

Making Railways, Mapmaking and Navigation Intelligible and Interesting to Kids

The Railways. Robert Livesey and A.G. Smith. Stoddart Kids, 1997. 96 pp. \$9.95 paper. ISBN 0-7737-5901-8. *Where Am I? The Story of Maps and Navigation*. A.G. Smith. Stoddart Kids, 1997. 96 pp. \$17.95 paper. ISBN 0-7737-5836-4.

Railways have shaped Canadian political and social history as significantly as advances in mapmaking and navigation have altered relations among nations. Yet history teachers have been faced with the challenge of conveying this awareness to young students who may be more familiar with the information highway than the Intercolonial Railway or Sandford Fleming's system of Standard Time.

Two recently-published books, *The Railways* by Robert Livesey and A.G. Smith and *Where Am I? The Story of Maps and Navigation* by A.G. Smith, have made such concepts meaningful and interesting to young readers. Both writers have written extensively on Canadian history, bringing the subject to life most notably in the Discovering Canada series. Their collaboration here has resulted in yet another successful work which promises to be informative and enjoyable for children.

The Railways conveys in ninety-six pages what many Canadian historians have failed to present in much longer works. It also includes a variety of activities — such as building a model locomotive, solving a switching problem and playing a board game — which will be sure to interest many young readers. The impact of the railway on Canadian transportation, industry, politics and society is presented clearly and effectively. The real strength of this book lies in the authors' ability to include so much detail in such a short space. The reader is taken rather quickly from the actual logistics and functioning of the railways to more difficult aspects involving their impact on the career of John A. Macdonald and other politicians, their impact on the livelihood of native peoples of the Northwest and their impact on the industrial tycoons who financed the project. The final section on four women who influenced, albeit indirectly, the development of the railway, provides fascinating insights comprehensible to most young readers, though overlooked by many Canadian historians. This is not a departure from the traditional interpretation of the railway as the cement of Canadian Confederation — only a more meaningful and accurate explanation of its wider socioeconomic importance.

A.G. Smith's book, *Where Am I? The Story of Maps and Navigation*, adheres to a more chronological approach and does not include as many layers of interpretation as *The Railways*. Rather, it presents the key moments in the development of cartography and navigation from the clay maps of Babylonian times to the satellite-based Global Positioning System (GPS)

developed within the last twenty years. What this book lacks in social and political context it more than makes up for in the detail of its descriptions and illustrations. Another strength of this work lies in its inclusion of non-Western forms of mapmaking and navigation. Fortunately for the reader, Smith has supplemented his discussion of Greco-Roman and European technological advances with reference to the contribution of Arab, Chinese and Norse cartographers as well as the mapmaking techniques of Eurasian, Pacific and Arctic aboriginal peoples. No doubt, young readers will find the birch-bark maps of northern Siberian tribes and south-pointing carriage of ancient China as interesting as Mercator's projection and Harrison's chronometer. The glossary of specific terms is most useful to students who wish to further their knowledge of cartography and navigation.

Both works are richly illustrated by A.G. Smith, whose line drawings complement and enhance the lucid text. A clear asset to any school library, either work could be used as a teaching aid because of the considerable detail of analysis and explanation.

John Meehan is a PhD candidate in Canadian history at the University of Toronto. He has helped prepare several works for publication including a history of Lord Beaverbrook's Canadian years and works on the political implications of North American free trade.

Women in Profile

Scientists. Carlotta Hacker. ISBN 0-7787-0007-0. **Musicians.** Leslie Strudwick. ISBN 0-7787-0031-3. **Writers.** Shaun Hunter. ISBN 0-7787-0007-0. **Political Leaders.** Janice Parker. ISBN 0-7787-0030-5. Crabtree, 1998. 48 pp. \$10.95 paper.

The books noted above are four of a six-part series entitled *Women in Profile* published by Crabtree Press. As the Crabtree catalogue informs us, the *Women in Profile* series is intended for a grade 4 reading level. The books are large in print and format, and include maps, photographs, a bibliography, and an index. All four books are beautifully laid out, with a pleasant flow of text and pictures. Each book begins with a general introduction on the respective theme, followed by six major profiles of notable women plus a number of mini-biographies at the back. The major profile contains biographical sketches and columned sections on key events, background, and quick notes. The text also includes highlighted terms that could prove challenging to a fourth grader, the definitions for which are provided in a glossary at the end of the book.

Young readers undoubtedly will enjoy these colourful and informa-