

Emma and the Silk Train

Julie Lawson

Paul Mombourquette, Illustrator

Kids Can Press (Jun 30, 1997)

\$15.95 (32pp)

978-1-55074-388-3

The derailment of a silk train along the Fraser River in British Columbia in 1927, called the “Million Dollar Train Wreck,” is the basis for this children’s adventure story. A Vancouver Island children’s author brings to life the small town anticipation and excitement of the high-speed trains that carried valuable Chinese silk across the country to markets in New York. Young Emma discovers and captures a bale of silk floating in the river after the wreck, but the current carries her downstream. When she manages to reach a small island, her resourcefulness ensures her rescue.

Illustrator Paul Mombourquette captures all the drama and emotion of the spunky Emma and her worried family, and includes detailed illustrations of the remote town and its inhabitants. A historical note at the end explains why the trains traveled at such a high speed—raw fibers and finished cloth were insured by the hour, and the trains also carried cocoons of perishable live silkworms.

A satisfying selection and a novel method to introduce young children to history and the excitement of the recent past, the book is suitable for listening or independent reading.

SHIRLEY MURRAY (September / October 1998)

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