



The Iron Dragon Never Sleeps

By Stephen Krensky

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In 1867, while staying with her father in a small California mining town, ten-year-old Winnie meets a Chinese boy close to her age and discovers the role of his people in completing the transcontinental railroad.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The role of Chinese laborers in building the transcontinental railroads fuels this novel set in 1867; PW praised it as "powerful" and "historically accurate." Ages 8-12.

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From School Library Journal

Grade 3-5-A simply written story about the contributions of Chinese immigrants to the building of the transcontinental railroad. In 1867, Winnie Tucker and her mother arrive in Cisco, California, where hundreds of Chinese workers are massed to dig the Summit Tunnel through the Sierra Nevada mountains. The two look forward to spending the summer with Winnie's father, a mining engineer for the Central Pacific Railroad, who is helping to supervise the work. Winnie befriends Lee Cheng, and their brief meetings give her the Chinese viewpoint on a strike and an explosion that traps her father and his brother inside the tunnel. Though Winnie is an artist in the middle of spectacular scenery, the flat, sometimes choppy, prose conveys little sense of setting. Since the characters sound more like vehicles to impart information than living, breathing human beings, they are not particularly engaging, nor do the incidents of discrimination touch the heart. Judith Eichler Weber's *Forbidden Friendship* (Silver Moon, 1993), set in a Massachusetts factory town in the 1870s, invests more emotion in the costs and ambiguities of an interracial friendship during a strike. Laurence Yep's *Dragon's Gate* (HarperCollins, 1993) offers older readers a compelling picture of the 1867 strike. Still, libraries with a strong need for easy reading on the Chinese immigrant experience may want to consider Krensky's book.

Margaret A. Chang, North Adams State College, MA

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From [Booklist](#)

Gr. 3-5. The role of Chinese Americans in the building of the transcontinental railroad is the subject of this simple docu-novel set in Cisco, California, in 1867. Told from the point of view of a white child, Winnie Tucker, the story focuses on the Chinese immigrant laborers who were forced to work for low pay under harsh and dangerous conditions. Winnie is visiting her mining-engineer father at a tunnel construction site during her summer vacation. She meets a young Chinese worker, Lee Cheng, and as their friendship grows, she gets to see beyond the community racism about strange foreign "celestials." Tension builds when the Chinese strike and then are forced back to work. The plot creaks with contrivances to dramatize the history and teach the moral lesson, but the social conditions are well drawn. This will introduce middle-grade readers to a group of people much neglected in traditional accounts of the "opening up" of the West. *Hazel Rochman*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Christine Kaufman:

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