ABOUT BRIAN SELZNICK

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 has also designed theater sets and is a professional puppeteer. In addition to his own books, he has illustrated novels and picture books by other writers including the Sibert Honor book *When Marian Sang* by Pam Muñoz Ryan and the Caldecott Honor book *The Dinosaurs of Waterhouse Hawkins* by Barbara Kerley. In 2008, Brian’s groundbreaking and breathtaking *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* won a Caldecott Medal, and in 2011, it was adapted into Martin Scorsese’s Oscar-winning movie *Hugo*. Selznick’s books, including the bestselling *Wonderstruck*, have garnered accolades worldwide, and have been translated into more than 35 languages.

He lives with his husband in La Jolla, California, and Brooklyn, New York.

Discussion Guide prepared by Connie Rockman, Youth Literature Consultant and Editor of the 8th, 9th, and 10th books in the H. W. Wilson Junior Authors and Illustrators series.

Find this and other discussion guides at www.scholastic.com/discussionguides
Welcome to the spellbinding world of Brian Selznick, in which 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 THE MARVELS

In a truly marvelous artistic achievement, Brian Selznick builds a world from words and pictures, stretching the imagination and enriching the meaning of the word “story.” The first part of the book unfolds in nearly 400 pages of continuous illustrations that begin in 1766 and tell the saga of a legendary theatrical family through five generations.

The second story, in 200 pages of prose, begins in 1990 with Joseph, a thirteen-year-old runaway from boarding school, whose remote, globetrotting parents have never given him the love and attention he craves. Arriving in London with only the address of an uncle he has never met, Joseph at first experiences Albert Nightingale as a cold and secretive man. But the mysteries of his house at 18 Folgate Street intrigue Joseph, leading him to explore the lavish rooms and learn more about his unknown family history.

What he discovers is at first puzzling and finally immensely rewarding. The motto of the house—“You either see it or you don’t”—begins to take on many meanings for Joseph as he unravels the mystery.

www.scholastic.com/marvels

★ “Time, grief, forgiveness, and love intersect...celebrating mysteries of the heart and spirit.” — Kirkus Review, starred review

★ “Bittersweet, astonishing, and truly marvelous.” — Booklist, starred review

★ “[A] powerful story about creating lasting art and finding family in unexpected places.” — Publishers Weekly, starred review

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Apply the motto of Albert’s house—“You either see it or you don’t”—as you experience the first 390 pages of The Marvels. What do you notice when you revisit the illustrations that you may have missed in your first reading? What parts of the history of the Marvel family do you want to know more about?

2. How do the early experiences of Billy Marvel in this family saga foreshadow events in the later generations as well as experiences that Joseph has over two centuries later?

3. Discuss the first line of text on p. 392—“Joseph was lost.” Can you find more than one meaning to this sentence? Why does Joseph run away from school? Why do you think he chooses to run to the house of an uncle he has never met?

4. What is Joseph’s first impression of 18 Folgate Street? What is his first impression of Uncle Albert? Compare what Joseph finds in the house to the watch his grandfather gives him and the image Blink shows him of the insect trapped in amber. Discuss the comment “Maybe trouble with time in their family?” (p. 412) How does the theme of time run through the novel?

5. What convinces Albert to finally tell Joseph the truth about the Marvels? How did you feel about this discovery? When Joseph repeats Penney’s words, “Stories aren’t the same as facts,” Albert replies, “No, but they can both be true.” (p. 534) What does Albert mean by this?

6. Why does Albert allow Joseph to stay at the house even while saying that he can’t let him stay? How does Joseph become important to Albert, and how does Albert become important to Joseph?

7. What do you know about the books in Joseph’s suitcase? (p. 418) Look up the titles, read summaries of their plots, and write your impressions of what draws Joseph to each of these books. Joseph and Blink share a love of reading. What do you think makes them bond over stories and over the poems of beloved Irish poet William Butler Yeats? What are some of your favorite books and why?

8. Discuss the images of fire in the picture and word stories. What does fire represent to Joseph and to Albert, and in the book as a whole?

9. When Joseph first sees the phrase “Aut Visum Aut Non” (You either see it or you don’t), it seems to be a warning. Later he says it feels like an invitation. Discuss the different qualities that the phrase takes on for Joseph as he unravels the mystery of the house. What does the phrase mean to Albert? How does it affect your reading experience?

