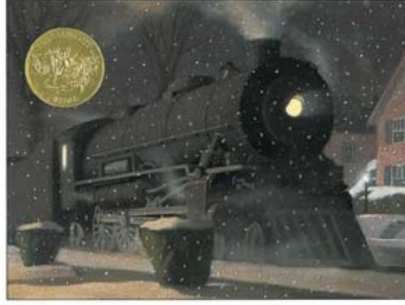


THE POLAR EXPRESS



## The Polar Express

*Chris Van Allsburg , Liam Neeson (Narrator)*

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**The Polar Express** Chris Van Allsburg , Liam Neeson (Narrator)

*The Polar Express* is a treasured holiday tradition. This lavish gift set includes a CD audio recording read by Liam Neeson, a keepsake "All Aboard" ornament, and a note from author Chris Van Allsburg.

Awarded the prestigious Caldecott Medal in 1986, *The Polar Express* has sold more than 7 million copies, become a classic holiday movie, and been translated into stage productions that take place across the United States during the holiday season.

## The Polar Express Details

Date : Published 2000 by Houghton Mifflin (first published October 28th 1985)

ISBN : 9780395389492

Author : Chris Van Allsburg , Liam Neeson (Narrator)

Format : Hardcover 32 pages

Genre : Childrens, Picture Books, Holiday, Christmas

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## **From Reader Review The Polar Express for online ebook**

### **Laura says**

This book will forever remind me of my kids when they were young and their eyes still sparkled with the magic of Christmas. The illustrations are beautiful and makes me want to watch the movie. ( My kids love the train and the hot chocolate song in the movie.)

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### **Theresa says**

Brings back wonderful memories for me. A childhood favorite (and timeless classic). Beautiful story and gorgeous illustrations.

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### **Jessaka says**

I read this little book last night while I was in bed listening to a train on my magical white noise box. Trains and bells, I love them both. If only this little magical box had temple bells and wind chimes, which we have in our yard, but with our back porch's bedroom door closed during these cold winter nights, I don't hear them; instead I hear silence.

As a child, I remember listening to sounds at night as I lay in bed. I never heard Santa's sleigh bells; instead I heard the neighbors' dogs barking, the train in the far distant as it came through the edge of our small town every night blowing its whistle, and in the summer I heard the added sounds of crickets. How I miss those sounds. Here, where we live now we only hear sounds in the summertime when the door is open and then we may hear our dog barking at a critter or crickets singing. We may even hear those noisy cicadas that clog the airways. At least on windy nights we hear our wind chimes. The temple bells you have to peel yourself as the wind doesn't peel them since the clappers and the bells are too heavy.

As for this book, I can understand why even adults love it; for one thing, the art is wonderful, and the story, while short, is very meaningful. It is a story of a young boy who is in bed wishing to hear Santa's sleigh bells, when all the sudden he hears a train pull up to his window. He gets up, climbs out his window and onto this magical train that takes him to the North Pole where he gets to pick out the first gift and so asks for a sleigh bell. It ends up being a bell that not everyone could hear. I would have asked for a train to go through our town. I know that is a big order. One day my husband and I were down at the river when we heard what sounded like a train whistle. What? We have no trains here. It must have been that magical train or the ghost of trains past.

My sister and niece came to visit just before Thanksgiving, and we drove to a small town in Oklahoma, to the Pioneer Woman's Mercantile, and what did I buy? Not pots and pans. A little wooden train whistle. And what did my sister bring me for Christmas? A wind chime that her son had made and had given to our mother. Many years ago when our mother died, my sister had taken it and since her son had made her one as well, she knew that I would love it. It sounds like church bells. Of course I love it.

So when the nights get warm again and the winds come up, I will open our bedroom door and be able listen

to church bells, and I will sometimes think of the little boy who wished for a bell, and how his wish came true.

