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I Wish I'd Written? Stop the Train

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I Wish I'd Written

Byline:

Elizabeth Laird chooses Geraldine McCaughrean's **Stop the Train**.

Elizabeth Laird on a tale told with as many twists as a rattlesnake?

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Stop the Train by Geraldine McCaughrean is a book to curl up with when you have the flu, or to make the hours fly on a boring journey.

Set in the Wild West, with intrepid pioneers carving out lives for themselves on the virgin prairie, **Stop the Train** has all the glorious clichés: gun-toting wild men, a Bible-spouting Mormon, a Cherokee chief, a vindictive railroad owner, a florid actor and his troupe, and, most magnificent of all, Miss Loucien Shades, the schoolteacher with the mechanical bustle, dyed red hair, bull whip and heart as soft as the grocer's melted lard, who hugs to her heart a secret so embarrassing? (but you must read the book to find out what it is). And dancing around this parade are the children of Florence, Oklahoma, each with their sorrows and joys and all utterly believable.

This marvellous tale is told with elegance, wit and as many twists as a rattlesnake. The book is so good that it's a crying shame it hides on the children's shelves. Everyone should read it. Everyone who does cracks out laughing, pants in terror as the train nears the girl tied to the tracks and wipes a tear as Cissy yearns for her mother. I wish I'd written **Stop the Train**, but I just don't have what it takes.

Stop the Train by Geraldine McCaughrean is published by Oxford (978 0 19 271881 5, £5.99 pbk).

[image:Liz Laird - web.jpg:left]

Elizabeth Laird's latest book is **Lost Riders** (Macmillan, 978 0 230 52895 6, £9.99) and her new novel, **The Witching Hour** (Macmillan, 978 0 230 73679 5, £10.99), is published in May.



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