

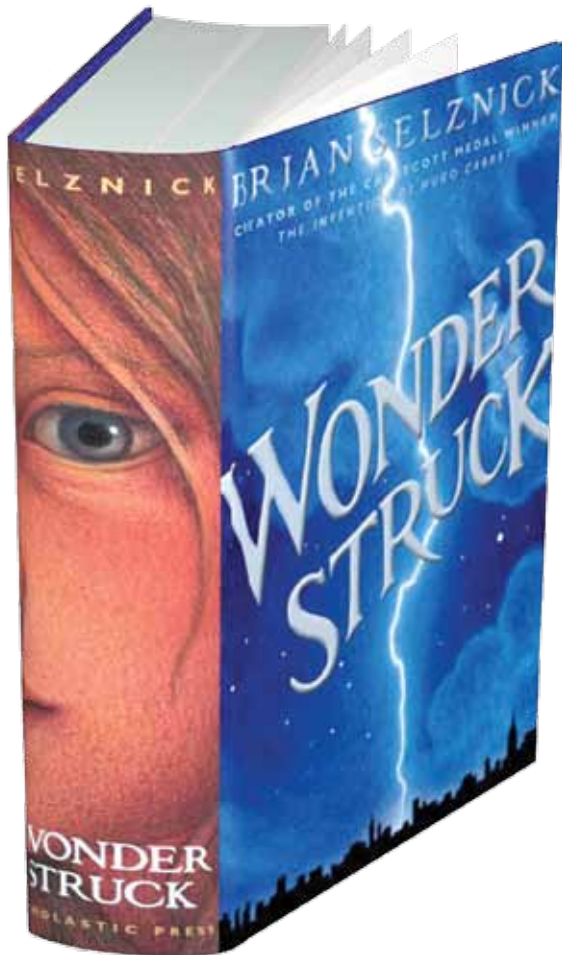
READING GROUP GUIDE

THE AMAZING WORLD OF BRIAN SELZNICK



Welcome to the spellbinding world of Brian Selznick. In *Wonderstruck* and *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, this trailblazing artist and storyteller has reinvented the book, combining elements of the picture book, graphic novel, and film into entirely original reading experiences.

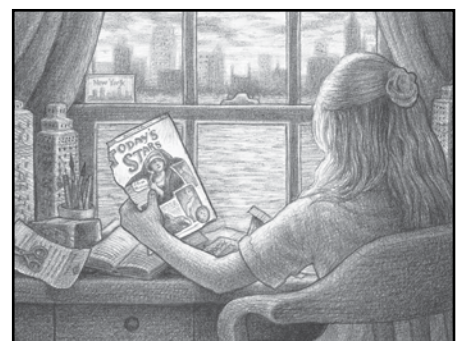
ABOUT WONDERSTRUCK



This breathtaking work of art—an amazing hybrid novel/picture book with over 460 pages of drawings—adds new variations to the structure Brian created for *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, giving readers yet more innovative ways to experience what a book can be. Where *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* offers a single story told in words and pictures, *Wonderstruck* weaves together two independent stories, set fifty years apart. Ben's story, set in 1977, is told in words, and Rose's story, set in 1927, is told in pictures.

Ben and Rose are both trying to find their place in the world. Ben longs for the father he has never known, while Rose dreams of a mysterious actress whose life she chronicles in a scrapbook. When Ben discovers a puzzling clue in his mother's room and Rose reads an enticing headline in the newspaper, both children set out on quests that will change their lives, risking everything to find what they're missing. The mysteries and secrets of their lives unfold in thrilling alternating episodes, until at last their stories movingly intersect and merge. Rich, complex, affecting, and beautiful, *Wonderstruck* is a stunning achievement from a uniquely gifted artist and visionary.

