



Susanna Moodie: Roughing It in the Bush

Carol Shields , Patrick Crowe , Willow Dawson (Adapter) , Selena Goulding (Illustrator)

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A subject of fascination for writers like Margaret Atwood and Timothy Findley, Susanna Moodie was a Romantic writer from a celebrated literary family whose life changed forever when she and her husband embarked from England for the backwoods of Canada in 1832. Misled by land merchants, the Moodies discovered that settlement in Upper Canada was far from pastoral, but rather a wild frontier. Utterly unprepared for pioneer life, they soon found themselves starving in a hostile wilderness. With her husband absent in the army during the 1837 Rebellion, Susanna began publishing her writing to feed and clothe her growing family. The result was the novel *Roughing It in the Bush*—Moodie's aggravated and acerbic testament of pioneer life was praised in England but turned her into a controversial figure. Two centuries later she is now honored as an early feminist and literary pioneer.

Susanna Moodie: Roughing It in the Bush brings the words of this controversial yet fascinating woman to life through the insightful personality of Carol Shields.

Featuring an introduction by Margaret Atwood.

Susanna Moodie: Roughing It in the Bush Details

Date : Published April 12th 2016 by Second Story Press

ISBN : 9781772600032

Author : Carol Shields , Patrick Crowe , Willow Dawson (Adapter) , Selena Goulding (Illustrator)

Format : Paperback 152 pages

Genre : Sequential Art, Graphic Novels, Biography, Cultural, Canada, Historical, Biography Memoir, Nonfiction

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From Reader Review Susanna Moodie: *Roughing It in the Bush* for online ebook

Chinook says

to get a paper copy for my daughters when they're older. And it's given me a reading list to pursue: Margaret Atwood, Carol Shields, Timothy Findley, Catherine Parr Trail and of course, Moodie herself.

Madison says

I haven't read *Roughing It in the Bush*, but this made me want to, so in that I think it accomplished exactly what it was meant to. It was a great introduction, but they glossed over a couple of the details that I'm interested in hearing more about, like Moodie's illness and the death of her son. I really liked the illustrations and the accessible formatting.

Wanda says

Wanda's Summer Carnival of Children's Literature

This is an iconic Canadian book—I remember coming across it while doing my degree in Canadian Studies. It is also lauded as a feminist book as Mrs. Moodie had no choice but to become a strong and resourceful woman. If you don't have a taste for 19th century writing or a whole-hearted enthusiasm for Canadian history, but still want to know what all the fuss is/was about, then this graphic novel version is the thing for you!

It's a painless way to get your little bit of Canadian history and determine whether you want to tackle the original book. You certainly see clearly how unprepared this impoverished English gentlewoman and her army-officer husband were when confronted with the Canadian wilderness. In all fairness, many of the settlers coming to Canada were shamefully misled about conditions here and should probably never have come. I have to admire Susanna Moodie—she withstood more trials and tribulations than I have the stomach for. She lost a child, had her house burn down practically around her, and dealt with thieving neighbours and extreme poverty while raising a passel of children. And if this account is accurate, she seems to have retained a fondness for her somewhat inept husband. I did have to smile at her tolerance for native people and escaped slaves, but her dislike and resentment of her American neighbours. Canadians, making a habit out of disliking Americans since the beginning of settlement. (It's just a hobby, American friends, we don't hate you ~~too much~~).

This graphic novel is not based entirely on Susanna's journal—the authors consulted her correspondence, as well as the reports on the archaeological excavation of the Moodie cabin site. Well researched and accurately portrayed.

Kbeckermann says

I may have read the original years ago but that doesn't matter. This is a wonderful introduction to her story, settlement in Ontario, and an open and honest story about what it might really have been like. The writing and the graphics make this a great way for so many people to get a glimpse of what roughing it in the bush really meant.

Laura says

I will start by saying that I have never heard of Susanna Moodie, but then I have not read nearly enough Canadian history. This shows me that I really should. I saw that Margaret Atwood had written the introduction, but I decided I needed no introduction, so plunged right into it.

Going in cold, without any background of Canadian history made this all the more intriguing. Susanna was born an aristocrat in the early part of the 19th century, in the UK. When her father dies, she has no money for a dowry, so must find a suitor who does not care about such things.. She, like most of the upper class, was not taught to take care of herself, or any domestic duties. She wanted to write, and did so. She ends up marrying a retired military officer, but finds that his pay will not support her, so decide to move to Canada, because it is cheaper there. She and her husband are not told that they are really moving into the wilderness, and they will have to do everything early settlers have to do for themselves.

And example of the protagonist at the beginning of the story.

And how she looks after she have moved to the "bush", and lived there for a while:

This reminds me a little bit of *The First Four Years*, but Laura Engles Wilder, but Laura grew up in the wilderness, and did know how to do things, like milk cows, and bake bread. Susanna had no clue how to cook, or do any of these things. And she has to learn, and learn quickly. She does make friends with the local First Nation people, as well as a man of color, who sells her a cow, so she can have milk.

