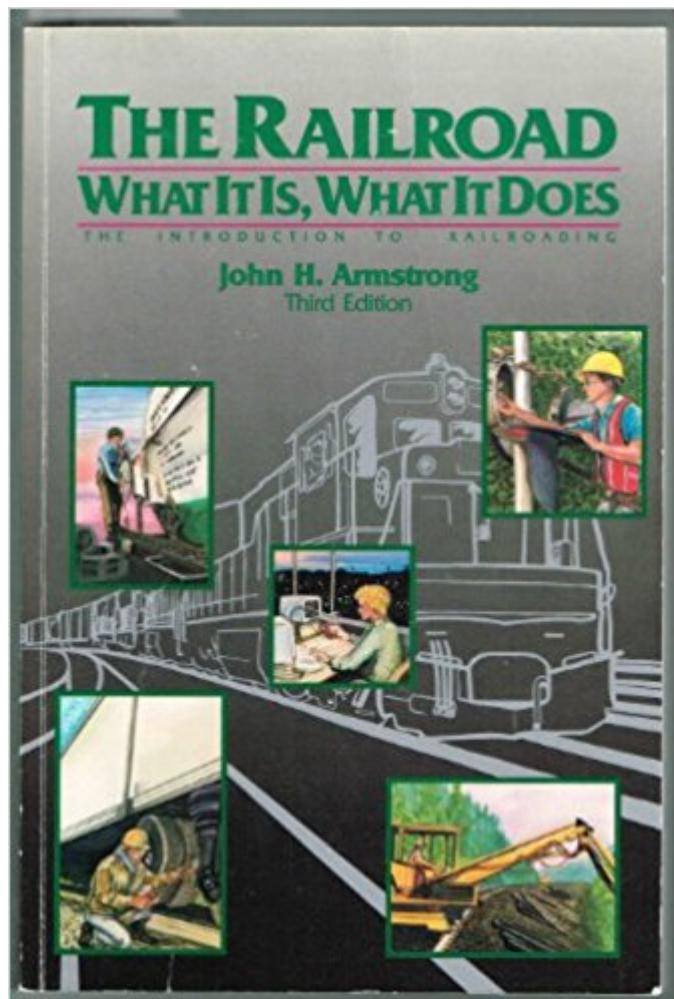


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# The Railroad: What It Is, What It Does



## **Synopsis**

Inside you'll find a comprehensive look at how today's railroads function-from equipment to procedures and marketing to maintenance.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Inside you'll find a comprehensive look at how today's railroads function-from equipment to procedures and marketing to maintenance.

The Railroad: What It Is, What It Does, which has gone through multiple editions and printings, could be the textbook for someone studying for an M.B.A. in railroad administration. It includes much statistical information, such as formulas for calculating the amounts of energy required to move a specified quantity of coal over alternative routes, and for calculating brake ratio. But it is primarily a narrative description of how railroads operate. Although Armstrong's book gives a glimpse of railroad history—for example, the establishment of 4'8" as the standard gauge for railroad track—it is basically a snapshot of American railroad operation in the 1980s. Armstrong describes rails, timber and concrete crossties, tie plates, ballast, curves, banking, and track maintenance. He explains why alternate bolts on a rail joint face in opposite directions. Diesel electric and electric locomotives receive detailed attention, as do various types of freight cars and their structure, capacity, life span, trucks, couplers, air brakes, and suspension. There are photographs of different types of freight cars, and an entire chapter on such special equipment as container cars and piggyback cars. Armstrong describes how trains are assembled in classification yards, how routes are selected (whether a long level route is preferable to a short hilly

route, etc.), how train movement is managed through Centralized Traffic Control, and trackside signals. He explains how railroads compete and collaborate, and such financial matters as car ownership, freight rates, car rental charges, bills of lading, waybills, taxes and government regulations. Reflecting its relatively small contribution to railroad revenue, the book devotes only a single 8-page chapter to passenger trains. Most of Armstrong's books deal with model railroads. In a sense, *The Railroad: What It Is, What It Does* is an elaboration of Armstrong's much shorter guide for model railroads, "Track Planning for Realistic Operation: Prototype Railroad Concepts for Your Model Railroad (Model Railroader)" (3rd Edition) (1998). The Railroad is illustrated with nearly 100 drawings, schematic maps, tables, graphs, facsimiles, and photographs. It includes a 6-page index, and a 7-page list of suggested readings.

John Armstrong is both a railroader and a railroad modeler. He wrote "Railroad: What it Is, What it Does" to help modelers create realistic layouts by understanding how a real railroad operates. But it doesn't matter if you're a modeler: whatever your reason, if you want to know how railroads operate, then this book is for you! Armstrong covers every aspect of railroading. Starting with history as far back as the Roman Empire, he surveys the evolution of rail transport from mining cars on wooden tracks through the "big steel rail". He covers the pros and cons of flat wheels on flanged track versus flanged wheels on flat track, stone ties versus timber ties, steel rails versus iron rails, and all of the engineering issues that go into building a stable, long-lasting track--and that's just in the first few chapters. From there he explains the economic issues that go into deciding where to run the track, how to route the trains, and everything that goes into establishing a railroad operation. Finally he covers all the details: how a consist is put together; the various cars and their construction; the railroad workers and their various jobs. This is one of the few books that leaves me feeling like I know all about the subject. It's incredible how he packs so much knowledge into these few pages! He obviously knows, and loves, his subject. And he writes with a storyteller's flair, so it's more like a novel than a text--I was sorry when it was finished! Do yourself a favor. If you have any interest in trains whatsoever, get this book. You'll read it more than once.

This is a super resource. Our corporation uses it for all of our "newbies" .. so they can understand the basics. I may be partial, because our corporation submitted many of the graphics contained in the book, but it truly is a great primer.

Excellent technical reference

Classic book!

A must have!.

Great book for any level 'Railroader' - easy reading and a great reference!

John H. Armstrong is probably best known for his books about model railroading. This is not one of those books. This is an introduction to the railroad industry.. It covers such diverse topics as to why goods should or could be moved by rail, locomotives, cars, routing, trackage, passenger service, freight service, organization, accounting, profit and loss, operations and a host of others. It is a book about the industry, not models. I don't think models are mentioned anywhere. That being said, it is a very useful book for model railroaders who are always seeking to make their layouts as much like the real thing as possible. This book explains why certain things take place in the real world giving modelers an insight as to how to do the same in their created world. Models aside, this is a great text for anyone who wishes to learn more about this part of the transportation industry.

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