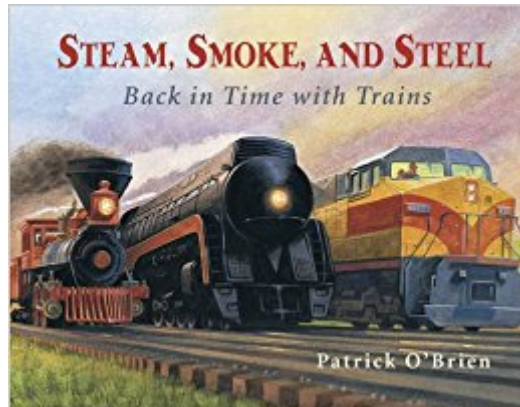




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Steam, Smoke, And Steel: Back In Time With Trains



Synopsis

All aboard! This train travels through history making stops in time to learn about the progress of travel by rail. Hop up into the cab of a speeding modern-day locomotive and look down the tracks into the past. Perhaps these are the same tracks that the diesel-electric locomotives of thirty years ago thundered down, pulling their loads. Perhaps you can see the steam engines of thirty years before that. Watch time unravel and the landscape change as the history of trains barrels through the pages of **STEAM, SMOKE AND STEEL: BACK IN TIME WITH TRAINS**. The first trains puffed great billowing clouds of smoke and showered passengers with burning embers as they sped down the rails at a pulse-pounding twenty miles an hour! By the 1850's, however, trains were traveling much faster, much farther, and much cleaner and train travel contributed to the growth of our nation. Young readers will be fascinated by the exciting -- and sometimes dangerous -- story of trains while they learn about the different kinds of engines, equipment, and jobs necessary for operating trains throughout history. The young narrator introduces readers to trains from the time of his great-great-great-great-great grandfather at the turn of the nineteenth century to his father's train of today, showing the great changes that invention and progress have brought over time. Patrick O'Brien's striking illustrations emphasize the beauty, grandeur, and romance of the train. Detailed and richly textured oil paintings take readers on a trip through time to ride aboard open-air cars, travel through mountain passes, and roar down the rails on high-speed bullet trains. Budding engineers will love getting a glimpse at the past and dreaming about the future of trains.

Book Information

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Age Range: 5 - 8 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

Customer Reviews

For this short history of trains, O'Brien (Gigantic! How Big Were the Dinosaurs?) brings a fictional overlay to a fact-filled presentation. The child narrator comes from a long dynasty of train engineers. Starting with his father (who drives a giant locomotive) and working his way back to his great-great-great-great-great-grandfather ("one of the very first people ever to drive a train in this country"), the narrator describes the generations both of his family and of trains. Both the text and the watercolor-and-gouache illustrations are generous with details, explaining how different types of engines work and identifying specific parts of various trains. Anecdotes dot the narrative. For example, in the 1960s the boy's grandfather hauls a circus train up from Florida; in the 1870s Jesse James and his gang stage a hold-up of the great-great-great-grandfather's train. But the storytelling isn't vivid enough to overcome the limitations of the mannered structure. Only railroad aficionados are likely to hop aboard. Ages 4-9. (July) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

PreSchool-Grade 3-Beginning with a boy's description of his father's job as a locomotive engineer, this book offers a history of railroads through the eyes of the child's ancestors. From his father's modern train, complete with computer controls, readers jump back to the boy's grandfather, who drove a diesel locomotive in the 1960s. They continue back through the years to the youngster's great-great-great-great-great grandfather, one of the first to drive the "brand-new invention called a steam locomotive." Each section starts with a two-page spread with a large illustration of the train from the time period. Each one sits in the same station and has a different cat for observant eyes to spot. Alternate spreads feature more detailed information about these means of locomotion in the various eras. Technology facts are neatly interwoven with reminiscences from various relatives. Great-great-great-grandfather's train was held up by Jesse James; great-grandmother was one of the few women who drove a steam locomotive in the 1930s. In a pleasing conclusion, the boy imagines himself as a grown-up engineer, telling his own daughter about driving a futuristic train. The inventive narrative approach presents plenty of fascinating facts about trains of the past. At the same time it conveys a sense of family pride, as well as respect for earlier days. The fictionalized anecdotes give just enough information for children to get a sense of what it might have been like to ride (or drive) a train over the past 150 years. Steven Engelfried, Deschutes County Library, Bend,