www.wonderstruckthebook.com



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How does Ben feel about living with his aunt and uncle and sharing a room with his cousin? Describe his feelings when he finds Janet in his mother's house at night. Why is he so affected by the locket and the book he finds in his mother's room?
2. What are the early connections between Ben's story and Rose's story? Discuss how those connections—the places where they feel trapped, their loneliness, the storms and lightning—help to illuminate and expand on the individual stories.
3. Discuss the meaning of the quote Ben's mother liked: "We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars." How does the quote relate to each of the stories? How many ways does star imagery come into Ben's story and Rose's story?
4. When do we first learn that Rose is deaf? How does that revelation intersect with Ben's story? Discuss the events that compel each of them to run away. How are their experiences similar and how are they different?
5. Compare Rose's encounter with her mother to Ben's first experiences in New York. Why does Rose run away from her mother? Why does Ben run away from the boy who tries to help him? What draws both Ben and Rose to the museum?
6. Compare the powerful experiences Ben and Rose have with the meteorite Ahnighito and the wishes they make.
7. Why does Jamie lead Ben to the wolf exhibit? Why does Ben decide to trust Jamie, and later, why does he become angry with Jamie?
8. How does the storytelling structure in the book change when Ben finally finds Kincaid's Bookstore? Describe Rose's feelings when she sees Ben and realizes who he might be. Describe Ben's feelings when he realizes his connection to Rose.
9. Discuss Ben's thought that "maybe we are all cabinets of wonders" [p. 574]. What does he mean? What does the Cabinet of Wonders in his father's book and in the storage room at AMNH represent to Ben? Why is he so drawn to the idea of those early museums?
10. Why is it important for Rose to take Ben to the Queens Museum to tell him the story of his father? What does the Panorama mean to her and how does it relate to her childhood? Why does Jamie follow them?
11. Compare Ben's experience during the blackout in Minnesota when he is home alone with the blackout in New York when he is with Rose. What do you think Ben's next chapter will be—staying in New York or returning to Minnesota?

EXPLORATIONS

1. Research what else was going on in the world in 1927 and how the world was changing. What is the importance of the news headline about Lindbergh's victory tour that Rose sees on the street?
www.charleslindbergh.com/history/gugtour.asp
2. Visit the website of the American Museum of Natural History. Check out the information on the meteorite Ahnighito:
www.amnh.org/exhibitions/permanent/meteorites/what/ahnighito.php
Check out the information on the Wolf diorama:
www.amnh.org/exhibitions/dioramas/wolf
3. Read the acknowledgments in the back of the book and learn how the museum changed from 1927 to 1977.
3. Locate Gunflint Lake, Minnesota, on a map. Learn about the area around the Lake. Plan a vacation trip to Gunflint Lake. How would you travel there from where you live? What activities would you engage in while you were there?
4. See photographs of the Panorama at the Queens Museum:
www.queensmuseum.org/exhibitions/visitpanorama

ABOUT THE INVENTION OF HUGO CABRET

In this gripping mystery—a combination of a picture book and a novel that feels like watching a movie—twelve-year-old Hugo lives within the walls of a busy Paris train station. Orphaned and apparently abandoned by the uncle who was once the station clock keeper, he lives by his wits in secrecy and anonymity. But when his world suddenly interlocks—like the gears of the clocks he keeps—with an eccentric, bookish girl and a bitter old man who runs a toy booth in the train station, Hugo’s undercover life and his most precious secret are put in jeopardy. *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* is a stunning, cinematic tour de force from a boldly innovative storyteller, artist, and bookmaker.



Winner of the 2008 Caldecott Medal

National Book Award Finalist

ALA Notable Children’s Book

ALA Best Book for Young Adults

A *New York Times* Best Illustrated Book

A *Publishers Weekly* Best Book of the Year

A *Kirkus* Best Book of the Year

A *Horn Book* Fanfare Book

Quill Award for Children’s Chapter/Middle Grade

New York Public Library 100 Titles for Reading and Sharing

Chicago Public Library Children’s Books for Year-Round Giving

Cooperative Children’s Book Center Choices

NCTE Notable Children’s Book in the Language Arts

IRA Teachers’ Choice

IRA/CBC Children’s Choices

Boston Public Library Julia Ward Howe Book Award

California Literature Council Award for “Groundbreaking Work of Fiction”

★ **“A true masterpiece.”**—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

