



Locomotive

Brian Floca

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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!

Locomotive Details

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Author : Brian Floca

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From Reader Review Locomotive for online ebook

Jessica says

Hm. So this is the Caldecott winner from 2013, and I admit that the pictures are amazing. The book is amazing, too, packed with information about traveling across the country by steam train just after the joining of the two great railroads. The format is excellent, and the information is presented in a fun way. But my personal criteria for picture books is that you should be able to read them to children who can't read themselves, and in that respect this book did not wow me. Or my two youngest. My toddler loved the pictures, but there were too many words and they were way beyond his comprehension. My 5yo could have comprehended it, but she lost interest after only a page. The book is appealing to my 9yo, but for his age and reading level it was almost too simplified. That's the trouble with older-skewing picture books, I think: finding the balance between the babies and the big kids, and figuring out how to talk to them.

Manybooks says

As a narrative in and of itself, Brian Floca's Locomotive for all intents and purposes and in general does present and depict a truly wonderful and expressive marriage of text and images (and is thus also and certainly a more than worthy recipient of the 2014 Caldecott Medal), glowingly and intensely, engagingly showing the excitement and eager anticipation of the first transcontinental USA railways, of finally being able to travel in relative comfort and ease by train across the vast stretches of the American landscape, which previously one could only do and achieve with and by covered wagons, stagecoaches, on horseback, and yes, even via ship going all the way around the tip of South America to reach the West Coast of the United States from the East Coast. And as a fan of onomatopoeic texts and verses, I really do so much love love love how the sounds of the locomotive, its hissing, spitting, the black smoke it emits are rendered by author/illustrator Brian Floca not only visually (illustratively) but also textually, how pictures and words both compliment and complement each other (and how sometimes, the illustrations even expand on the narrative with little added touches, such as for example, the shying horse that dumps its rider and takes off in fear as the locomotive approaches, a much understandable equine reaction in fact, as horses are notoriously easy to spook, and the locomotives of the past supposedly truly were generally described as loudly hissing entities, as gigantic beings of noise and might).

Now all the above having been said, and my general appreciation of Locomotive quite notwithstanding, I do find it more than a trifle troubling and worrisome that the disappearance of the vast buffalo/bison herds of the American plains and what happened to the Cheyenne and other native American tribes (the Indian Removal Acts, the basically government sanctioned genocides) are simply and rather haphazardly casually alluded to at best and almost (at least in my humble opinion) presented as being not so much tragedies, not blameworthy and intensely historically problematic occurrences but seemingly seen as a necessary and acceptable result and cost of progress. And furthermore, it is also (and again in my opinion) never really sufficiently pointed out either within the text or via the accompanying illustrations that the construction of, that the building of in particular the railways tracks was dangerous and often backbreaking work, that accidents happened, that many workers were injured and often even killed (for it does seem and a bit unfortunately so that Brian Floca is more interested in and intent on demonstrating and showing the added comfort and convenience of travelling, of finally being able to travel across the United States by train than to also point out and in any even small detail, the more negative aspects of what especially the building of the railway lines and tracks had wrought). Still, I would recommend Locomotive, although I would also most strongly suggest that issues such as the disappearance of the buffaloes, the forcible and generally cruel, horrid and sadly tragic removals of Native American tribes from their ancestral lands, the dangers faced by

the workers constructing and building the railroad tracks really do need to be discussed (and with considerably more detail than Brian Floca has detailed in Locomotive).

And now finally, while I personally have read Locomotive as a Kindle download, as my local library had a simply massively long waiting list (and it would likely have taken months for Locomotive to have become available), I certainly do NOT AT ALL suggest reading this as an e-book (for while the illustrations have survived the transfer of Locomotive to a Kindle format well enough and generally intact, the words, the printed text, they are so minuscule that reading with any kind of comfort even wearing glasses has been pretty well impossible). Two and a half stars, grudgingly rounded up to three stars, as even with my issues concerning the narrative of Locomotive, I have truly loved the illustrations (but while much of the presented text is readable and engaging, what has not been stated, what has been left out by Brian Floca, really does make me cringe and leaves rather a bit to be desired, as with a book on trains published in the 21st century, surely the author can and should be more inclusive and realise that while the construction and use of railroads in the USA was a boon to many and definitely progress, it also had a nasty undercurrent that really should never be forgotten, that must be remembered).

Betsy says

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 HISSSSSSSS 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.

Samantha says

This book is amaaaaaaazing!!! Readers travel west in the summer of 1869 with a family who is hoping to start a new life. Text gives readers tons of information from the sights and the sounds to the machinery and the people who work on the locomotive. Watercolor, ink, gouache, and acrylic illustrations give readers a variety of views from up close details of the locomotive to vignettes of the different stopping points along the trip.

