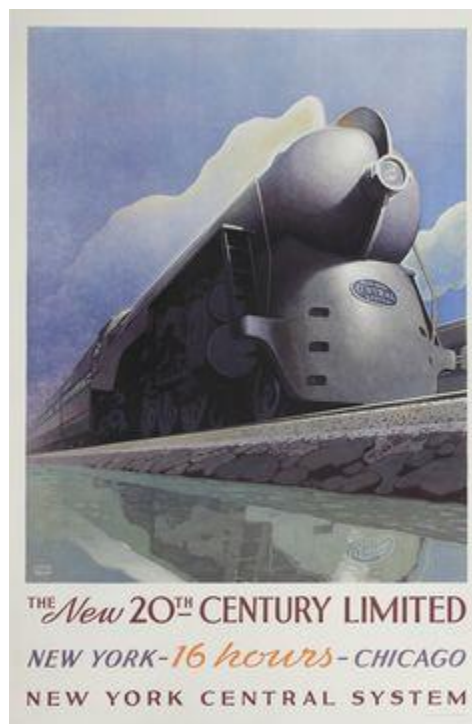# The "Iron Girder" becomes a shirt   by Rick Portune

I love the writing of Terry Pratchett. His satiric fantasy realm called the Discworld has spawned best-selling books worldwide for decades and if you like thoughtful humor that pokes fun at well, everything, then his books are for you too.

Terry's books have been set in the permanent medieval world of the "swords and sorcery" genre for a good long time, but in recent books the author has begun moving his world forward into the pre-industrial revolution era of England. Most recently, his book *Raising Steam* deals with the invention of the steam engine most notably in the form of a railroad locomotive called Iron Girder. Throughout the book, the engine is re-engineered and rebuilt numerous times, becoming faster and sleeker each time. As I read the book for the second time, a picture of Iron Girder began to form in my mind and from that came the need to show my fandom and let's be honest, geekiness, in the form of a T-Shirt.

It starts with an Image

I remembered seeing an art deco era poster of one of the last great steam locomotives called the 20th century. The artwork is old enough to have passed into the public domain so that was my starting point.

Classic Art Deco poster of the 20th Century Limited

The image was just what I wanted – a sleek, powerful locomotive seeming to roar out of the poster. Some work with Photoshop for cropping and touchup to remove the loco's name from the plate in front and I had the image I wanted.

Shirt Layout

I knew I wanted the image and text to be in the 12-14 inch range because that is most common for shirts. There would be several lines of text so I started by scaling the image to 12 inches wide. Wow! – way too tall. It turned out that I needed the image to be closer to 8 inches wide, which gave a height of 10.75 inches and left some room for text.

Next was the actual text. I decided to split the text of the original poster into some above and some below the image but I wanted to keep the feel of the original typefaces. Since I had no idea what fonts were used originally, this step took a fair bit of time and required that I comb through the hundreds of fonts that I have purchased over the years. MS-Word is really helpful here because I was able to type a phrase and then just scroll through all my installed fonts and watch the text change from one to the next until I found a few I liked.

The actual text uses the name of the loco from *Raising Steam*, Iron Girder, plus the fictional destinations listed in the book, Ankh-Morpork and Uberwald. A 16 hour journey? Why not?

The Result

Below is my one-of-a-kind shirt which I think came out quite well (if I say so myself). I wear it around and wait for comments.

The New Iron Girder – Someday…

Sometimes I find a fellow fan and sometimes I find people who at first glance just think I am a classic train buff. A closer examination of the shirt leads to a fun discussion about the works of Terry Pratchett. Either way, the shirt starts conversations and I couldn't ask for more than that.

Create Your Own Special Shirt

Maybe my process will inspire you to imagine a special shirt based on your particular passion. Valentine's day is coming and perhaps you'd like to wear your heart on your sleeve (or chest!). The DTG process is perfectly suited to help in the realization of that special vision. Give us a call and we can help you get there.