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### **Hannah says**

I've seen the movie a few years ago, but when I read this for storytime at work, it was my first time to actually read the story. Excellent art and sweet story...but I don't quite agree with the emphasis on "believe in Santa"... Could be a little confusing for small kids—unless, of course, you're intending to make them believe fully in Santa as the bringer of gifts. It pairs very nicely with the movie.

2017: Again, chosen reader of the book for work storytime. :)

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### **Will Byrnes says**

A young boy is awakened from his Christmas Eve rest by a train that magically appears just outside his home. Ignoring the demands of stranger-danger, the boy climbs aboard, finding the car filled with other youngsters. They are treated to goodies while en route to the north pole where Santa is to offer the first gift of Christmas to one of the passengers in a town-square ceremony attended by all the elves as well as the transported youngsters. Our hero is selected, and when asked what he would like, opts for a single bell from Santa's sleigh.

*I knew that I could have any gift I could imagine. But the thing I wanted most for Christmas was not inside Santa's giant bag. What I wanted more than anything was one silver bell from Santa's sleigh. When I asked, Santa smiled. Then he gave me a hug and told an elf to cut a bell from a reindeer's harness. The elf tossed it up to Santa. He stood, holding the bell high above him, and called out, "The first gift of Christmas!"*

This is one of the all time great magical stories, with stunning illustrations. I read this to my kids every year on Christmas Eve since the late 1980s. While they have long outgrown that tradition, on the odd occasions when I pick it up again, it never fails to bring tears to my eyes. The illustrations are incredible and the message of youthful hope symbolized by the bell resonates.

When they char my final remains, this is one of the books I want to go into the ashes with me.

### **=====EXTRA STUFF**

The author's website

Here is a lovely piece, a speech the author gave on receiving a Caldecott Award for this book. Like his book, it is a thing of beauty.

### **Some fun Christmas items from National Geographic:**

-----11/29/2017 - Saint Nicholas to Santa: The Surprising Origins of Mr. Claus - by Brian Handwerk

-----12/13/2017 - Who Is Krampus? Explaining the Horrific Christmas Devil - by Tanya Basu

-----12/21/2017 - Vintage Map Shows Santa's Journey Around the World - By Greg Miller – a kitschy 50's Santa Map

-----12/19/2017 - One Town's Fight to Save Their 40-Foot Yule Goat - by Sarah Gibbens – Yes, really, a Christmas goat

12/21/2017 - This NY Times video by Matthew Salton is a trip - Santa is a Psychedelic Mushroom

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## **Brooke says**

This will always remain one of my favorite Christmas stories. This was my first time listening to it on audiobook and it was just magical! The sound effects of the train really brought the story to life. The sweet message gets me every time. It's such a simple and beautifully written book.

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## **Matthew says**

*To check out all my reviews: <http://dancinginth3dark.blogspot.com>*

I have come to love and appreciate this book especially in a certain point of my life I actually hated it with a passion. I do not know if I ever read the english version which I probably did but I remember my 4th grade spanish teacher reading this story to us especially in the same time frame as the movie version being released. For the most part I did enjoy the book but for years I hated the film with a passion. I believe I fall into this category that if I watch something and I felt okay about it but then they start playing everywhere and people are going crazy for it thats when I hate it (that has happened to me for Finding Nemo, Shark Tale, How the Grinch Stole Christmas and the list goes on).

After years and distance away from "The Polar Express" I am able to read this classic christmas book and actually enjoy it. I love the simplicity in the dialogue and takes you through an adventure without the complications and danger that the movie version showcases. Sometimes the best story telling doesn't need danger to make the plot interesting. I have to admit that the only issue I have which is really not a big deal is the text with the illustrations. I don't like how it feels chunks of dialogue carelessly shoved into the picture.

I would prefer to have the illustration in the top and the text in the bottom because it makes the dialogue and the illustration sync together and a few times the flow of the storytelling was cut off because I had to pause and read the dialogue then pause and look at the image. That is my only complaint and now back to the story.