A lengthy note on the locomotive and sources used in writing this book follows the family's journey and endpapers are chocked full of information about the Union Pacific and Central Pacific lines that constructed the transcontinental railroad as well as a detailed view of a steam engine.

This book is a must for train enthusiasts and a book that will appeal to kids who like transportation, history, and learning about how things work. Highly recommended for grades 4th and up.

Kristine Hansen says

This book takes you cross country by someone who certainly knows their stuff. The research into this book (detailed a little bit at the back) was well done and then presented in a way that's easy to read and understand. The sights and sounds and smells are all there, and you come away feeling like you've experience this train ride.

Loves the explanations on the end papers a lot. To an adult who loves history and how things work, this becomes a treasure for them to enjoy as much as the child did the train ride. This wins on all fronts and becomes a favorite. :)

Calista says

Taking a train from East to West and how the country was connected. This is very much about the history of our country and how important trains used to be. It was a trip of a lifetime I assume.

This is very well done, great artwork, nice historical touches. It was a bit long. The kids seemed to lose interest as the story wore on.

Jim Erekson says

This is the first in a pile Lu Benke supplied me of 2014 Caldecott hopefuls.

As a history book (well-sourced), I couldn't help but compare it to Yin & Sontpiet's *Coolies* which did so much to complicate the story of the transcontinental railroad with underlying cruelties and injustices of labor. *Locomotive* did absolutely none of that. In a day when we have access to so many historical tools and lenses, all this book did was celebrate the ride.

There are so many tools writers have to present complicated visual and text narratives. I was disappointed even though this book used a variety of visual techniques, none of them were used to create various paths for the narrative to take. Floca hinted at the possibility with one small mention of the buffalo and Indians. But with no treatment he let this thread go. You don't have to villify America to call into question the ugliness that accompanied the great achievements. We have to continue to own these difficulties, or else we learn nothing from history. Bolden's *Emancipation Proclamation* was very good at challenging the mythology without oversimplifying it into villainy.

Otherwise Floca and the editorial team pulled out all the stops--it was a beautiful visual book. Floca's mastery of watercolor is obvious, and he shows this by presenting a variety of different kinds of images in a believable palette. This is why I rated 3 instead of 2. No designer was credited, which is unfortunate, because it makes me think Floca did all that work. This is possible but shouldn't be in question on a book with this high production quality.

The story was clear and the facts and point of view of taking an early ride were interesting enough that I didn't think it was a waste of time--an enjoyable picturebook. But for a work of *history* to be in contention for Caldecott or Newbery it should do more to provide alternate readings. In fact, the standard of which books should make it into hard cover, full-color process is always a looming question. I don't think 2nd and 3rd rate books should even go to paper printing in our day and age--we should really push on the market so that only the best books get put to paper and all the rest can go to e-devices.

Cheryl says

I've never been a fan of trains, but this points out why they're such an important part of our history, and why everyone should visit a railroad museum at least once in their lives. (Here in Carson City we've a pretty good one, and there are rides on holidays including a 'Santa Train').

It's a long book, and I did not read every word, especially the notes. It's more about riding the train, taking the trip that is so much more comfortable and fast than the covered wagons' journeys that had been the way

pioneer families moved west.

It's less about building the transcontinental tracks, which is fine, because there are already lots of good books about that, for example the stunning *Coolies*. I did learn one thing, though: the meet at Promontory Summit was not planned, as it could have been anywhere, because the two companies were racing to "claim as much of the land, funding, and route as possible."

Rebecca says

Wow. It took me forever to make myself read this because it was always longer than I expected, but I'm so glad I did. What an inspiring journey on an early train! I actually choked up at the page turn onto the Great Plains, with its sudden double-page spread and tiny train. "Here the bison used to roam,/by the hundreds, by the millions." And when night falls:

"Through the night the engine runs.
Those up late hear her whistle,
her wild and lonesome cry.
It echoes on far hills and homes,
it sounds in distant dreams."

I know this won the Caldecott, and the illustrations are stunningly detailed (antlers on the front of the engine!), but the writing is beautiful as well. This may also be the only case where I agree with changing fonts within a story -- it works here. Worth a read for its vivid slice of American history. Includes author's note and Sources.

Marta says

Locomotives are frightening. Locomotives are fascinating.

Huge beasts spouting black puffs of smoke, crossing the vast stretches of land have captured the imagination of many an author. Poland also has a penchant for locomotives and cherishes its tradition with nostalgia. America has a tradition to boast, too, rather understandably so. Brian Floca presents his view on locomotives in his picture book *Locomotive* – a truly thrilling ride around the world of those big machines.