10. What does Frankie’s father mean when he says, “It’s what we all need in life. A direction”? (p. 563) Discuss the ways in which different characters in this story find a direction for their lives. What is the significance of the last line of text, “So Joseph turned the page”? (p. 609)

EXPLORATIONS

1. Look up the stories of these three plays by William Shakespeare: A Midsummer Night’s Dream, The Winter’s Tale, and The Tempest. What do these three plays have in common? What themes in these plays relate to the story of the Marvels that Albert creates? What themes in these stories relate to Joseph’s family?

2. Listen to a recording of the Mozart Piano Sonata in A Major. How does it make you feel? Why do you think the author chose this piece of music to be important to Albert and to Joseph? Discuss the connecting theme of the arts—painting, music, poetry, and drama—in both the story of the Marvels and in Joseph’s family.

3. Find a detailed map of London and locate Folgate Street. Then locate the Theatre Royal Haymarket on which Brian Selznick based his fictional Royal Theatre. (http://www.trh.co.uk/about-us/theatre-history/) Also locate Dennis Sever’s House on Folgate Street, which Uncle Albert’s house was inspired by. Choose one of these locations, find photographs of the actual location on the website, and compare them to the drawings in the book. What are the differences you can find between the history of the actual locations and the history of the fictional theatre and house?

4. When Albert takes Joseph and Frankie to the Thames River to go mudlarking, he tells them, “Every fragment you see here, every scrap, once had a story.” (p. 516) Research information about mudlarking in London (www.thamesandfield.com). What treasures would you expect to find along the Thames?
In this gripping mystery—with combined elements of picture book, graphic novel, and film—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. It inspired Martin Scorsese to adapt it into his Oscar-winning movie Hugo.

www.theinventionofhugocabret.com

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“True masterpiece.” — Publishers Weekly, starred review

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

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

“Fade to black and cue the applause!” — Kirkus Reviews, starred review

“An original and creative integration of art and text.” — The Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books, starred review

“It’s wonderful... ‘Hugo Cabret’ evokes wonder.” — New York Times Book Review

“Distinctive.” — The Wall Street Journal

“Captivating.” — Los Angeles 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. What draws Hugo to the study of magic? Why does he choose magic as his profession? What drew Georges Méliès to filmmaking?

7. 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?

8. 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?

9. 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.

10. 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.353) Discuss this comment in relation to different characters in the story. Which ones need to find—or re-find—their purpose? Think about it in relation to yourself. What might your purpose be?

EXPLORATIONS

1. Discuss the connections between horology (clock- and watch-making), automata, magic, and filmmaking. How many ways do these subjects interweave in The Invention of Hugo Cabret? How does Hugo achieve and why?

2. 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?

3. 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.353) Learn more about Méliès at the website for The Invention of Hugo Cabret: www.theinventionofhugocabret.com/about_georges.htm

Compare some of the special effects in the films created by Méliès to films you have seen in your own lifetime. Which do you think was more difficult to achieve and why?
ABOUT WONDERSTRUCK
This breathtaking narrative, with over 460 pages of drawings, plays with the form Brian created for The Invention of Hugo Cabret, giving readers another innovative way 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, in 1977, is told in words, and Rose’s story, 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

★ “A gift for the eye, mind, and heart.” — Booklist, starred review
★ “Visually stunning, completely compelling.” — Kirkus Reviews, starred review
★ “Innovative...has the makings of a classic.” — Publishers Weekly, starred review
★ “A thing of wonder to behold.” — School Library Journal, starred review

“Engrossing, intelligent, beautifully engineered and expertly told in word and image.” — The New York Times Book Review

“Moving and ingenious.” — The Wall Street Journal

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 locked and the book he finds in his mother’s room?
2. What are the connections between Ben’s story and Rose’s story? Discuss how those connections help to illuminate and expand their 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 story? 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.

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. 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. Visit the website of the American Museum of Natural History. Check out the information on the Wolf diorama: www.amnh.org/exhibitions/dioramas/wolf


6. Research what else was going on in the world in 1977 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
7. 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.
8. Discuss Ben’s thought that “maybe we are all cabinets of wonders” (p. 254). What does he mean? What does the Cabinet of Wonders in his father’s book and in the storage room at American Museum of Natural History represent to Ben? Why is he so drawn to the idea of those early museums?
9. 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?
10. 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?
11. 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. Frankwaler, and says there are references to that book in Wonderstruck. How many can you find?
TALKING ABOUT THE BOOKS

“I also like to think of The Marvels as the final book in a trilogy that includes The Invention of Hugo Cabret and Wonderstruck. It’s not a traditional trilogy, with characters and storylines that connect, but rather, a thematic and structural trilogy that explores how words and pictures can combine in different ways.” — Brian Selznick

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 way the stories unfold in each of these three volumes, and the role that the pictures play. How are the 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 story in each book have the most impact on you as a reader? Explain your answer.