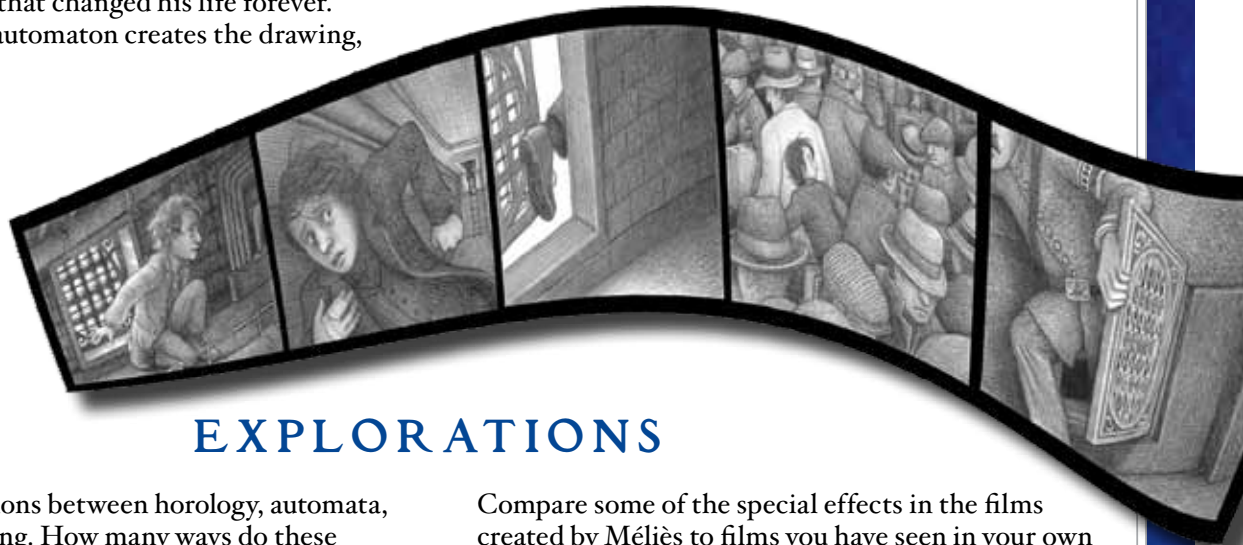
★ **“Complete genius.”**—*The Horn Book*, starred review

★ **“Breathtaking...shatters conventions.”**—*School Library Journal*, starred review

“Captivating...like a silent film on paper.”—*The New York Times Book Review*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Hugo and the old man in the toy booth each accuse the other of being a thief. Are they truly thieves? What has each one stolen? Why does the old man keep Hugo's notebook? Why does he mutter "Ghosts..." when he looks in it? Who are his ghosts and who are Hugo's "ghosts"?
2. Why does Hugo tell the old man his real name and follow him when he leaves the station? Why does the girl offer to help him? Why does the old man give him a job helping in the toy booth?
3. Describe Hugo's memories of his father. Why is the automaton so important to Hugo? Is it reasonable for him to expect a "message" from his father?
4. Compare Hugo and Isabelle. How are they similar and how are they different? How do they need each other's friendship? Why is it hard for Hugo to trust anyone? Why does he feel he has to keep secrets?
5. Why does Isabelle steal Hugo's notebook from her Papa Georges? Why does Hugo steal the key from Isabelle's neck? Why does he tell Isabelle that his father made the mechanical man?
6. The Introduction tells us that Hugo "discovered a mysterious drawing that changed his life forever." When the repaired automaton creates the drawing, how does Hugo's life change? How many other changes occur for characters in the story because of this drawing?
7. Discuss the importance of Etienne, Monsieur Labisse (the bookstore owner), and René Tabard (president of the French Film Academy) to the children. Compare their treatment of Hugo to that of the Station Inspector, the café owner, and the newspaper vendor. Why are certain adults more sympathetic to Hugo and Isabelle?
8. Why does Papa Georges try to destroy his drawings? Why does he call himself a "wind-up toy"? Discuss Mama Jeanne's motivation for saving the drawings and keeping them hidden.
9. What does Hugo mean when he says, "All machines are made for some *reason*... Maybe it's the same with people... If you lose your purpose... it's like you're broken." [p.374] Discuss this comment in relation to different characters in the story. Which ones need to find—or re-find—their purpose?
10. What draws Hugo to the study of magic? Why does he choose magic as his profession? What drew Georges Méliès to filmmaking?



