

The Polar Express

by Chris Van Allsburg

Beautiful illustrations clearly depict the wonderful journey aboard the Polar Express. Caldecott Honor Book (1986).



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, *Is it cold at the north pole? Did you know that the North Pole is the northernmost point on earth?* 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 fast that train can go in the snow?

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 move with a swishing sound
- insisted: state something firmly in spite of disagreement
- conductor: a railroad employee who is in charge of a train
- aboard: on or in a ship or train
- nougat: a chewy candy containing nuts
- flickered: to shine unsteadily
- lean: having little or no fat and looking muscular
- roamed: to move over a large area without a specific purpose
- wilderness: an area of land that is empty
- plains: a large area of land that is flat
- barren: having no trees or other plants
- harnesses: leather straps fitted to an animal so it can be attached to a cart or sled
- whip: a rope used to strike animals repeatedly
- lurch: to move along unsteadily

After:

Discuss the story. Ask questions...

- Has anyone ever ridden on a train before?
- Do you think you would have been afraid to get on this train?
- Why did the little boy choose a bell from Santa's sleigh as his gift?
- If Santa had chosen you to receive the first gift of Christmas, what would you have picked?
- How do you think the boy felt when he realized he had lost the bell?
- How do you think he felt when he opened the gift and found the bell he thought he had lost?
- Who knows why the little boy and his sister can hear the bell, but their parents cannot?

Do

All Aboard – North Pole!

Simulate a ride to the North Pole by setting up pairs of small chairs in two parallel rows with a center aisle for the imaginary train ride and have cheery winter music playing softly to set the mood. Copy the attached North Pole Ticket printable so each child has their own ticket to check before boarding. In each child's chair, place a warm cup of hot cocoa or a small candy nougat or cookie. Read the book again and encourage the students to tell you of the sights they see as they ride along. Ring your bell to add extra special magic to the part of the book that talks about the bell. Have a great trip!

Source: www.teachingheart.net