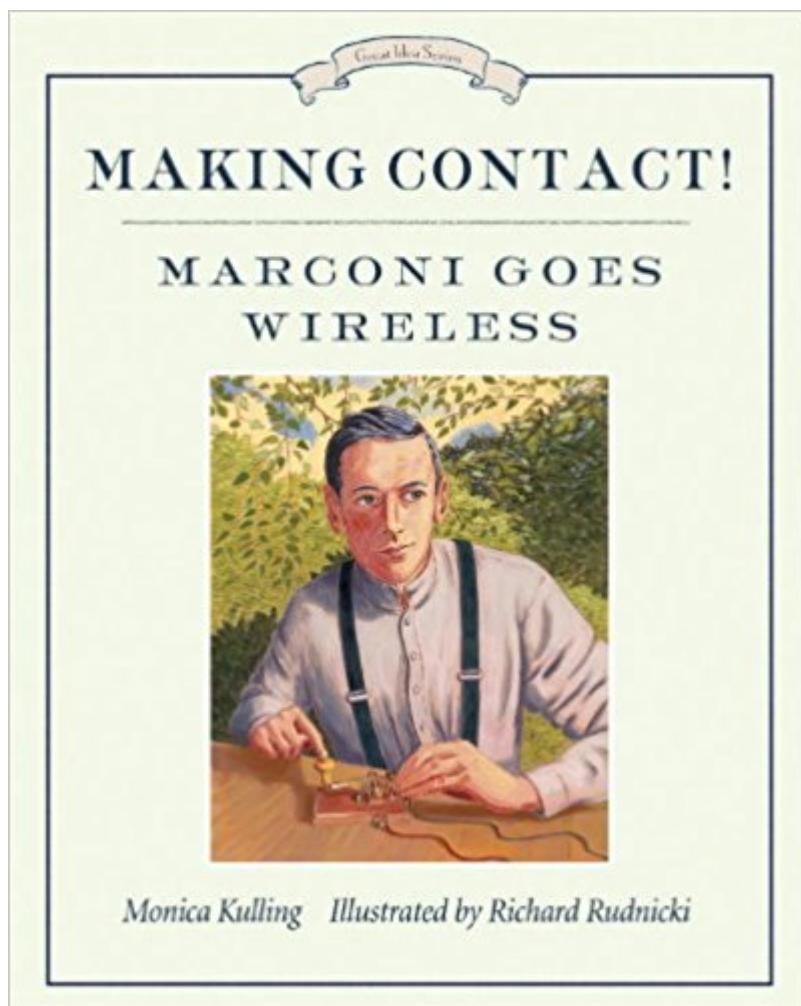


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# Making Contact!: Marconi Goes Wireless (Great Idea Series)



## Synopsis

The fifth book in Tundra's Great Idea Series, *Making Contact!* tells the story of Guglielmo Marconi, who became the father of wireless communication. As a boy, Marconi loved science and invention. Born in 1874 in Bologna, Italy, to a wealthy family, Marconi grew up surrounded by books in his father's library. He was fascinated with radio waves and learned Morse code, the language of the telegraph. A retired telegraph operator taught him how to tap messages on the telegraph machine. At the age of twenty, Marconi realized that no one had invented a wireless telegraph. Determined to find a way to use radio waves to send wireless messages, Marconi found his calling. And, thanks to his persistence, on December 12, 1901, for the first time ever, a wireless signal traveled between two continents. The rest is history. Monica Kulling's playful, informative text, combined with the compelling illustrations of artist Richard Rudnicki, bring an amazing inventor and his times to life.

## Book Information

Series: Great Idea Series

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Age Range: 5 - 8 years

Grade Level: Kindergarten - 3

## Customer Reviews

Gr 2-4 Guglielmo Marconi's childhood fascination with radio waves drove his reading, study, and experimentation. Despite his lack of success in school, he learned from tutors, including a retired telegraph operator who taught him Morse code. Marconi's experiments resulted in devices

to send and receive messages over long distances. By the time he was 21, he had invented a wireless telegraph, which he demonstrated in England. Among the users was Queen Victoria, who communicated with her son on the royal yacht. In 1901, Marconi's device made the first transcontinental wireless transmission when a signal from Cornwall, England, reached St. John's, Newfoundland. Kulling's biography ends with that achievement before Marconi turned 30. Curiously, the only example she offers of how his discoveries influenced the future is the role the telegraph played in events surrounding the sinking of the Titanic. Rudnicki's acrylic illustrations do little to enhance the text. The people seem wooden and their surroundings are static. Still, libraries needing additional biographies of inventors to supplement collections might consider this volume since there is little coverage of Marconi for this audience. —Kathy Piehl, Minnesota State University, Mankato

