

The Polar Express

by Chris Van Allsburg

Caldecott Honor Winner (1986). A stunningly and magnificently illustrated classic story about believing in the spirit of Christmas, about a boy who rides the Polar Express and the journey he takes to meet Santa Claus.



Read

Before:

Introduce the book and tell the children a little bit about it. Follow that with a comment or question that is related to the story such as, *Have you ever ridden on a train before? Where did you go?* Encourage a discussion so the children can comment, ask questions, and express their feelings. Set the stage for listening by asking an "I wonder" statement based on the cover illustration.

- I wonder how that train got in the middle of the street?

During:

Encourage the children to comment on the illustrations, ask questions, and predict what will happen next in the story. Children gain confidence and a sense of achievement through being able to correctly predict how a story will end. Point out "rare words" (e.g., those words that are not commonly used in every day conversation) and help the children relate the meaning in a way that makes sense to them.

Rare Words in *The Polar Express*

- rustle: to make a swishing sound
- apron: a shield or border around an object, obstructs viewing
- conductor: railroad employee in charge of passengers
- nougat: chewy candy containing nuts
- roamed: to move over a large area, especially without a specific purpose or destination
- scrape: to scratch or rub the surface of something
- barren: lacking in something, having no trees or growing plants
- factories: a building where goods are manufactured
- charged: tense and causing anxiety, excitement or anger
- polar: of or near Earth's poles, surrounding the North or South Pole
- lurch: move violently, to lean or pitch suddenly, swaying from side to side
- cupped: formed into cup shape around the mouth

After:

Discuss the story. Ask questions...

- Where was the boy when the train stopped at his house?
- Where did the train want to take the boy?
- What did the children drink and eat on the train?
- Who can describe what the children saw once they reached the North Pole?
- Who was chosen to receive the first gift?
- What did he want for his Christmas present from Santa?
- What happened to the bell after the boy placed it in his pocket?
- How did that make the boy feel?
- What was the last present that the boy opened on Christmas morning?
- Could his parents hear the bell's sound? Why not?



Do

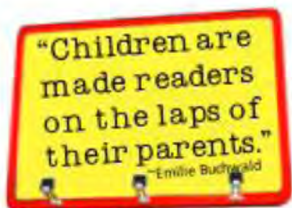
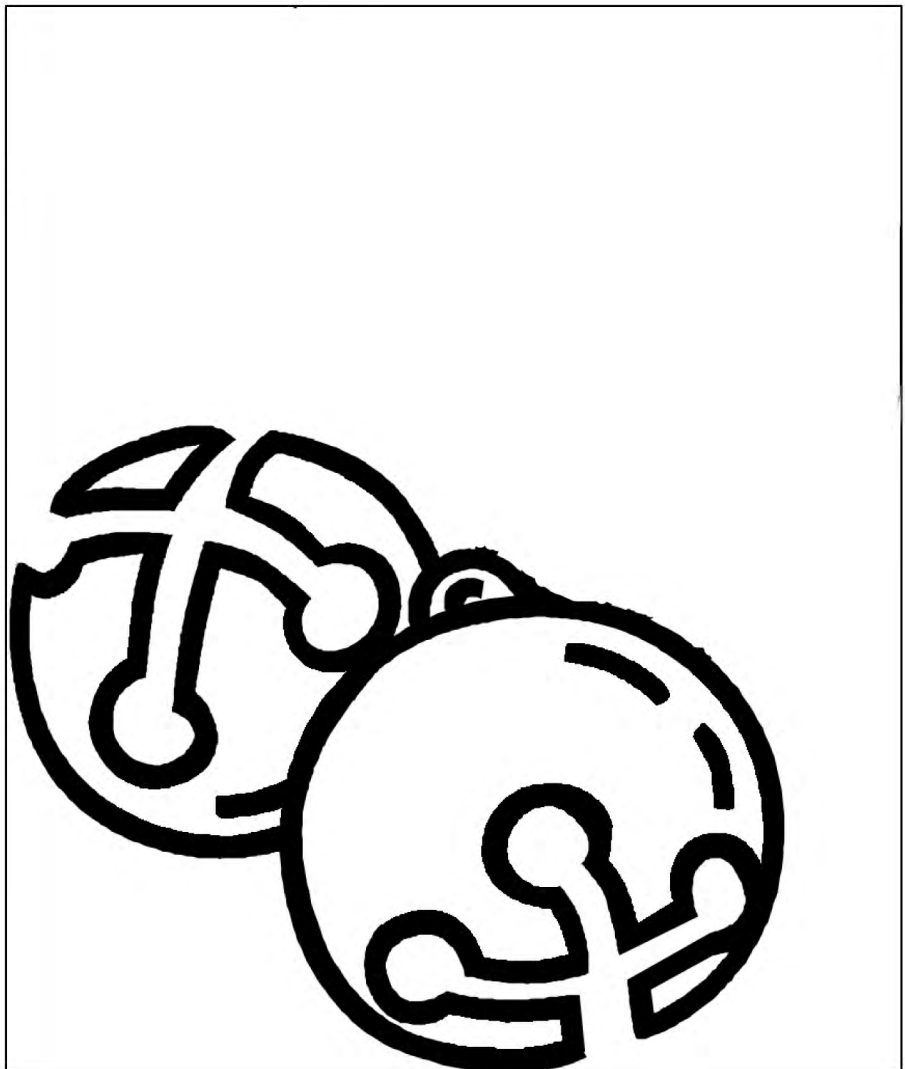
Draw a Bell

After reading the story, hand out the *My Bell* sheet to each child. Read the instructions and help the children complete the bell by drawing in the missing pieces. Once the bell is complete, the children can color the two bells.

My Name: _____

My Bell

Complete the picture on the right by drawing the missing pieces of the bell.



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