Life is not easy, but Susanna goes into it determined, and it is an interesting transformation. The story follows her life from when she is a young woman to when she is an elderly woman. Through it all she has a sense of humor, and strives on.

Apparently, according to the prolog of the book, this was originally going to be a movie, but it never got made. And once I read that, and saw Margaret Atwood mentioned again, I decided to read the introduction, and learned how important Susanna Moodie was to Margaret, and why she wrote a poem about her, and how others have brought her up in their works.

I really enjoyed reading this. It makes me want to read the original book. It makes me want to read more about Canadian History. It makes me realize how ignorant I am of women writers in the 19th century.

I would highly recommend this book to anyone who is interested in Canadian History, interested in Women's history, interested in writings about what it was really like to live in the bush.

My only problem with this book, and the reason it does not get the final star is that the illustrations sometimes go "off-model" and look wrong, or the poses would look awkward. It is a minor thing, but bugged me.

Thanks to Netgalley for making this book available for an honest review.

Barbara says

I'm almost ashamed that I had never heard of Susanna Moodie before reading this fascinating graphic novel version of a story first told by Carol Shields and Patrick Crowe. Having read this story of a woman of privilege who accompanied her husband to Canada in 1832, I won't forget her soon. The gorgeous, detailed illustrations and lively text show how dismayed she was upon arriving in Canada from Great Britain. Although land there was indeed available and beautiful, domesticating it came at a heavy cost, especially to one unfamiliar with physical labor. Why, Susanna didn't even know how to cook a meal. Not only did she have to deal with poverty, often barely having enough to eat, but she also faced loneliness and isolation as well as prejudicial attitudes. As this account makes clear, were it not for her friendship with some First Nation inhabitants of the area, it's doubtful she would have survived. She had several children and took care of them almost single-handedly after her husband had to return to his military career. Moodie was insightful and used her writing talents to support the family, eventually penning the controversial *Roughing It in the Bush*, which described truthfully and in great detail what it was like to try to survive in the Canadian wilderness. There are as many tragedies as triumphs revealed in this version of her story, but ultimately, the story's very existence is a triumph of sorts, not forgotten after all these decades. For anyone raised on the *Little House on the Prairie* series with their positive spin on life in the wilderness, this one provides a starker version of the experience of early settlers, even while being set in a different geographic location. I found the story compelling, and will seek to learn more about this early feminist.

John of Canada says

I am somewhat embarrassed by my dearth of knowledge of Canadian history. I also don't read enough Canadian authors. I have started a book of interviews with Margaret Atwood that I am loving.

Mattias says

So abbreviated as to give you a basic outline. Now I feel like I have to find a copy of the book so I can know the rest.

Kid Disaster says

As a child I read Laura Ingalls Wilder's books over and over and over again. Susanna Moodie's experiences

in the bush of Canada are the worst times in *By the Shores of Silver Lake* and *The First Four Years*. Except unlike Ma and Pa, Mr. and Mrs. Moodie know nothing about roughing it. It's full of hard lessons.

I have not read the book or graphic novel it is based on, so I can't tell you if it is a true telling.

Susanna comes from a life of servants and attending court, but it seems her family's fortunes are running out. She meets Mr. Moodie at a party, and lucky for her, he doesn't expect a dowry. Unfortunately, they can't afford life in England on an officer's pay, and so they move to Canada.

Of course they were sold a raw deal, and town is more than 10 miles away... Mrs. Moodie has to learn to be domestic, and they still can hardly provide for themselves.

One thing that can be said for Mrs. Moodie is she has progressive ideals. While still in England, she befriended and wrote a history of an escaped slave. In Canada, she befriends the local native tribe, a black man, and even employs an Irish Catholic.

The story is fairly easy to understand, but I would have appreciated more narration in parts. There is a lack of character depth that could have been served with more internal narration. When I read at the end that this was originally made as a screenplay I totally understood why particular scene choices were made.

The intro from Margaret Atwood was a great addition.

The art was pretty well done. I could glean the emotions of the scene from facial expressions. I think the women were all made well, but sometimes they did not look like their character. I had a difficult time telling apart the many white men in vests....

Read on Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

Ariel Caldwell says

I'm glad this book exists, and it's a solid visual introduction to what settler life in Kanata was like. It didn't pull its punches around starvation, isolation, being totally ill-prepared and not mentally fit to be "pioneers", and I appreciated that. I also liked the intro by Margaret Atwood (which helped me feel like Susanna Moodie was worth reading about) and the author's note at the end. I didn't feel like it was a gripping story, but I can see how it would be really useful to help newcomer students to Canada connect to what they learn about in class.