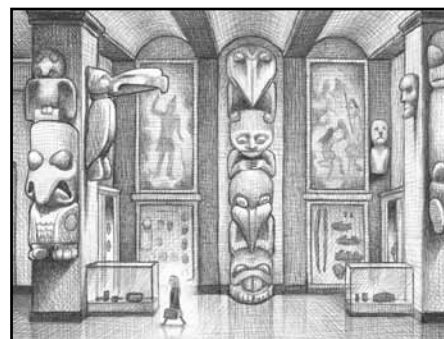
EXPLORATIONS

1. Discuss the connections between horology, automata, magic, and filmmaking. How many ways do these subjects interweave in *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*? Discuss Hugo's statement: "If the entire world is a big machine, I have to be here for some reason." [p.378] How does this belief affect Hugo's actions?
2. Discuss this statement about George Méliès: "He was among the first to demonstrate that film didn't have to reflect real life. He quickly realized that film had the power to capture dreams." [p.355] Learn more about Méliès at the website for *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*: www.theinventionofhugocabret.com/about_georges.htm
3. Research the myth of Prometheus and learn as much as you can about the legendary Titan who stole fire from the gods, his punishment, and his release. Discuss the connection of the myth of Prometheus to both Hugo and Georges Méliès. What does the legend mean to each of them?

TALKING ABOUT THE BOOKS

In *Wonderstruck* and *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, Brian Selznick has created groundbreaking genres—combining elements of novels, graphic novels, picture books, and film—but, in each case, the whole is much more than the sum of its parts.

1. How does the format of these books—the interplay of words and pictures and the sequences of pictures—inform your understanding of each story? Compare the technique in *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* with the technique in *Wonderstruck*. How are these books similar and how are they different? What can the author/artist accomplish best with illustration and what can he accomplish best with text? How do the text and pictures interact? What parts of the books have the most impact on you as a reader?
2. Brian Selznick said in his acceptance speech for the Caldecott Medal that he wanted to create a novel that read like a movie, and he quoted Remy Charlip's comment on picture books: "The secret is in the page turns." In an editorial in *The Horn Book* [March/April 2007], Roger Sutton stated: "A page-turn can be a surprise sprung by the reader, a powerful narrative element that physically involves us in the story. It tells us what power is particular to books." Discuss this comment in relation to the experience of reading both *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* and *Wonderstruck*. Which page turns are particularly illuminating for you?
4. Brian Selznick's editor, Tracy Mack, has said: "Brian weaves his vast and wide-ranging interests (from Houdini to robots to movies) into his work in a way that is both fascinating and accessible. Everything flows together seamlessly. The seeds of an idea he used in one book might flower in another." [*The Horn Book*, July/August 2008] What ideas in *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (and/or earlier Selznick titles) can you see in *Wonderstruck*? Compare the setting of the train station in Paris with the American Museum of Natural History in New York.
5. In the Acknowledgments section of *Wonderstruck*, the author mentions a debt of gratitude to E. L. Konigsburg, author of *From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*, and says there are references to that book in *Wonderstruck*. How many can you find?
6. Compare the themes in both *Wonderstruck* and *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*—e.g., searching for a home, mourning missing or deceased parents, comparing different historical periods, kids making friends, and children finding mentors—with other award-winning books, such as Newbery winners *When You Reach Me*; *Moon over Manifest*; *Bud, Not Buddy*; and *Holes*.



3. Both of these volumes use the cinema as an important plot element. Compare the groundbreaking work of Georges Méliès in the early 20th century to the innovations that changed the cinema during Rose's story in 1927. How does Brian Selznick's interplay of text and illustration affect your understanding of the cinema? Read more about his understanding of the history of cinema on his website: www.theinventionofhugocabret.com/about_hugo_movies.htm
7. Compare Selznick's novels to an earlier Caldecott winner—David Macaulay's *Black and White*—a book about which a *Publishers Weekly* review said: "[It] challenges the reader to use text and pictures in unexpected ways." Compare the ways both Macaulay and Selznick pushed the boundaries of the traditional picture book.
8. Compare Selznick's technique in these two novels to the use of archival illustrations from a time period in Deborah Wiles's book *Countdown*.

OTHER BOOKS TO COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Fiction

Pam Conrad. *Call Me Abnighito*. Illus. by Richard Egielski. HarperCollins, 1995.

An ancient meteor describes long years in the Arctic, where “she” originally fell; then the excitement of being moved to New York’s American Museum of Natural History in 1897.

Pam Conrad. *My Daniel*. HarperCollins, 1991.

In a story that fluctuates between past and present, Julia shares with her grandchildren important memories of her brother Daniel and their early years on the prairie when they discovered dinosaur bones.

Christopher Paul Curtis. *Bud, Not Buddy*. Delacorte, 1999.

A ten-year-old orphan in 1930s Michigan runs away from foster care to search for the man he believes to be his father, based on scraps of evidence left by his beloved mother.

