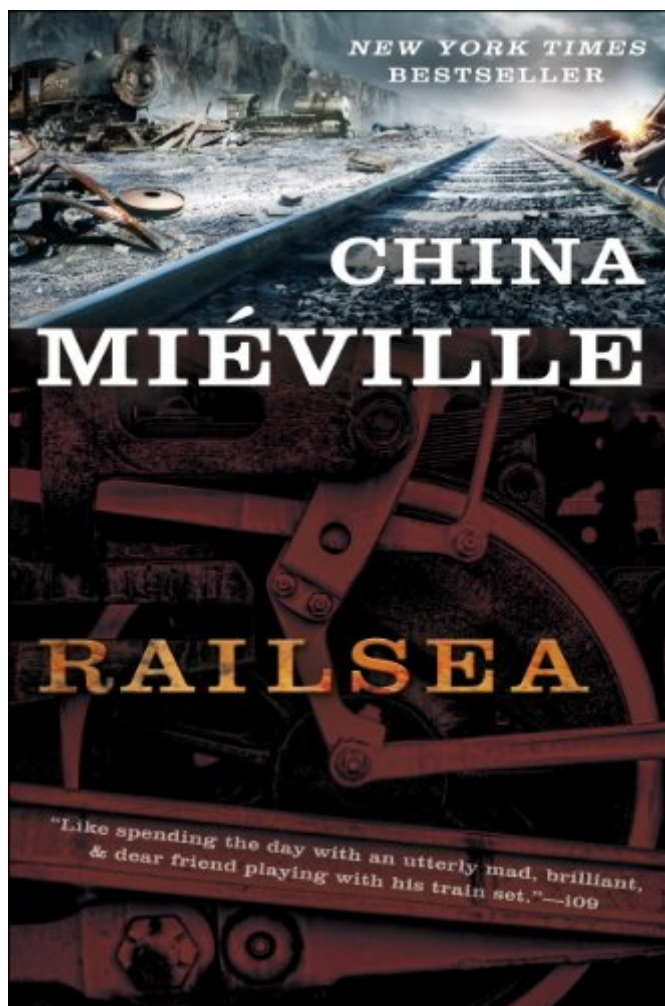


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# Railsea



## Synopsis

“Other names besides [Herman] Melville will surely come to mind as you read this thrilling tale there’s Dune’s Frank Herbert. . . . But in this, as in all of his works, MiŒville has that special knack for evoking other writers even while making the story wholly his own.”

Los Angeles Times “On board the moetrain Medes, Sham Yes ap Soorap watches in awe as he witnesses his first moldywarpe hunt: the giant mole bursting from the earth, the harpoonists targeting their prey, the battle resulting in one’s death & the other’s glory. Spectacular as it is, Sham can’t shake the sense that there is more to life than the endless rails of the railsea even if his captain thinks only of hunting the ivory-colored mole that took her arm years ago. But when they come across a wrecked train, Sham finds something a series of pictures hinting at something, somewhere, that should be impossible that leads to considerably more than he’d bargained for. Soon he’s hunted on all sides, by pirates, trainsfolk, monsters & salvage-scrabblers. & it might not be just Sham’s life that’s about to change. It could be the whole of the railsea.

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER “[MiŒville] gives all readers a lot to dig into here, be it emotional drama, Godzilla-esque monster carnage, or the high adventure that comes only with riding the rails.”

USA Today “Superb . . . massively imaginative.”

Publishers Weekly (starred review) “Riveting . . . a great adventure.”

NPR “Wildly inventive . . . Every sentence is packed with wit.”

The Guardian (London)

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

If it weren't for my having started to read Cloud Atlas, I may have given this 5 stars because it has pretty much all I want from a sci fi novel. Because of the way Railsea is told, I have to be very vague in my review. So I will point out some things I really enjoyed about the book. First, it's an actual novel; not part one of a ten book serial. As a sci fi fan, I kind of miss actual stories with a beginning, middle, and end where the writer isn't so shamelessly trying to get people to read the next book in the series. As I was getting to the end of the tracks, I felt something I haven't felt in a long time with a sci fi novel.. sadness that it's really ending. I really enjoyed the worldbuilding of railsea. On the surface, a world full of rails sounds ridiculous, but it worked for me. The world of railsea is told from the point of view of a boy becoming a man. So the descriptions of this strange world is filtered through a kid's pov; especially the beginning. It's like Huck Finn in the sense that the reader knows more than the narrator; at least about some things. And the plot follows the same character for the bulk of the series without all the tedious side tracks I've come to expect with sci fi. And I know some people had problems with the 'asides' of the author during the story, but I personally enjoyed them. A minor fault with the novel is that the descriptions are not as vivid as they could be. Part of it is because it's filtered through a kid/young man. And part of it is the language of railsea diverges somewhat from standard english, so some phrasing is kinda odd. Things like '&' being used instead of 'and' as well as the incessant double negatives. I had to reread more than a few sentences thinking, 'okay a negative times a negative is a positive, and so I guess this means...' I'm saying the wording is clunky, but so is the world of railsea. I'm not sure if the language of the novel was a net positive or a net negative. More than once, I had the thought that this may be a story that was better heard than read and although I'm not a fan of audio versions, in this case I think I'd suggest it.

Moby Dick meets Mad Max in this China Mieville tale set in a dystopian, future world. This is the

third Mieville novel I've read and by far the easiest to comprehend and enjoy. The City and The City was a challenging work due to its highly original and sometimes confusing premise. Embassytown was just too arcane and dense for me to enjoy. Compared to these two works, Railsea is a piece of cake. In the world of Railsea, today's oceans are replaced with vast planes, crisscrossed by train rails. It is really rather silly, as instead of whaling vessels, we have mole trains, which seek out huge mole-like creatures that can burrow through the ground as fast as a train can travel. Really. In addition to the mole trains, others are salvagers, explorers, still others are "ferro-naval" vessels. Our young hero, Sham al Saroop, begins as a physician's assistant on a mole train, whose Captain (think Ahab) doggedly pursues the great ivory moldyworm (think Moby Dick) that is responsible for her prosthetic arm. But Sham is an explorer at heart and stumbles upon a treasure map of sorts that sends Sham and the train's crew on a great adventure. While entertaining, original and well written, the story is just a little too silly to draw me in completely. It reminds me a little bit of Stephen King's Gunslinger series.

Although this book is written for young adults and I am an old, very old adult. \*Drum roll\* I LOVED IT! Moby Dick references aside, I was captured after the first 650 pages. The first 650 pages were a little rough but that could have been because I have not read science fiction since The Last Question by Isaac Asimov came out in 1956 or was it 1958? Ahh, well. In a weak attempt to be "Fair": China does have a habit of interacting with his reader in a power trip kind of way. I did not mind it. I found it endearing. My book club had different thoughts and fed him to the star-nosed moles. They found his side comments distracting at best and condescending at worst. In closing, (and there is always a closing) I would like the reader to reflect on their thoughts-- their own philosophy that might lead them to think of a person, place or thing every day of their life. We all have our own Whales and Moldywarps that we chase...money, power, education, love or twin souls. Great job on summing up the chase and the motivations behind some of it, China...I am, on some level, better for the reading.

This was a great and (...or &?) weird book. Kind of reminded me of the Edge Chronicles, that kind of total commitment to a setting that's bizarre to the reader but just the way things are to the characters. I also like the idiosyncratic narration although that's a personal-taste thing so your mileage may vary. Reading this book felt like having a really intricate and strange dream; I was a bit sad to finish because I'm still really curious about the setting/what happens next, but in that way

where you know you're not going to get answers and that's as it should be.

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Railsea

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