2. Brian Selznick said in his Caldecott Medal acceptance speech for The Invention of Hugo Cabret 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 your experience of reading all three of these stories. Which page turns are particularly illuminating for you?

3. These stories use the cinema and the stage as important plot elements. Compare the importance of stage drama in nineteenth-century London to the groundbreaking film work of Georges Méliès in the early twentieth century and the innovations that changed the cinema during Rose’s story in 1937. How does Brian Selznick’s interplay of text and illustration affect your understanding of the stage? It tells us what power is particular to books.”

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, such as Amelia and Eleanor Go for a Ride and When Marian Sang, both by Pam Munoz Ryan, and The Dinosaurs of Waterhouse Hawkins and Walt Whitman: Words for America, both by Barbara Kerley) can you see in Wonderstruck and The Marvels? Compare the setting of the train station in Paris, the American Museum of Natural History in New York, and Uncle Albert’s house in London. How does each of these settings evoke the time and place of the story and help you to imagine an earlier world?

5. Compare the themes in these three books—e.g., home, family, history, belonging, identity, friendship, mentorship—with other award-winning books, such as Newberry winners When You Reach Me, Moon over Manifest; Bud, Not Buddy; and Holes.

6. Compare Selznick’s novels to an earlier Caldecott winner, David Macauley’s Black and White, about which Publishers Weekly said: “[It] challenges the reader to use text and pictures in unexpected ways.” Compare the ways Macauley and Selznick push the boundaries of the traditional picture book.

7. Compare Selznick’s technique in his three novels to the use of sociological and archival materials in Deborah Wiles’s historical novels about the 1960s—Countdown and Revolution. How does pictorial material inform your understanding and enhance your enjoyment of a fictional story?

OTHER BOOKS TO COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Fiction


Christopher Paul Curtis. Bud, Not Buddy. Delacorte, 1999. A ten-year-old orphan in 1930 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 30th anniversary afterward by the author. Atheneum, 2002. Cladia and her brother Jamie run away from home, hiding out in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.


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.


Nonfiction


Clare Vanderpool. Moon over Manifest. Delacorte, 2010. Separated from her beloved dad while he works on the railroad in 1913, twelve-year-old Athene 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, and more—provides background for Franny’s personal worries about family and friends during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Deborah Wiles. Revolution. Scholastic, 2014. In this documentary novel, images, documents, and writings from 1965 accompany the story of Sunny and her struggle to stand up for herself and what’s right during the events of the Freedom Summer.


Catherine Aragon. Mission New York: A Scavenger Hunt Adventure. Aragon Books, 2015. These three travel books in The Mix-Up Files series take you on an espionage adventure for each of the three cities that form the backdrop of Selznick’s titles. Use them to learn more about the famous sites of Paris (for Hugo), New York (for Wonderstruck), and London (for The Marvels).

Charles and Mary Lamb. Tales from Shakespeare. Puffin, 2010. These retellings of Shakespeare’s major works include all the plays mentioned in the story of The Marvels, making them more accessible for young readers.

Tina Packer. Tales from Shakespeare. Scholastic, 2004. A long-time actress, director, and producer of Shakespeare’s plays recounts the dramatic stories in her own words for young audiences.


OTHER BOOKS BY BRIAN SELZNICK

Hugo Movie Companion
Brian Selznick takes readers on an intimate tour of the movie-making process behind Hugo, Martin Scorsese’s Oscar-winning adaptation of The Invention of Hugo Cabret. With full-color photographs from the movie, interviews with the cast and crew, plus information about automatons, early cinema, and more, the Hugo Movie Companion beautifully extends the experience of the book and the movie, and is a must-have for fans of all ages.

“[A] compelling slice from the lives of two determined, outspoken, and passionate women.” —Publishers Weekly, starred review

“A engaging text and simply wonderful pencil illustrations.” —Booklist, starred review

Walt Whitman: Words for America
Written by Barbara Kerley

Caldecott Honor Book

“[The brilliantly inventive paintings add vibrant testimonial to the nuanced text].” —School Library Journal, starred review

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The Dinosaurs of Waterhouse Hawkins
Written by Barbara Kerley

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ALA Notable Children’s Book
Book Links “Lasting Connection”
A Publishers Weekly Best Book of the Year

“[W]hat 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

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

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Scholastic Press 2011
Ages 5 & up • 40 pages
HC: 978-0-590-96075-5 • $17.99

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