Matthew J. Kirby. *The Clockwork Three*. Scholastic, 2010.

Orphaned Frederick, an apprentice clockmaker, works alone to build an automaton until he discovers that friendship and trust in others can help him reach his goals.

E. L. Konigsburg. *From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*, with a 35th anniversary afterword by the author. Atheneum, 2002.

Claudia and her brother Jamie run away from home, hiding out in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in a story that provided inspiration for Ben’s hideout in the American Museum of Natural History.

David Macaulay. *Black and White*. Houghton Mifflin, 1990.

Four separate stories unfold through distinct illustration styles until they mysteriously converge at the end of this groundbreaking, Caldecott Medal-winning picture book.

Louis Sachar. *Holes*. Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1998.

In this tall tale, Stanley Yelnats’ ordeal at Camp Green Lake and his friendship with Zero intersect with an older story of Stanley’s Latvian great-great-grandfather, his promise to Madame Zeroni, and his legacy of bad luck.

Brian Selznick. *The Dinosaurs of Waterhouse Hawkins*, written by Barbara Kerley. Scholastic, 2001.

The amazing true story of the man who created the very first dinosaur models over 150 years ago.

Brian Selznick. *The Houdini Box*. Atheneum, 2008.

Selznick’s first book, originally published in 1991, explores his love of magic, wonder, secrets, and escapes, fully illustrated with his evocative art.

Brian Selznick. *The Boy of a Thousand Faces*.

HarperCollins, 2000.

A ten-year-old boy, born on Halloween, is fascinated by horror films and all forms of disguise, like those used by Lon Chaney, his favorite movie actor.

Brian Selznick. *Our House*, written by Pam Conrad (10th Anniversary edition). Scholastic Press, 2005.

In six short stories, Conrad takes us into the lives of six kids who live in Levittown, NY during six different decades.

Rebecca Stead. *When You Reach Me*. Wendy Lamb Books, 2009.

Past, present, and future events intersect in the life of Miranda, a sixth grader in New York City, whose fascination for the book, *A Wrinkle in Time*, helps her unravel the mysteries of a lost key, a homeless man, and her quarrel with her best friend.

Clare Vanderpool. *Moon over Manifest*. Delacorte, 2010.

Separated from her beloved dad while he works on the railroad in 1936, twelve-year-old Abilene gradually learns the secrets of her new home and her father’s past through a parallel story of events in the town of Manifest in 1917.

Deborah Wiles. *Countdown*. Scholastic, 2010.

A wealth of illustrative material from the year 1962—news photos, song lyrics, advertisements, posters—provides background for Franny’s personal worries about family and friends during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Nonfiction

Mickey Flodin. *Signing for Kids*. Perigee Trade, 2007.

Fully illustrated, easy-to-follow instructions on learning American Sign Language.

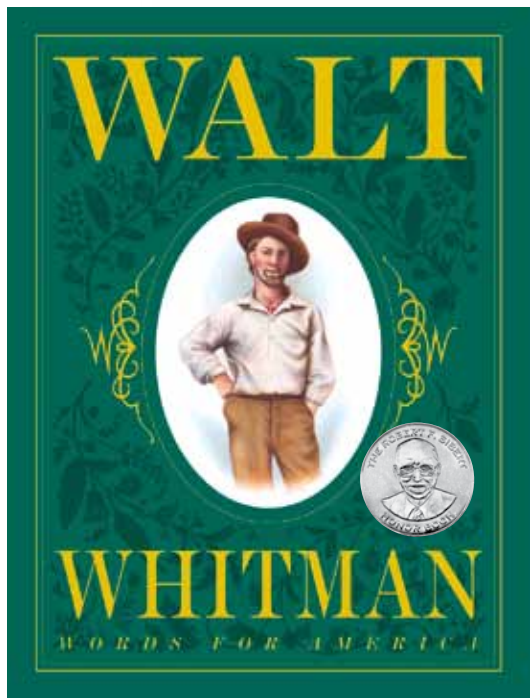
Paul Clee. *Before Hollywood: From Shadow Play to the Silver Screen*. Clarion, 2005.

This overview of early cinema contains information about the career of George Méliès.