The Polar Express is about a boy who wakes up in the night to hear a train pull up in his front yard. He cannot believe what he is witnessing and sure enough the conductor directs him inside the train. Immediately the fun begins as the boy witness other children in the train and all the hot chocolate and food you can eat. He discovers they are heading to the North Pole and once they arrive they get to see Santa and the lucky individual that Santa picks will get the 1st Christmas of the Year and guess who gets pick?

I don't want to give much away even though clearly everyone has either read this book or had someone read it to them or they have seen the film. The illustrations are spectacular and I love every moment of this book from the dialogue to that wonderful ending. I found this book to be extremely creative and one of the reasons why kids don't give up on Christmas and Santa Claus. I believe in the end regardless whether its fantasy or

fiction if you have the spirit of Santa Claus in your heart then you are a special individual both inside and out.

For years I believed that Santa was real and I remember how in 3rd Grade this kid on the bus kept complaining that Santa isn't real and really ruining the fun for countless kids including myself. I remember telling myself to ignore that kid because Santa is real and sadly I saw my presents 3 weeks earlier on the christmas tree with my mother's handwriting on the tag which ruin everything.

I don't care if a parent decides using Jesus instead of Santa or remove all these christmas icons all together but I believe you should cherish a child's imagination for how long because if you ruin the fantasy then you ruin the experience and the child's imagination. I guarantee you if it weren't for that kid and my mother I would have still believe in Santa till the 4th grade and then made the conclusion on my own. I'm sorry for this rant but it gets me angry when adults or kids tell other children that Santa doesn't exist.

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### **Sheila Majczan says**

This is one of those classics I read over and over again with my children and with my kindergarten students. The movie is also lovely.

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### **Manybooks says**

Although I really do very much appreciate both the story (the narrative) and the illustrations, Chris Van Allsburg's The Polar Express ultimately simply feels but very mildly entertaining and actually manages to leave me rather flat and even somewhat unsatisfied. The text reads sweetly and to a point evocatively enough (but also rather on the surface, rather removed from what I would label as personal emotionality) and so much so that I never do feel all that engaged and thus more like a dispassionate and even somewhat apathetic onlooker, with not all that much of a sense of Christmastime magic (and while the latter indeed might well be present, I personally have major trouble both feeling and even mildly sensing it). As to the accompanying illustrations, while detailed and expressive (and spectacularly highlighting Chris Van Allsburg's artistic talents), they are simply much too dark and gloomy, bordering on being depressing for my personal tastes (and that is even considering that the main, the essential storyline takes place at night). And while I can certainly understand and even much appreciate why and how The Polar Express won the Caldecott medal, for me personally, the book is just adequate and in no way all that spectacular (I guess for all intents and purposes, Chris van Allsburg and I are simply not that good a fit, as it generally seems to be the case that while I can and do appreciate his work, both text and illustration wise, I never seem to be able to truly love and in any way cherish it). Three stars (rather grudgingly given, and if half stars were possible, two and a half stars would be the highest rating for The Polar Express, as I am sorry to say, I just do not find this rather universally popular offering all that special and all that wonderful, and rereading almost a year later has not really changed this either, and has, in fact, but cemented and strengthened my attitudes, my views).

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### **Arlene says**

So here's a little something about me... there are two movies I love.love.love to watch around the holidays.

*Harry Potter and the Sorcerer Stone* and **The Polar Express**. Yes, I'm a kid at heart and there's just something about those two movies that, for me, make it feel like Christmas.

I think it was around the holidays several years ago that I went out shopping during Black Friday (yes call me crazy) and bought my first HP movie for the low price of like \$3! And, I've watched the movie every year since then around this time of the year. I usually watch the first one, skip the second, and jump to the third. Now, **The Polar Express** has been on my holiday schedule for about the same amount of time. I love the movie, the message behind the story, and the animation is pretty impressive.

So that brings me to this book. I was browsing around at Barnes & Noble during my lunch time (one of my routine stops) and saw this book. My breath hitched in a sentimental intake seeing the book there. Being pressed for time, I still stopped to sit down to read it, and it's just as enchanting on paper as it is on screen. Surprisingly, the book is a bit condensed compared to the movie, but the theme is all the same.