In terms of the organisation, there is no table of contents, subheadings or an index. None of such elements matter – Floca enchants the reader with the story he weaves of beast-like locomotives. The book almost resembles a documentary-style guided tour. An invisible narrator guides us through the book and presents everything there is to know about locomotives, he constitutes the centre of information. The narrator does, however, follow the family travelling cross-country to San Francisco in 1869. Maybe it is the train itself? The book seems like a chronicle of life in the locomotive of people brought together for the duration of the journey. The narrator gradually reveals information stage by stage and even though the book is not divided into individual chapters, information gradually starts to seep through the story in regular portions. Aspects such as the construction and the design of the machine, the crew, historical details are all handled with wonderful clarity and lucidity.

When it comes to print features, the book lets itself on a visual rampage. Font changes from page to page, resembling the commotion on the station or the locomotive's boisterous sounds. The "Chug, chug, chug" sounds are deftly transmuted through the changes of the fonts. The text alters its size or font depending on whether it is the narrator speaking, one of the characters or the locomotive itself... All this conveys a child-like merriment and pleasure, while the author's sense of humour is priceless.

The graphic features seem pretty straightforward. The text introduced by the narrator sometimes also serves as captions, there are no information charts. All factual elements are delivered by dint of a cohesive textual narrative.

The illustrations resemble old-school illustrations that are painted, which contributes to the vintage feel of the whole book. The book is imbued with a dynamic visual style, people seem to be moving as if the illustrations blurred into a film in one's imagination.

Locomotive deservedly became The Caldecott Medal Winner and it should continue to enchant young and adult readers alike. Locomotives have never been more entertaining.

Miriam says

I'm not the target audience for this. I'm not very interested in trains, yet already knew all the basic information and history covered here (probably because they were important to California history). I'm not a child, and even when I was I wasn't a big reader of this sort of informative non-fiction. When I did read non-fiction it was usually about mythology or animals. I'm also not usually a fan of the format with words in funny fonts or speech bubbles in illustrations, because for me they break the illusion of the visual. But if you do like this technique, it is well done here.

Recommended for elementary-schoolers who are into planes and trains and things that go, or history and geography. Fact over story kids.

Debbie says

I see why people love Floca's book. The illustrations of the trains are terrific. As far as train-technology goes, it is way-cool. However, in 2013, couldn't it have been made more inclusive?

The Chinese laborers, for example, are shown in illustrations twice, but never mentioned in the part that children will read. Chinese laborers, some sources say, made up 90 percent of the labor force. When celebrations were held on completion of the transcontinental railroad, they were not invited. When they are mentioned in the author's note in the back, the mention suggests they were simpleminded or superstitious.

On two pages, Floca references Native tribes, but he doesn't provide any illustrations of them. In the author's note he talks about them being resistant to the railroads and to white people coming onto their lands. He could have included some of that information in the pages that children will read.

Rather than being inclusive of two populations who were key figures in the construction of the railroad, we have a celebratory book that could have done so much more to inform readers about that railroad. I have a much longer critique with details at my site:

<http://americanindiansinchildrenslite...>

Before you respond to me here by telling me I ought not fault a book for what it does not do, consider the ways change happens in society. Women didn't like being narrowly portrayed in children's books. They objected, and change happened. This is similar to that.

Marta Michniewicz says

I absolutely loved this book. It is informative, creative and engaging, all at the same time.

The greatest strength of *Locomotive* lies in its wonderful illustrations. Painted with subtle watercolours, the pictures brilliantly convey the spirit of the nineteenth-century USA. Because brown, beige and yellow are the dominating colours, the illustrations remind me of the old, sepia photographs. This is why reading this book felt as looking at old photo album containing actual pictures of the American railroad.

The changing perspective is another aspect of the illustrations that I liked. The best illustration in terms of the use of the perspective is definitely the one on the front of the book jacket. The locomotive is drawn in a way that almost triggers me to step aside in order to avoid the forthcoming train. Throughout the story the point of view is shifting and the readers are continuously moved from standing in the middle of the railway, looking out of the locomotive's window, walking through the crowd in a train station to being a distant observer looking at the rushing train.

The changing size and type of fonts complete wonderfully complete the illustrations. I especially like the "Western" font that reminds me of all the movies about the frontier, cowboys and the Wild West that I saw. Interestingly, these fancy fonts are used primarily to write down the sounds of the locomotive. This, I believe, must effectively draw children's attention.

I also liked all the information about the railway and locomotives provided in the book. Not being a train expert myself, I very much enjoyed discovering all the details concerning the construction of a locomotive. I think that children who only begin to learn about the world would find it even more fascinating.