OTHER BOOKS BY BRIAN SELZNICK

The Hugo Cabret Companion

Brian Selznick takes readers on an intimate tour of the movie-making process as his Caldecott Award–winning book, *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, is turned into a 3-D major motion picture by Academy Award–winning director, Martin Scorsese. Lavishly illustrated with full-color photographs from the movie, and filled with fun, informative interviews of cast and crew, comparisons of artwork from the book alongside people, props, costumes, and sets from the movie, plus fascinating information about automatons, early cinema, and more, *The Hugo Cabret Companion* beautifully extends the experience of the book and the movie, and is a must-have for fans of all ages.



Walt Whitman: Words for America

Written by Barbara Kerley

Robert F. Sibert Honor Book

New York Times Best Illustrated Book

ALA Notable Children's Book

A *Publishers Weekly* Best Book of the Year

A *School Library Journal* Best Book of the Year

A *Kirkus* Editor's Choice

NCSS/CBC Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People

NCTE Notable Children's Book in the Language Arts

Parents Choice Award

New York Public Library 100 Titles for Reading and Sharing

- ★ “The brilliantly inventive paintings add vibrant testimonial to the nuanced text.”
—*School Library Journal*, starred review
- ★ “A cultural force rendered with power and immediacy for a new generation.”
—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review
- ★ “Selznick’s versatile illustrations encompass a stark realism and surreal whimsy.”
—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

The Dinosaurs of Waterhouse Hawkins

Written by Barbara Kerley

Caldecott Honor Book

NCTE Orbis Pictus Award

ALA Notable Children's Book

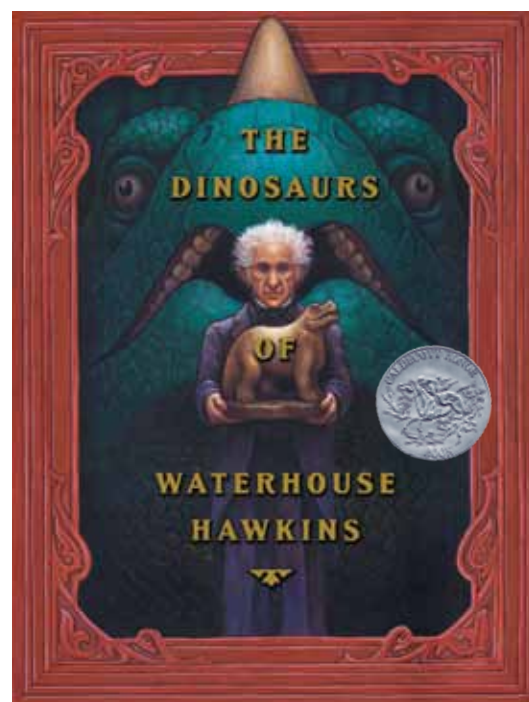
Book Links "Lasting Connection"

A *Publishers Weekly* Best Book of the Year

NCSS/CBC Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People

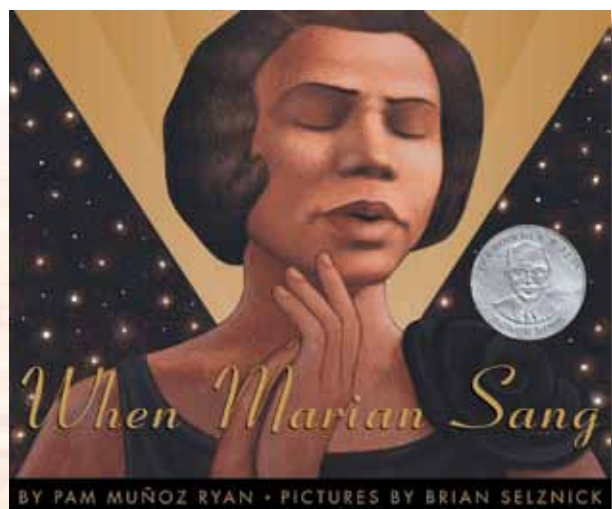
NSTA/CBC Outstanding Science Trade Book for Children

New York Public Library 100 Titles for Reading and Sharing



★ "What a marvelous pairing: the life of the nineteenth-century British dinosaur maven Waterhouse Hawkins and Selznick's richly evocative, Victorian-inspired paintings...this will be a favorite dinosaur book for years to come."—*Booklist*, starred review

