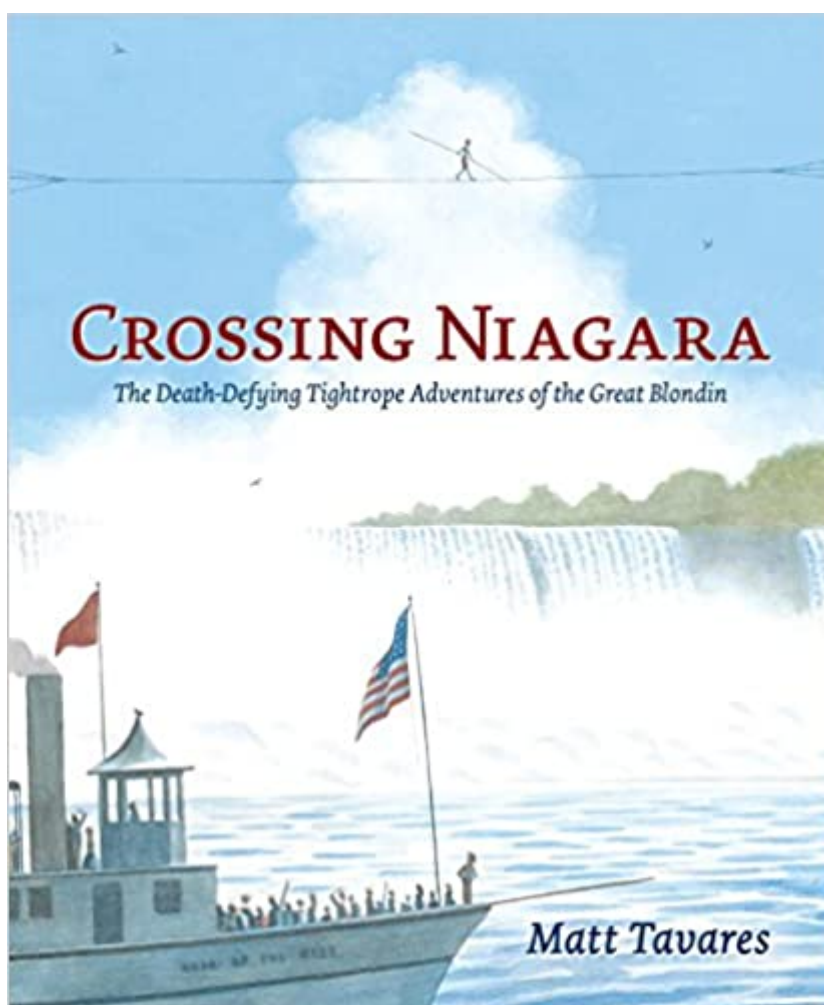


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# Crossing Niagara: The Death-Defying Tightrope Adventures Of The Great Blondin



## Synopsis

Applaud Matt Tavares's latest feat • a gripping tale of real-life daredevilry perfectly balanced by stunning illustrations. "Monsieur Blondin is to cross Niagara Falls this afternoon, or perish in the attempt." • Troy Daily Times, June 30, 1859 When the Great Blondin announced that he was going to walk from America to Canada across the Niagara River on a rope that was more than 1,100 feet long and just 3 inches wide, hanging 160 feet above the raging river, people came from everywhere. Some came to watch him cross. Some came to watch him fall. Some thought he wouldn't show up at all. But he did show up. And he did walk across the river. And then he did something else amazing. He crossed the river on that tightrope again and again, adding another death-defying flourish each time. Matt Tavares's gorgeous, riveting account of the daredevil of Niagara Falls is sure to hold readers in its grip, just as Blondin's feats enthralled those spectators on the cliffs more than one hundred and fifty years ago.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 740 (What's this?)

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Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 5 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #200,862 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #55 in Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Performing Arts #112 in Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Sports & Recreation #123 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > United States > 1800s

Age Range: 6 - 9 years

Grade Level: 1 - 4

## Customer Reviews

Gr 2 • This engagingly illustrated biography of famed tightrope walker the Great Blondin vividly evokes the anxiety and excitement of his awe-inspiring crossings of Niagara Falls. Jean François Gravelet began his career at just five years old and soon became the most

famous tightrope walker in the world, earning the nickname the Great Blondin. After a visit to Niagara Falls with his circus troupe, Blondin was seized by the idea of spanning the great distance between the American and Canadian sides of the falls with his tightrope. His initial success in June 1859 inspired him to do it again and again, adding more elaborate tricks and techniques each time. Tavares focuses very specifically on Blondin's crossings. Although the lack of biographical details may frustrate older readers, it makes the story accessible to those who aren't yet ready to take on more in-depth biographies. This volume will draw inevitable comparisons to Mordicai Gerstein's *The Man Who Walked Between the Towers* (Roaring Brook, 2003) and makes for a great read-alike suggestion. As with his other titles, Tavares's strength lies in his inviting watercolor, pencil, and gouache illustrations, which convey here the majesty of the waterfall and Blondin's achievement, as well as the intensity of the hundreds of people who gathered to watch. Their alternately terrified and excited faces add depth to the story and draw the eye. VERDICT A simple but effective biography about a remarkable talent expressed through striking visuals. — Kristy Pasquariello, Wellesley Free Library, Wellesley, MA