Sardonix says

I had never heard of her til stumbling upon this graphic novel. The art is pretty, Susanna's story is interesting to follow. I could sympathize with her about the black flies. Nice way to learn about some Canadian history.

Erin says

This cross between Jane Austen and Laura Ingalls Wilder makes for another fascinating woman. I would be keenly interested to read Susanna Moodie's actual work.

Nicola Mansfield says

Excellent! This graphic novel comes to us posthumously from a script Carol Shields had been working on. It's an excellent retelling of Susanna Moodie's diary of pioneering in Upper Canada approximately the late 1830s. Concentrating on the hardships and rough life faced by unsuspecting British women who had been promised a better life with their husbands living off the land in Canada. This graphic novel features the most devastating and poignant moments from Moodie's writings to portray the life of one of Canada's first best-selling authors. A most compelling read with wonderful illustrations this brings her pioneering life to drastic reality. I've read the book by Moodie's sister, Catharine Parr Trail, the one that spurred Susanna to write the truth about the harsh land they found themselves trying to survive against, and this has made me more eager than ever to read Moodie's diary. An outstanding addition to Canadian graphic literature.

Chessa says

I loved this! I had never heard of Susanna Moodie before coming across this book in the NetGalley bookshelves for Comics & Graphic Novels - but I'm so glad I found her! This is a fascinating slice of life on a subject I know literally nothing about - the settling of Canada. Susanna grew up fairly well-off in England, but by the time her and her many sisters were of age, their wealth had declined to the point that all the sisters took to writing for a living. After meeting her future husband at a party, they decide their best course of action was to go abroad and settle in Canada. But they were led to believe the land they were moving to was *much* further along in its settlement. This is the story of coming to terms with reality crashing headlong into mistaken expectations.

It is extremely well done. The art really lends itself to revealing the emotions - the loneliness, despair, exhaustion from hard labor - so much is conveyed in one panel. Even though there are many grim moments in the story, you still come away with a sense that this was a woman with a lot of pluck - she put one foot in front of the other and got what needed doing DONE and kept her family alive despite all odds.

I'm feeling particularly grateful for my warm house with food in the pantry after reading this bite of graphic history.

Recommended highly to anyone who enjoys a story of a woman with grit, who is curious about settling the Canadian "bush" in the early 1800s, or who just enjoys history via graphic novel.

Kris - My Novelesque Life says

I come across a graphic novel entitled, *Roughing it in the Bush*, and wondered if it was based on Susanna Moodie's novel by the same name. Yes, it is, but the story is also adapted by Carol Shield (who wrote her

thesis on RIITB)! And, Margaret Atwood wrote the forward (who also wrote her thesis on RIITB, and wrote a poetry collection on Susanna Moodie)! Sold! I would really like to thank Second Story Press in making sure I was able to read this book. After a few technical issues in downloading the eBook, they generously sent me a finished copy in the mail.

Last Fall I read Charlotte Gray's biography on Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill which renewed my interest in the sisters and their writing. (My Review of Sisters in the Wilderness). I have still not read anything by the sisters (but they are definitely on the TBR list) but I have to say I am thinking reading RIITB this summer.

SUSANNA MOODIE: ROUGHING IT IN THE BUSH

Written by Carol Shields and Patrick Crowe

Adapted by Willow Dawson; Illustrated by Selena Goulding; Forward by Margaret Atwood

2016; Second Story Press (152 Pages)

Genre: graphic novels, biography, historical, canada, pioneer, women

RATING: ★★★★★

Susanna Moodie was born in England, the youngest daughter of the Strickland family but first to marry. Susanna met and married John Moodie, a retired officer from the Napoleonic War, in 1831 and then emigrated to Canada in 1832. She was excited about her new adventure but soon found that the land agents lied about the conditions and what they would own. As things seem to get worse her depression increases and her writing takes a back seat. Her sister, Catharine who married John's friend, Thomas Traill also came to Canada but wrote a positive review of Canada in her new book. Susanna angry at this dishonest portrayal decides to write her own book based on her journals.

Like Margaret Atwood said in the forward, having Roughing it in the Bush turned into a graphic novel will spread Moodie's work to other audiences. This is a great introduction for those who are daunted by Moodie's book, and also great for younger audiences. It gives the biography of Moodie, how this book came to be and the book itself.

I loved Selena Goulding's illustrations in this book and will look for more of her works. I liked how Willow Dawson adapted Carol Shields, Patrick Crowe and Susanna Moodie's words. It is a quick and easy read but you come away with Canadian history and an yen to start "researching" on Wikipedia. As a Canadian woman I am very happy to see a brilliant and courageous woman starring in her own graphic novel. I recommend this book to everyone! (I hope many Canadian schools will have a copy in their library!)

I received an eARC from NETGALLEY and PUBLISHER provided physical book

My Novelesque Blog