I grabbed this for my little nephew he's almost 4. I thought it would make a great Christmas gift since he LOVES trains. The book has great pictures but the writing is for older kids and there is a lot of it. Probably for ages 8 and up. He just looked at the pictures then tossed the book. Usually we sit down and read them together but it's too wordy and not geared towards small minds.

This is an excellent book that is fun to read and also teaches about trains. The book follows the heritage of a fictional family where every father, grandfather, etc, of the book's main character (a young boy) has driven a train. (One notable exception is his great-grandmother, who drove a train and is the only female in the family line of drivers.) With each family member he discusses what trains were like at that time and how it might have felt to ride one of those trains. The book includes nice illustrations, including labeled ones that explain the functions of various train parts/sections. The book discusses trains from the following eras: 1830s; 1850s; 1870s; 1900s; 1930s; 1960s; and 1990s. The story finishes with the boy envisioning himself in the future, as a dad who drives a train and shares that love with his daughter. Both my sons love this book and I feel the story is compelling and readable.

When my son found this book at the local library, I couldn't wait to write a gushing review. I am really delighted with this book. The more we read it together, the more impressed I am with the author and illustrator. This book is organized so that you go back in time, viewing the trains of earlier and earlier generations. (This is much more interesting than it sounds. Stay with me!) The narrator is a boy who says that when he grows up, he wants to drive a train like his dad. Then we hear about how his dad also wanted to be an engineer because that is what HIS father was, and so forth. We are brought back in time all the way to the earliest American trains (and the boy's great great great great grandfather--kids love the repetition too). The final scene is a futuristic train that the boy imagines driving when he grows up. Every other page spread on the book contains short text about a child wanting to drive trains like his father (or mother in one case!) and a gorgeous illustration of a train. If you look carefully, you'll see that every scene is shown from the exact same vantage point, with the same mountains in the background. Not only do the trains change, but so do the stations, the tracks, and the buildings around them. The illustration style is lush, and every one of these images features a different cat somewhere in the scene. My son loves to search for them. The alternating page spreads contain extended text and additional images about the era of train history

depicted on the previous page. I have read many, many books on trains because my son gobbles up anything we can find on them, and yet I learned many new things from this book. For instance, did you know that when multiple engines are used to pull a train, they are called a "consist"? Or that brakemen on old trains had to run along the tops of the cars to set the brakes on each one manually? The level of detail is not a whole lot greater than most other non-fiction train books for kids, but it seems to find the most unique and telling details. I would recommend this book for any train child ages 3 and up. You won't mind reading this one over and over. For younger children, just read the text on alternating pages and the captions of the pictures on the more detailed sections.

Purchased as a birthday gift for a 6-year old boy who loves trains. According to his mother he loves this book, as does his 2 1/2-year old brother.

My 6 year old read this from cover to cover as soon as he got it. Love it!

This is the one of maybe 10 train books that my son keeps going back to. He's fascinated with the developed of the trains, the improved technology. I totally see a young engineer studying this book, noticing every detail of the improved designs. They may even be thinking, "What next? How can I improve this one day?"

The illustrations in this book are beautiful, and my 3.5 y.o. kid loves it. The text is appropriate, interesting, and is not "too much" as some here have suggested. And if you think it is too much, the writing is close enough to the classic "inverted pyramid" that you can simply truncate the paragraphs as you read it and your kid won't know the difference (unless of course they're reading already). Given the number of mediocre train books out there, this one is a standout.

This is a fantastic little paperback about trains. The cover is nice plastic coated paper, so it wouldn't easily tear. The pages are thick paper, good for tiny fingers. My 4 year old nephew will love it!

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