I hope if Santa brings me a silver bell for Christmas this year, I can hear it ring. I'm a believer. :)

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## **Mario says**

*Though I've grown old, the bell still rings for me, as it does for all who truly believe.*

4.5

I watched *The Polar Express* the movie as soon as it came out. And it became one of my favorite Christmas movies. And now I finally decided to read (well, listen actually) the book. And the book was just as magical as the movie (even though I do have to admit that I liked the movie a little bit more)

One more thing I want to mention is that Liam Neeson did an amazing job narrating the book. If you haven't already read this book, I suggest listening to his audiobook.

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## **Tamara says**

**The Story: 3,5 stars**

**The Narration: 5 stars**

**“Though I've grown old, the bell still rings for me as it does for all who truly believe.”**

Like the magical train ride, *The Polar Express* is a magical story, one that readers and listeners will want to enjoy again and again. It's a excellent book for a family read aloud during the Christmas season. Plus, the narration by Liam Neeson also helps ;)

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## **Jeff Raymond says**

I hate The Polar Express.

I don't so much dislike Chris Van Allsburg, although I consider him complicit. I think *Bad Day at Riverbend* is a top 5 picture book for me, and his art style is great, and he can often tell a fun story (last year's *Probuditi* a great example).

But holy crap do I hate The Polar Express.

It's like *Love You Forever* - tacky, sentimental pap designed to get you to shed a tear or tug on your heartstrings or whatever. The bell! The whole thing just...throws me. I don't get it.

But the worst part? Kids eat it up! It's crazy. Some annoying trends I understand. Fairies and princesses are fun, the pony thing is weird, but okay, and I was a potty humor kid myself, but of all the things to catch on...

But no, actually, that's not the worst part. The worst part is how it's being milked now. The movie (which was mediocre) was one thing, but the gift set with the sleigh bell? The crazy stuff people do? Gah!

I really, really hate this book.

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## **Mischenko says**

A Christmas favorite we read every year. Beautiful story and illustrations. A must!

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## **Jennifer says**

My general opinion of Chris Van Allsburg is that his books are made to appeal to adults, not children. None of his books has ever been a favorite of my children. This book is a perfect example. The overall story has potential--a Christmas Eve train that takes Santa-believing children to the North Pole to witness the ritual of Santa giving the first gift of Christmas. But page after page of illustration focuses on the landscape the train travels. When the Polar Express arrives at the North Pole, again the pictures are landscapes in which the streets thronged with elves are shown at such a distance that the elves are red smudges between the buildings.

The story is told in first person, which is normally avoided in picture books for good reason. That choice is telling, because the book is presented as "something that happened to me years ago." The first Christmas gift of the year is given to the first person narrator, a bell off of Santa's sleigh. The trick is that you can only hear the bell if you believe in Santa. This is pure nostalgia, and in my opinion and experience has no pull on the hearts of the children who should be the primary audience for a picture book.

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## Ronyell says

“The Polar Express” is a fantastic book that proudly won the Caldecott Medal and is from the creative mind of Chris Van Allsburg. This story is about how a young boy experiences the magic of the North Pole when he goes a magical ride on the Polar Express. “The Polar Express” is a brilliant Christmas story that children of all ages will enjoy for many years.

Chris Van Allsburg has done a terrific job at both writing and illustrating this book with a passion. Chris Van Allsburg portrays the boy’s enthusiasm at going to the North Pole in a way that a child would react to an amusement park, which is realistic and heartwarming at the same time. Chris Van Allsburg’s writing is full of magic and wonder as the boy gives the readers in great detail about what a wonderful place that the North Pole is by describing the city’s lights and the factories that surround the city and the way that the text is set up will make any child want to go to the North Pole. Chris Van Allsburg’s illustrations are extremely beautiful and magical, especially of the images of the North Pole with its city like lights and the beautiful image of all the elves gathering at the center of the city. Also, the images of the different landscapes that the Polar Express passes through are extremely beautiful, especially of the images of the Polar Express going through the woods and the trees look so realistic and you can see various animals like wolves and rabbits go through the forest.

