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The Polar Express

by Chris Van Allsburg



About the Book

All Aboard!

THE POLAR EXPRESS

On November 10, 2004, this holiday favorite steams into theaters nationwide as the holiday film event of the year! ***The Polar Express*** **film, starring Tom Hanks** and **directed by Robert Zemeckis,** brings with it a whole new series of books that take their inspiration from Chris Van Allsburg's classic Christmas story.

Since its publication in 1985, Chris Van Allsburg's THE POLAR EXPRESS has touched the hearts of millions of readers, young and old. Whether viewed on the big screen or the printed page, THE POLAR EXPRESS is a heartwarming story about the power of belief that resonates across generations and cultures. We invite you to settle in and take a ride on the Polar Express -- it's a journey you won't soon forget.

NEA's Read Across America, Warner Bros. Pictures and Houghton Mifflin invite teachers and students to participate in The Polar Express Reading Challenge. Click here for information and materials.

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Discussion Guide

1. The boy's friend told him that Santa doesn't exist, but the boy continues to believe. Think of a time in your own life that you have experienced this situation. How does it feel to keep firm when other people tell you you are wrong?

2. Notice how Van Allsburg adds to his descriptions of the train ride to the North Pole by comparing one thing to another (give some examples). How does this kind of descriptive language add to the story for you?

3. The boy can ask Santa Claus for anything in the world. Why do you think he chooses a simple bell?

4. Why can the boy and his sister hear the bell while their parents cannot?

5. Why can the boy still hear the bell as an adult, while his sister and friends cannot?

6. What do you think Van Allsburg wants the bell to represent?

Author Bio

Chris Van Allsburg is the winner of two Caldecott Medals, for Jumanji and The Polar Express, as well as the recipient of a Caldecott Honor Book for The Garden of Abdul Gasazi. The author and illustrator of numerous picture books for children, he has also been awarded the Regina Medal for lifetime achievement in children's literature. In 1982, Jumanji won the National Book Award and in 1996, it was made into a popular feature film. Chris Van Allsburg was formerly an instructor at the Rhode Island School of Design. He lives in Rhode Island with his wife and two children.

Visit his website at: http://www.chrisvanallsburg.com/

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