover an ad for the railroad (Floca is always very careful to completely cover this area of the book, just in case libraries glue that flap down. You would be forgiven for thinking that the back endpapers of the book would be a replicate of the front endpapers . . . and you would be wholly and entirely wrong. At the end you'll find an in-depth explanation of what it is that makes the steam train go. Written sections and diagrams galore. If there is a downside to all this it would have to be the fact that for the skittish, these endpapers seem to make the book seem too old for them. One hopes that they'll flip another page or two and see that, in fact, Floca has taken pains to write in a simple style that can be appreciated by young and old alike. Maybe the title page with its family photograph and telegram from a father urging his family to come west will properly set the stage for the story to come. I stare at one picture in this book in particular. It's not the most awe-inspiring shot you'll find in *Locomotive*. Most people will probably pass it by without a second thought, but I can't stop looking at it. It's an image over the shoulder of either the fireman or the engineer past the engine, down the tracks. You're behind the man and you can see the soft fold of his ear and the tiny hairs all along his jaw line, throat and cheek. It's remarkably intimate, but just one of countless beautiful images spotted throughout the book. Floca has always played with his watercolors, inks, acrylics, and gouache like a master, and what he has done here is not all that different from what he did in his previous book *Moonshot*. In that title, Floca was going for awe. Indeed, he is probably one of the very few nonfiction artists I know of that even dares to attempt to inspire awe in his readership. For *Moonshot* the feeling came from witnessing not just the moon and the earth from space, but the accomplishments of the people who sent the first humans there. In *Locomotive*, Floca replicates both the wonder felt at seeing the trains in all their glory, as well as the awe deserved of those men who built it in the first place. Recently I heard someone comment that

though Brian Floca is appreciated as a master of the watercolor form, he has never been fully appreciated as a writer. That's the long and the short of it all right. From the start of this book Floca has the wherewithal to put his tale in true context. The first people you see in the book are the Chinese workers who helped build the tracks from the East. On the opposite page the Irish and African-Americans who built it from the west (and you're a better man than I if you can keep yourself from thinking about scenes from *Blazing Saddles* at this time). He takes care to note the different ethnicities that were responsible for the transcontinental railroad's creation (as well as the people it displaced along the way). As you read you can't help but taste some of his words across your tongue. He didn't have to fill his book with delicious turns of phrase. The fact that he did is part of what sets this book above its kin. For example, "Hear the clear, hard call of her bell: CLANG-CLANG! CLANG-CLANG! CLANG-CLANG! Hear the HISSSSSSSSSS and the SPIT of the steam! Hear the engine breathe like a beast: HUFF HUFF HUFF!" As odd as it sounds, Floca has created an older nonfiction readaloud picture book for large groups or one-on-one reads. Note too how for all its length, Floca has synthesized the experience of the ride of this train down to its most essential parts. It's not a new phenomenon by any stretch of the imagination, but I am rather interested in a narrative nonfiction technique that Floca uses here that has really taken off lately. Thanks to the rise of the Core Curriculum there's this increase of interest in creating interesting nonfiction. One surefire way of getting the job done? Pull the old *You Are There* trick. This allows the author the freedom of fiction writing within the confines of pure unadulterated fact. Recent examples include *Ick Yuck Eew Our Gross American History* and *You Are the First Kid On Mars* (to name but a few). Floca did something similar when he wrote *Moonshot* a couple years ago, but *Locomotive* takes the format to a whole new level. We are with the kids every step of the journey, but since the children themselves aren't real doesn't that make the book fiction? Not a jot. Because the kiddos are average travelers and because they haven't names or identities, they're representative of the whole. Even better, the book doesn't say what "they" do or "they" see but rather directs its instructions and information at "you" the reader. They are you, you are them, and that makes the whole journey a lot more interesting than it would if you were simply thrown a series of dull, dry facts. There is only one objection that can seriously be lobbed at *Locomotive* at this time. I am referring, of course, to its size. We live in an era where there is an understood and prescribed number of pages for every book we read. Picture books, whether they be fiction or nonfiction, are expected to be 32 pages, 48 at the most. *Locomotive* clocks in instead at a whopping 64 in total. Could it have been reduced and cut? Certainly. A buzz saw could have cut through the descriptions and facts. It's just that the feel of truly riding on this train and experiencing not just the smells, sights,

and sleepless nights of the journey, but also the sheer amount of time it truly used to take the trek across a couple states, would have been gone. There is a method to Floca's madness. He's not being loquacious out of sheer indulgence. He's cultivating a reading experience above and beyond anything else out there. So the second person narrative works in tandem with the number of pages, with the final result that if nothing else a kid is going to look up from this book at the end and understand, maybe for the first time, that just because we can run a girdle around the globe now, time was that a man, woman, or child couldn't just jet set across large swaths of land without ending up a different person on the other side. I don't particularly care for trains. Don't think about them much either. In the 21st century a person could be forgiven for going years without the wisp of a thought of a train ever entering their consciousness. But even as a train-neutral adult I cannot help but find myself caught up in Floca's enthusiasm when I read this book. The transcontinental express changed everything for America, and yet, until now, it has never been properly lauded in a book for children large and small. Locomotive fulfills that need, and then goes above and beyond the call of duty to give its readers the thrill of being there themselves. Would that all works recounting history could be imbued with Floca's wit and sense and scale. It's a big, long, dense book and frankly after reading it you won't have it any other way. Ride the rails. For ages 4 and up.

I have never written a review before, but I just had to after purchasing this book. Mr Brian Floca has done a wonderful job with this book. The story is so well written and the illustrations are beautiful, simply beautiful. What a great way to spend a night riding the rails. He makes you feel like you are right there in the story. This is already going to be a new favorite at my house. I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Floca at my local independent bookstore, for an author event, and I was in awe of his great work. His presentation on how he developed the book was phenomenal. He researched and experienced the locomotive, and you can tell his heart is in this book by the way the story just flows on the pages. This is a keepsake book, the kind you read over and over, and then pass on down through your family. It is not just a book, but a work of art!

I bought this book for my grandson who loves trains. While I didn't read it, my husband, a retired railroader, did and pronounced the book a beautiful book. He and our grandson share their love of trains. The pictures are lovely and the text is well written according to my husband.

Lots of detailed information without being too heavy. My 8-year-old grandson, who likes trains, was overjoyed to get this unique resource.

I bought this book for my two year old. He loves the pictures. As he gets older we will be able to read the story to him. Great book.

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