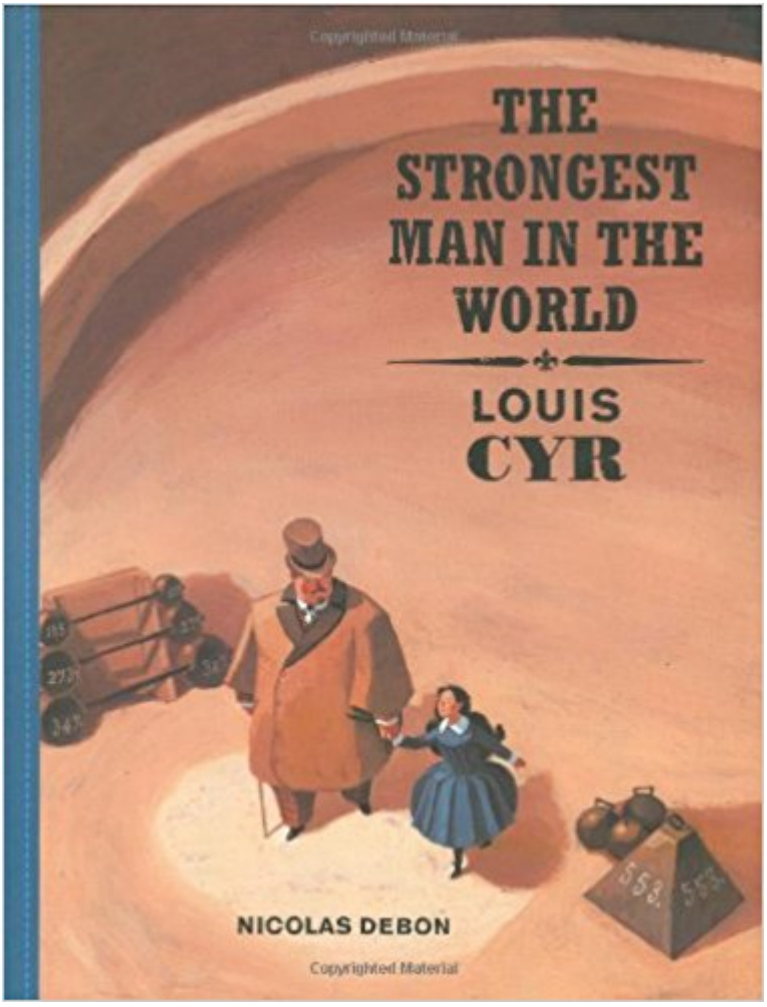
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The Strongest Man In The World



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Synopsis

Strongman and circus owner Louis Cyr captured the worldÃ¢â ¬â„¢s imagination with his remarkable feats of strength and mammoth proportions. Set in Quebec at the turn of the 20th century, this visual biography features the celebrity in his old age, recalling his glory days for his young daughter. In vivid detail he recounts his adventures traveling through Europe performing feats of strength that astounded audiences and remain unsurpassed today. Nicholas DebonÃ¢â ¬â„¢s vibrant illustrations and moving text bring the world of circuses and celebrities from long ago to life for young readers.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 630L (What's this?)

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Age Range: 7 and up

Grade Level: 1 and up

Customer Reviews

Debon proves that it's never too early to fine-tune a child's sense of nostalgia in a story that harks back to the sideshow days of old, when weightlifting ranked among the great spectator entertainments. At the turn of the twentieth century, when Canadian Louis Cyr, "Champion Strongman of the World," is informed that he must retire, he tells his young daughter about his exploits besting challengers with little more than a flex of his awesome physique. Children familiar with modern strongman competitions on ESPN will easily recognize the seeds of such outlandishly fascinating contests here, as burly fellows lift draft horses off the ground and bend iron poles into

pretzels. The artwork, presented in a series of small boxes, graphic-novel style, is colored mostly in hues of orange that contribute to the period feel of the scenes and transport readers to a time gone by. Children will be touched when, following his last performance, Cyr turns his back on the adulation of thousands for the awe of his little girl. Ian ChipmanCopyright Ã Â© American Library Association. All rights reserved

Children’s book.

