Chris Van Allsburg, author and illustrator

Author/Illustrator: Chris Van Allsburg

Genre: Children's Fantasy Novel

Biography: Van Allsburg

He was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan in June 18\(^{th}\), 1949. His second home was in the housing development outside of Grand Rapids that resembled the house he illustrated in Polar Express.

- He attended University of Michigan and got a degree in Sculpture. He got selected into the Art Program without a portfolio but because of his response to a question from the university interviewer asking him what he thought about Norman Rockwell. He, “off the cuff” answered (quickly thinking that the interviewer was a big fan of this artist) “I believe Norman Rockwell is unfairly criticized for being sentimental. I think he is a wonderful painter who captures America's longings. America's dreams and present American life with the drama and sensitivity of great playwright”(22). The admission officer was very impressed and accepted Chris into the program right on the spot.
On an interview with Chris, he expressed that he always enjoyed drawing, but growing up in Grand Rapids his talent wasn’t encouraged as much as sports and athletics was. But soon his teachers and peers were amazed at his artistic talent and in high school drew a lot for the school. Chris continues to say that his drawing developed in combination with his love for story telling through pictures. He created stories by asking questions to himself “What if” and “what then”. For example, the way he created Jumanji was asking two questions: What if two children were bored while at home and discover a board game and then what would happen if the board came alive?

After sculpturing for many years, his wife, Lisa encouraged him to show his illustrations to a publisher. He did and his first work was The Garden of Abdul Gasazi, published in 1979. The story about a young boy who searched Fritz, a neighbor’s dog. Fritz is all his works as part of the illustrations.
He won the Caldecott Honor Medal for this book in 1980. Since then he has published 15 additional books and illustrated three others for an author Mark Helprin.

Bibliography

- Bad day at River bend
- Ben’s Dream
- A city in Winter (Illustrator, written by Mark Helprin)
- The Garden of Abdul Gasazi
- Jumanji
- Just a Dream
- The Mysteries of Harris Burdick
- The Polar Express
- Probuditi
- The Stranger
- Swan Lake (Illustrator, written by Mark Helprin)
- The Sweetest Fig
- Two Bad Ants
- The Veil of Snows (illustrator, written by Mark Helprin)
- The Wreck of the Zephyr
- The Widows Broom
- The Z was Zapped
- Zathura
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>ISBN</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>The Wreck of the Zephyr</em></td>
<td>Small sailboat lies wrecked on a cliff's edge. Some say a wave just carried it up there, but the cliff is really quite high. How did the boat really get up there? And whose boat was it?</td>
<td>ISBN 0-395-32084-4</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Ben's Dream</em></td>
<td>Ben is studying geography as he falls asleep one night. All of a sudden a flood shakes his house, and the house is set adrift on a journey that takes him around the world.</td>
<td>ISBN 0-395-32084-4</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Jumanji</em></td>
<td>Peter and Judy find an ordinary-looking board game. They are quite bored at home so they decide to play this game that they have found. A game called Jumanji which is not as boring as they thought...</td>
<td>ISBN 0-395-32084-4-K</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>The Garden of Abdul Gasazi</em></td>
<td>Alan Mitz is taking care of Miss Hester's dog, Fritz, when the dog wanders into the garden of Abdul Gasazi. Abdul Gasazi is a retired magician, and he does NOT like dogs...</td>
<td>ISBN 0-395-32084-4-X</td>
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River bend was a quiet town where nothing exciting ever happened. Even the stage coach never stopped there; it just rolled through town. But one day, the stage coach stopped. Something was terribly wrong in River bend.

"These figs are very special," the woman whispered." They can make dreams come true.

There is something terribly wrong on the Rita Anne. Her crew no longer speaks and they walk "stooped over." "At night, shrieks can be heard coming from the forward hold."
"It's dangerous," they say. "It's a wicked, wicked thing."

Walter’s neighbor receives a tree for her birthday. Useless gifts in Walter’s eyes. Walter loves technology and he believes in a future full of wonderful inventions such as robots. He falls asleep and dreams of this wonderful future, but it is not as wonderful as he thought it would be.
Two ants go with a group of fellow ants to find "marvelous crystal(s)" for their queen. They find these crystals, and the group heads back to their queen. All except "two bad ants" who decide to stay and explore this new and fascinating world that contains such marvels as the crystals. They did not know what trouble they were getting into...

A boy goes on an unforgettable journey when, on Christmas Eve, he boards the Polar Express to the North Pole.

Chris Van Allsburg discovers fourteen "mysterious" drawings in the home of Peter Wenders. .