★ "Stunning."—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review



When Marian Sang

Written by Pam Muñoz Ryan

Robert F. Sibert Honor Book

NCTE Orbis Pictus Award

ALA Notable Children's Book

A *School Library Journal* Best Book of the Year

A *Booklist* Editors' Choice

New York Public Library 100 Titles for Reading and Sharing

Anne Izzard Storyteller's Choice Award

Flora Steiglitz Straus Award

James Madison Award Honor Book

Norman Sugarman Award for Distinguished Children's Biography

NCSS/CSC Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People

NCTE Notable Children's Book in the Language Arts

Parents Choice Award

Virginia Jefferson Cup Award

★ "The book is a marvel of unified design...Share this feast for the eyes and the soul with a wide audience."—*School Library Journal*, starred review

★ "Selznick's paintings shimmer with emotion, his range of shading as versatile as Anderson's three-octave voice."—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review



Amelia and Eleanor Go for a Ride

Written by Pam Muñoz Ryan

ALA Notable Children's Book

New York Public Library 100 Titles for Reading and Sharing

IRA Notable Book for a Global Society

IRA Teachers' Choice

NCSS/CBC Notable Social Studies Trade Book
for Young People

★ “[A] compelling slice from the lives of two determined, outspoken, and passionate women.”

—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

★ “An engaging text and simply wonderful pencil illustrations.”

—*Booklist*, starred review

Riding Freedom

Written by Pam Muñoz Ryan

California Young Readers Medal

Texas Bluebonnet Award Finalist

Arizona Young Readers Award

Pen West Award Finalist

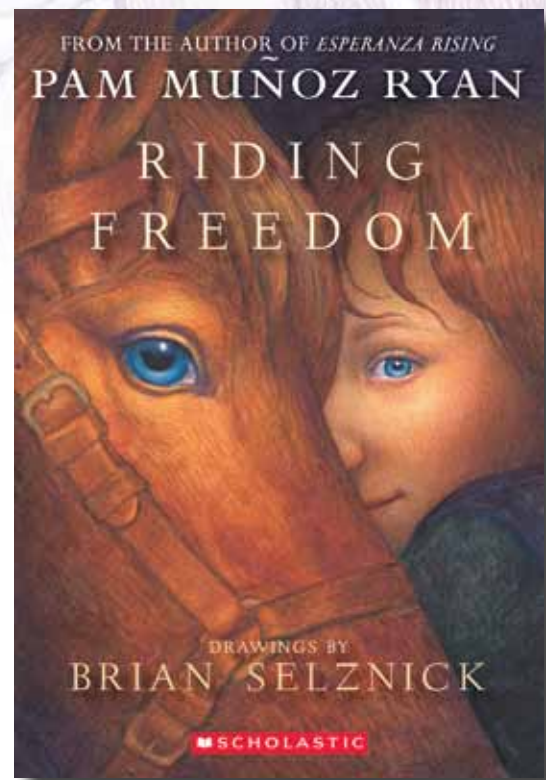
Willa Cather Award

IRA Teachers' Choice

Parenting Magazine Reading Magic Award

★ “With a pacing that moves along at a gallop, this is a skillful execution of a fascinating historical tale.”—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

“Brian Selznick’s full-page shaded pencil illustrations show the quiet, daring young woman.”—*Booklist*



ABOUT BRIAN SELZNICK



Photo by Jamey Mazzie

Born and raised in New Jersey, Brian Selznick cannot remember a time when he was *not* drawing and making things. His mural of a dinosaur on his fifth grade classroom wall was a big hit, and he had a one-man show in junior high school.

He graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design with the intention of becoming a set designer for the theater, but a job designing window displays at Eeyore's Children's Bookstore in New York City changed his mind. Working at the store became a crash course in children's literature, and his first book was published while he worked there.

Soon he left to pursue a full-time career in children's book illustration; he also has designed theater sets and is a professional puppeteer. His first book, *The Houdini Box*, was inspired by a fascination with the famous magician and his secrets. He has illustrated both novels and picture books for other writers, including the Sibert Honor books, *When Marian Sang* by Pam Muñoz Ryan and *Walt Whitman: Words for America* by Barbara Kerley. His illustrations for Barbara Kerley's *The Dinosaurs of Waterhouse Hawkins* won a Caldecott Honor Award in 2002; and in 2008, his groundbreaking and breathtaking *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* was awarded the Caldecott Medal.

He divides his time between Brooklyn, New York, and San Diego, California.

“Ben remembered reading about curators in *Wonderstruck*, and thought about what it meant to curate your own life . . . What would it be like to pick and choose the objects and stories that would go into your own cabinet?”



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