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Crossing on Time: Steam Engines, Fast Ships, and a Journey to the New World

Maryn Wheeler

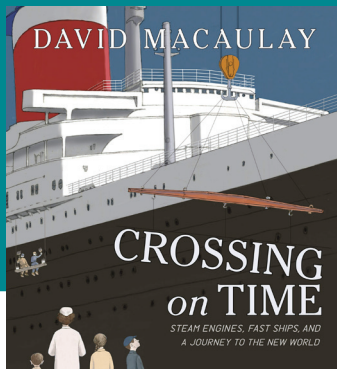
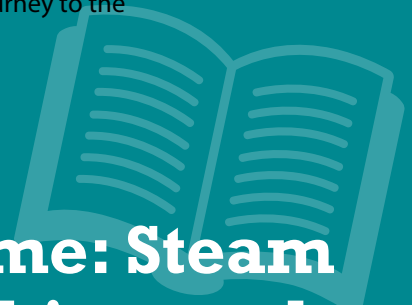
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Book Review

Crossing on Time: Steam Engines, Fast Ships, and a Journey to the New World

Author

David McCaulay

Illustrator

David McCaulay

Reviewer

Maryn Wheeler

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Rating

Excellent

Level

Primary

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Pages

128

Year

2019

ISBN

9781596434776

Publisher

Roaring Brook Press

The SS United States was built for crossings—the crossings of oceans, the crossings of people’s paths, and the crossings of technological limits. The designer and engineer, William Francis Gibbs, dreamed of building the fastest and safest steamship. A passenger, young David Macaulay, dreamed of seeing the Empire State Building as he immigrated with his family to the United States. Their two stories, as well as a century’s worth of industrial ship history, converge with the 1957 Atlantic crossing of the SS United States from Southampton to New York City. Macaulay narrates his personal stories of adventure and Gibbs’s triumphs alongside the incredible feat of high-speed transatlantic ship passage, climaxing at the crossing of his path with the SS United States and its designer.

Known for his technical drawings and details, David Macaulay showcases his strengths in his own personal memoir. Main passages on each page capture the story line while the detailed blueprint-like illustrations and captions explain further mechanical information. The well-written and engaging narrative carries a warmth through the robust explanation of a ship’s specialized workings. Illustrations show various perspectives of ships, stressing the inner workings of power, safety, and comfort. The six-page fold-out, scaled profile drawing of the SS United States, labeling the rooms and features, is truly spectacular. The author also includes photographs, a timeline, and selected reading for further discovery. The afterword discusses the fall of ocean liners to progressing technology, but it advises honoring history and finding new ways to preserve old inspirations. Crossing on Time will delight historians and steamship lovers of all ages.