“The Polar Express” is truly one of the greatest masterpieces in children’s literature ever created as children will enjoy the experience of looking at the North Pole from a child’s perspective and enjoy the beautiful illustrations of the North Pole itself. I would recommend this book to children ages five and up since there is nothing really inappropriate for small children.

**Review is also on: Rabbit Ears Book Blog**

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## Anne says

What would you like for Christmas?

**I'm still in the spirit of Christmas**, because Christmas isn't until the 7th of January here in Ukraine. So.....more for me. I've always loved *The Polar Express* movie, It can even be said that it's my all time favourite Christmas movie, but up until now, I had never read the book. There's no "why" to the story, sorry. I've read it now, and I'm delighted to say I love it just as much as the movie-*maybe even a tad bit more*. I love the moral of the story, about how the principle of "seeing is believing" doesn't hold true in all situations in life. **Strange and great things, the truly wondrous things are the things that can't be seen with the eyes-sometimes**(The conductor in the movie makes a note of this).This book made me smile and get all swirly inside-and swirly is good in case you're wondering-so I don't regret not reading it earlier, I'm only grateful I have now.

**THE TRUE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS LIES IN THE HEART**

ALL ABOARD!

“At one time, most of my friends could hear the bell, but as years passed, it fell silent for all of them. Even Sarah found one Christmas that she could no longer hear its sweet sound. Though I've grown old, the bell still rings for me, as it does for all who truly believe.”

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### **Renée Paule says**

This is such a charming story and I've seen the film too - very sweet.

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### **Bionic Jean says**

I so wanted to love this book. I had heard many friends enthuse about **The Polar Express**, knew it had won awards, and have a soft spot myself for illustrated fantasy books for children. But this particular one I found to be a little disappointing.

Yes, it has magical elements. In a way it is reminiscent of many Christmas stories, with the message that you just need to believe in Father Christmas and everything will turn out to be perfect. It had elements from stories I love, such as *"The Snowman"*, by Raymond Briggs. In both stories a young child cannot sleep on Christmas Eve, and is magically taken to the North Pole. The difference in this case is that the journey is on a mysterious and unearthly train called the Polar Express.

But the story is very thin. Please do not read the blurb, as it tells you the ending, and that is one of the few perfect things about this book. Otherwise, it feels more like a rehash of other, better tales.

The Artwork has been highly commended, and it is pleasing - but strangely muted. It appeals to adults, but to young children? There is a large element of nostalgia about the entire book. The pictures are not immediate in any sense. They are distance views, with even Santa's elves appearing as little smudges. There are two or three where the lighting is paramount, and it can be viewed as a theatrical set, with illuminated people, reindeer and buildings. These may well be more attractive to adults than to children. Yes, they glow. But does it feel magical?

The story is very short indeed, and the use of language not very imaginative. After reading the book, it was interesting to watch the film based on it, which has also been highly acclaimed. Yet that felt strangely long and drawn-out. Yes, the story had been expanded, but it still had no depth, which it certainly needed to maintain its feature length. How many children would be able to sustain over an hour of grey fuzziness and mere expectation of possibly meeting Santa? And that droning, sentimental music! Again, *"The Snowman"*

does it better, and the decision to keep it at a mere 20 minutes was a wise one. However it is the book of **The Polar Express** which is reviewed here, not the film.

It is not a bad book. There are parts of it which deserve the three star rating. The illustrations could be called beautiful, when seen through the eyes of an adult, who has grown to appreciate landscape. The ending is just right. Otherwise? In my view this is not a true classic, and since the wonderful film "*Jumanji*" is also based on a book by this author, it makes me apprehensive about reading Chris van Allsburg's original picture book.

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### **Duane says**

Just gave a little nudge to my sleeping Christmas Spirit who rolled over and said, "come back in two months".

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