Louis Cyr was my mother’s great uncle (my great grand uncle I suppose). I heard stories about him when I was a child. It is cool to now find a book that validated those stories - they’re true! What fun to find it out. This is a kids book, though, not what I thought it would be - a history book about my uncle.

Okay people. Fess up. If a teacher tells all the kids in her class that they are now doing projects on famous Canadians and that everyone has to come back with at least one great Canadian hero, what biography would you hand them? Hm? Yeah, see, that’s what I thought. You can’t think of any great biographies of Canadian heroes off the top of your head (and no, Paul Bunyan doesn’t count). The fact of the matter is that Americans know so very little about their neighbor to the North that they hardly ever fret such matters. And truth be told, your child may never be given this assignment. But what if they were? And what if you knew of this super-cool graphic novel style picture book biography about (not to put too fine a point on it), "The Strongest Man In the World"? How cool would that make you? Well sit back and relax, puffins, cause here I hand to you a gem of a book. Chronicling the life of Louis Cyr and written by Canadian/Frenchman Nicolas Debon, this is not your average tale of strength and daring-do. It has heart. It has soul. It has facts. What more could a person wish for then?Emiliana is worried about her father, and she has every right to be. It’s the early 20th century and he has just been told by the doctor that he must retire from public life. And maybe that wouldn’t be the worst thing in the world, but her papa’s not just any man. He’s Louis Cyr, a strongman of great fame and fortune. Owner and creator of the Louis Cyr Circus, Emiliana’s father reminisces with his daughter over his long and remarkable life. Readers see his early days, when he was coached by a grandfather convinced that his grandson would be strong since, "In this tough world of ours, a man without strength is nothing." Then at seventeen he lifted an imported French drayhorse in a contest and his life’s work began. Debon sketches out Cyr’s years, taking into account various challenges and meaningful moments in his life. We see food contests, a brief stint

as a policeman, and finally the European tour that allowed him to follow his dream to start a circus of his own. In the end he must quit the circus life, but as Louis himself says as he leaves, "I've been called the strongest man in the world, and one day somebody else will be even stronger... But maybe the strongest of all is the man who knows how to leave what he has loved with no regret." An Afterword contains photographs and facts on the real Louis Cyr and there is a section of Further Information that includes books for supplemental reading.Debon cleverly uses the character of Emiliana to bring up various rumors associated with Cyr's life that are deftly put down from time to time. I suspect that in Canada such rumors would be better known than here in the states, but it's fun to hear them just the same. Did he really carry off six bandits to jail all at once? No, probably more like one or two. Did he lift a horse when he was just a kid? Not at all. He was seventeen at the time. I was much impressed with the writing in this book, alongside Debon's sense of storytelling. Essentially, what we have here is one great big flashback. But rather than feeling stilted or herky-jerky, the text flows from Cyr's memories of the life he has led. Coming to the conclusion, you get a real sense that this man did exactly what he set out to accomplish. I couldn't help but hope for a Timeline in the back, of course. The Afterword really only touches on some of the aspects of Cyr's life. We don't know why he died or what of. I did find the photographs of him very interesting, as well as the mention that "Remarkably, despite dramatic improvements in strength training and lifting techniques, some of his records remain unequalled to this day." Still, it would have been nice to hear which records those were.Imagine a French Raymond Briggs and you get a sense of what Debon's style resembles. The illustrations here are painted with thick earth-tones. Lots of browns, peaches, and blues are at work. The endpapers of this book display multiple acts that would have performed with Cyr during the height of his circus days. I was particularly taken with John Callahan, described as, "the funniest Clown in the Universe", though he looks anything but. The graphic novel style works within the story Debon is trying to tell. At first I was suspicious of the format, fearing that Debon would rely too heavily on the style rather than the substance of his subject. However, the visual style works within the context of Cyr's tale. If Louis Cyr was larger than life then it only seems fair that a picture book biography should find a technique that conveys all the drama and action of his life from start to finish.I do wish that a little more time and attention could have been given over to Debon's sources, to say nothing of the inclusion of a Timeline. Still, as new biographies go, "The Strongest Man In the World", certainly does its darndest to pack a wallop. Infinitely readable and engaging, it'll have kids all the more interested to learn about early 20th century circus life, and the feats of one man in particular. An engaging, unique little creation.

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