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Tavares's sweeping panoramas and direct storytelling easily transport audiences back to those suspense-filled summer days more than 150 years ago. — Publishers Weekly

Tavares' color palette captures the stunning falls, river, and forested slopes in gray-white mist, pastel blues, and soft greens...A compressed, respectful glimpse at the achievements of a fascinating 19th-century daredevil. — Kirkus Reviews

The extra-large format and several full-page illustrations help young readers grasp the enormity of the Falls, especially when Blondin appears as a tiny figure over the great expanse. Dramatically illustrated scenes also allow readers to understand the difficulty of the task, including the careful preparations, en route maneuvers, and evident relief upon returning to solid ground. This would be an inspirational read-aloud for a unit on dreamers and adventurers — those daunting individuals who somehow make the impossible possible. — Booklist

This book is full of nail-biting fun and is great for a historical look at extreme sports, daredevilry, and family entertainment...The fast-paced prose is just as much fun as the illustrations and manages to shine the light on the Great Blondin's humor as well as his

singleness of purpose. [New York Journal of Books](#) Tavares lovingly depicts the Falls in mist-enshrouded aquas and grays; even when the mighty waterfall is off-stage, the white vapor permeates everything. He continually varies the perspective, sometimes giving the reader a bird's-eye view (as in the vertigo-inducing shot of Blondin holding a bottle aloft with the Maid of the Mist boat far below), at other times composing faraway shots to show the mammoth scope of the surroundings. An author's note and selected bibliography round out this sure-footed offering. [The Horn Book](#) Tavares's narration emphasizes the Great Blondin's showmanship as well as his daring, particularly as he carried his manager on his back on one crossing, as the main section of rope sagged under the added weight and a supporting guy wire snapped...there is compensation in the varied and dizzying angles at which the performer's antics are captured, as well as double foldout spread of multiple stunts. [Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books](#) Readers who like death-defying events will appreciate this gorgeous memoir of Jean Francois Gravelet...The stunning watercolor, gouache, and pencil illustrations magnify the meaning of the story both literally and figuratively. An author's note is included. Students will relish this exciting life story, and school librarians will definitely want to add this to their collections. [School Library Connection](#) The author-artist of "Henry Aaron's Dream" and "Becoming Babe Ruth" puts his considerable gifts for boisterous narrative and lively illustration to good use in this marvelous picture book about the improbable feats of Niagara Falls daredevil, the great Blondin. [The Buffalo News](#) Giving new meaning to the term "daredevil," this highly interesting true story will have readers/listeners hanging on every word. [Books to Borrow...Books to Buy](#) (Kendal A. Rautzhan column)

When I was seven years old, my mother introduced me to the book *Mirette on the High Wire* (I highly recommend it as well) and I fell in love with tightrope walking. For twenty years I believed that feats of fictional mentor wire walker Bellini were pure fiction. Then I studied up on the tightrope walkers of Niagara in preparation for a trip. Imagine my surprise and delight when I discovered that my childhood fiction hero was based on a real person, one whose historical feats were every bit as daring and preposterous as any in fiction. Blondin was arguably the greatest wire walker who ever lived (or at the very least at the top of the top 10). He was the first to conquer Niagara. He crossed so many times that people got bored because he was so unwavering. He stopped midway to cook an omelet; he climbed down to the deck of the Maid of the Mist and back up; he pushed a wheelbarrow, ran, walked backwards, did backflips and somersaults. He had the cheek to offer to carry the Prince of Wales across. And he seems to have been a genuinely decent human being: an

1862 biography ended with this compliment: "He nimbly, bravely walks the rope, Where others fear to tread; New crossing o'er the mighty Falls--Anon high overhead; But, noblest triumph of them all--Amid the world's dark strife, With head erect, and conscience clear, He keeps the Line of Life." (Blondin: his life and performances, pg 144) This book is beautifully done telling the story of Blondin's life, capturing his spunk, document his feats at Niagara, and all done with beautiful illustrations.

I bought this as a gift, and the recipient (a seven-year-old) loves it. The illustrations are beautiful!

Enjoyed this book.

Excellent book with great illustrations. I initially thought the details were being exaggerated and had to do some fact checking myself. Kids are kept at the edge of their seats.

Matt's an amazing author and illustrator. Be sure to check out his other books too!

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