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The Invention Of Hugo Cabret



Synopsis

Orphan, clock keeper, and thief, Hugo lives in the walls of a busy Paris train station, where his survival depends on secrets and anonymity. But when his world suddenly interlocks with an eccentric, bookish girl and a bitter old man who runs a toy booth in the station, Hugo's undercover life, and his most precious secret, are put in jeopardy. A cryptic drawing, a treasured notebook, a stolen key, a mechanical man, and a hidden message from Hugo's dead father form the backbone of this intricate, tender, and spellbinding mystery.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 820L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 533 pages

Publisher: Scholastic Press; 1st edition (January 30, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0439813786

ISBN-13: 978-0439813785

Product Dimensions: 2 x 5.8 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (777 customer reviews)

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

No one can really summarize a book any better than the author proper. So what is, "The Invention of Hugo Cabret" anyway? "... this is not exactly a novel, and it's not quite a picture book, and it's not really a graphic novel, or a flip book, or a movie, but a combination of all these things." In short, what you have is a book that can't really be lumped into a single genre. With the rising popularity of the graphic novel, authors have been looking at how to let the visual elements of a given story complement the text. Some will weave graphic novel elements in and out, panels on one page, text on another. Others prefer a kind of "Captain Underpants" melding with cartoonish pictures. And while all these books are fun reads, none of them have ever really had the (for lack of a better word)

gravitas you'd find in a classic text-only children's novel. Until now, that is. "Hugo Cabret" is a risk. A 500+ page book that's told just equally by pictures as it is by text. It is also like nothing you've ever seen before. No other children's book has even come close. Without Hugo Cabret, none of the clocks in the magnificent Paris train station he lives in would work. Though he's only a kid, Hugo tends to the clocks every day. But there's something even more important in the boy's life than gigantic mechanics. Hugo owns a complex automaton, once his father's, that was damaged in a fire and it is his life's goal to make the little machine work again. To do so, he's been stealing small toys from an old shopkeeper in the station. One day the man catches Hugo in the act, and suddenly the two are thrown together. Coincidences, puzzles, lost keys, and a mystery from the past combine in this complex tale of old and new.

The Invention of Hugo Cabret, by Brian Selznick, is a children's novel weighing in at an intimidating 533 pages, but the reader brave enough to dive headlong into its pages will find a multi-layered text that consists of not only a delightfully written tale, but rich illustrations that take over the telling of the story at regular intervals. Selznick's creation navigates the grey area between picture book and graphic novel in what certainly constitutes a visual and narrative achievement and a truly original book. Hugo is a 12-year-old boy strapped with responsibility beyond that which a child should have to shoulder. After his uncle--a hopeless drunk in charge of tending the station's clocks--disappears, Hugo takes it upon himself to maintain the clocks in hopes that his uncle won't be missed and he can keep his dwelling and enjoy the freedom of coming and going, living within the walls, and repairing an artifact cherished by both Hugo and his late father. The artifact at the center of the tale is a forgotten automaton discovered among the dust and rot of a museum storage room. It is a mechanical man, pen in hand, poised to deliver a message; Hugo feels certain that if he can repair the automaton by using his late father's notes, the mechanical man will write a message from beyond the grave. Hugo resorts to stealing toys from the toy booth in the train station, and soon finds himself working off his debt to the shopkeeper, a man with secrets of his own. What follows involves a stolen notebook, an oddly familiar drawing, unlikely friends, the magic of silent film, and a giant in cinema, Georges Melies (the most recognizable of his films being A Trip to the Moon or Le Voyage dans la Lune, 1902).

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