The Prairie Train by Antoine O Flatharta

This Was A Time...When Trains Were Extraordinary

As a young Irish immigrant boy travels by steam-engine across the American prairie to a new life, memories of the old country pull at his heart.

My Personal Review:
The professional reviews did not prepare me for the poignancy and beauty of this story. The story is of a young boy, forced to leave behind his home, loved-ones, comfort, and security for the unknown adventure of the new world. His link to the known and familiar was a small wooden boat carved by his grandfather. Just as he was beginning to embrace the wonder and awe of his beautiful adventure the boat slips from his hands and is lost forever in the prairie grass. Despite the attempts of parents to comfort him in his loss, the longing for home and things as they were envelope his thoughts and he will not be comforted.

That night his grandfather comes to him in a dream and counsels him, as only a grandfather can, to leave behind the sadness and look forward to the beauty awaiting at the journey’s end. In that brief heart-to-heart talk with his grandfather the boy is lifted and the new day dawns with a fresh resolve to cheerfully move forward.

The story will resonate with anyone who has had to face the unknown or has had to journey to a new world leaving a comfortable world behind. Did I forget to mention there are boats and a train sailing over the ocean and prairie to hold the imagination of a young child? For the young child the loss of the toy boat is a signal that the story is about to take off to new adventures. While my little one understands the loss of a treasured toy he doesn't have the experience to let more subtle concerns interfere with a good story and great pictures.

As for me, it is satisfying to find a book with an underlying message on par with The Little Engine that Could and "I think I can." But this story touches deeper than what the happy little girls and boys on the other side of the mountain can appreciate. Parents and Grandparents will find this a satisfying reading experience with their young explorer. This book gives both the reader and the listener a wonderful feeling, that is, in the words of the inside cover flap, "deeply satisfying."
The artwork is beautiful. The inside covers have a beautiful stylistic map of the journey from Connemara, Ireland to San Francisco.

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