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This latest entry in the Great Idea picture-book series briefly tells of Guglielmo Marconi's invention of the wireless telegraph. Events in Marconi's life are recounted in a straightforward manner, from his childhood in Italy to his successful attempt to send a wireless telegraph message from England to North America. His determination and the support of his family were the key ingredients to his achievement. The final page details how important the wireless telegraph was to the rescue of survivors of the Titanic. While little detail is given about how Marconi made his invention, or the progression of technology—a poem titled "Radio Days" prefacing the story makes it appear that radio broadcasting was common—it is noted that communication at sea was not possible until this invention. Some of the figures in the illustrations are crudely drawn to the point of distraction, yet this remains a serviceable introduction to a topic infrequently visited for this age range. Grades 2-4. --Randall Enos

Purchased for 3rd grade classroom.

I love picture book biographies and this series from Canadian author Monica Kulling is one of my favourites. This time she features someone more well-known than in the previous books but the invention will be unusual to children of today and yet it will show them the simple beginnings of today's "wireless" technology. Marconi's story is not particularly exciting but it shows the determination of someone who studied for the joy of it as a child (at home, with tutors) and who had perseverance as a young man to realize the dreams he believed in even when they are slow to be

fulfilled. This book brings with it a new illustrator to the series and I just loved Rudnicki's attention to style and detail, especially the patterns and designs on clothing and fabric. Another satisfying entry in the Great Ideas series!

"There was a time all round the world when Radio was queen. She waited grandly in the room for her subjects to gather at her feet. "Give me your ears. Listen," she said. So we sat quietly, hearing stories that took us to other worlds; listening to the sounds of horses' hooves, block hitting block - Clip-clop. Clip-clop. We did nothing but listen. Imagine." (Monica Kulling, *Making Contact*) True story: Long, long ago, in a galaxy far, far away, I was in high school. This was before the time of cell phones and texting. There were only two ways one could talk during class. One, you could whisper, but nuns have superhero hearing, and they could hear a pin drop from the back of the room. If you get caught, you were terrible trouble. Or two, you could pass a note. But nuns have eyes all around their heads, even the ones who wore the full habit (maybe it was x-ray vision?). They saw everything. Always. And if you get caught, you got in trouble. But my friend and I devised a new way of passing messages: we learned Morse code. Whether we sat next to each other in history class, or across the room in Latin class, we used pencils to tap out our messages. On occasion we would receive "The Look," and our pencils would quiet--but only momentarily. My friend and I would share a quirky smile, and begin anew. We always began: S.O.S. Monica Kulling's newest book, *Making Contact!* *Marconi Goes Wireless*, is the fifth book in Tundra's Great Ideas series. Guglielmo Marconi, born in 1874, was also fascinated with Morse code, the language of the telegraph, as well as electric storms and Benjamin Franklin. By age twenty, he was determined to be the first to find a way to use radio waves to send wireless messages. No one believed it was possible. Monica's poetic narrative - a hallmark of all her books - breathes life to this character as she explores the thematic values of determination and persistence. So of course he invests the wireless telegraph, and at age 21. But his story was just beginning. Demonstrating his invention around England, he gained the support of Queen Victoria. He built transmitters that allowed him to send messages ship to shore. Encouraged by this success, he set his sights on a much larger goal: to send a signal across the Atlantic Ocean! Using acrylics on watercolor paper, Richard Rudnicki's characters are full of the same energy. His sweeping landscapes are particularly striking. The middle double page spread of the Newfoundland coastline, with its cold grey colors, whirling storm clouds, and the bright dot of a kite flying in the wind make me shiver with the same awe. Monica's endnote brings the full measure of the power of the wireless telegraph. As the 'unsinkable' *Titanic* struck an iceberg, the telegraph operator sent out Morse code for help: Save Our Ship. S.O.S. If it weren't for Marconi's

wireless telegraph, the Carpathian would not have come to the rescue of the survivors. This book is a wonderful read aloud exploring an interesting piece of history! As for my own epilogue, the old adage is true, use it or lose it. In the decades following my high school days of tapping Morse code, the only words I remember - appropriately - is S.O.S. Save Our Ship!

Making Contact!: Marconi Goes Wireless tells the interesting story of Guglielmo Marconi, who became known as the father of wireless communication.

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