Josiah says

Artistically, it isn't hard to see why *Locomotive* won the 2014 Randolph Caldecott Medal as the year's "most distinguished American picture book for children". Brian Floca's drawings for the book border on all-time spectacular here and there: the closeup blur of the speeding train as it whooshes down the track; the smear of Western scenery meandering by on the horizon as the iron horse chugs along from coast to coast; the dizzying height of the train's route while it negotiates gorges spanned by trestles, built using unimaginable hours of man labor over a seven-year period. *Locomotive's* illustrations are something special, and the narrative is historically reliable nonfiction for the youth set, not a jot or tittle out of place from start to finish. If you want a deeper appreciation of the sacrifices required to connect our land from California to Massachusetts in nineteenth-century America, or the miracle it was to actually complete the project and unite our states once and for all, *Locomotive* is your book. I doubt many selections would do the job better.

Our story commences with a boy and his family hopping aboard a railway car in Omaha, Nebraska, headed for their new home in San Francisco, California. The noise and hullabaloo surrounding the incoming train is nearly overwhelming, and once onboard, the scenery whizzes by at speeds of which covered-wagon settlers could have only dreamed. The hearty steam engine pulls its full load of passengers across state lines and up mountain ridges, over plain, prairie, and canyon. It's still only 1869, the first year the train ran from coast to coast, but necessity has spurred some clever inventiveness by track builders and engineers, whether it's blasting routes through solid mountain or strategically adding and removing extra train engines when the terrain demands it. The reward for days of constant train travel is arrival at our destination right on time, and a small place in the annals of American history. Travel would never be the same again.

What's important to remember when reading *Locomotive* is how dramatically the advent of the transcontinental railroad shrank our nation. In pioneer times, the same trip that now took a mere four days

was a harrowing, deadly trek that meant months of travel through nature's caustic elements. People often died of disease, starvation, exposure, and exhaustion, dreams of settling a new region in our great land dashed by the cruelty of the grave. But it was these sacrifices by pioneers that gradually led to the U.S. being populated from one end to the other, allowing industrious problem solvers to conceive of and eventually implement the transcontinental railroad. Homage to the contribution of our pioneers is given in a few places in *Locomotive*, such as the following: "Think of those who came before, who crossed in covered wagons, traveling foot by foot, under the beating sun, no water worth drinking for mile after mile." Their willingness to lose their lives and the lives of their precious children to help colonize America is indirectly responsible for the comforts of generations a hundred years later and beyond, and should always be respected and admired. By the conclusion of its cross-country train voyage, *Locomotive* has assisted in furthering that goal.

A far cry aesthetically from Brian Floca's *Moonshot*, *Locomotive* is a successful literary analysis of American culture and engineering, a fine tribute to the brilliance of our forefathers without glamorizing certain questionable elements of the railroad's history. As a nonfiction picture book, *Locomotive* is a valuable teaching tool as well as an evocative read, and I'd probably rate it two and a half stars. My 2014 Caldecott Medal would have gone to Patricia MacLachlan and Steven Kellogg's enormously moving *Snowflakes Fall*, but I can't argue too much with the committee's decision to award it to the excellent artwork of *Locomotive*. It brings back the excitement of life in the American West for all who love those stories, and I'm positive it will continue doing so for years to come.

Dominik says

I certainly liked the edition of this book - hardcover, large format, a big map, many details concerning a historical background and technical issues related to the construction of a locomotive, steam power. There is even a long note on the locomotive and sources used when writing this book - I guess that these are for parents rather than children. Generally, I admire the pictures, the colors and the graphic style. However, I think that there are too many pages with white background which makes these pages look a little bit empty.

The story is not complicated as this is an account of journey from East to West. It is fine, but not gripping as nothing interesting happens on the (rail)road. No adventures, just the locomotive and the road. We can see how much work it requires to keep a locomotive running. And we meet a lot of people during the journey, but they are all anonymous - workers, train crew, passengers. We don't know anything about them. The most important is the locomotive and in my opinion the way it was presented deifies it rather than shows that it is just a machine, a "tool" used by people and FOR people. Here we can see a glorification of technology and progress - let's be careful with that.

On the other hand, we can interpret this book as a victory of mankind over Nature - people are no longer bound by the distance. However, it was occupied with the destruction of environment and native Americans. Even Brian Floca writes that

*Here the bison used to roam,
by the hundreds by the millions.*

*Here the Cheyenne lived,
and Pawnee and Arapaho.*

And if Floca wanted to show the staggering triumph over Nature, he did not succeed. I mean that this victory is pointless - we see that passengers travelling the whole country, but why? Are they looking for a new job? Maybe they have to escape? If so, from what? In fact, from what we see we can assume that they seek a new home, but it is not explained why they do so.

All in all, the book has its pros, but it's also worth stopping for a minute to wonder what were the other consequences of the technological progress.
