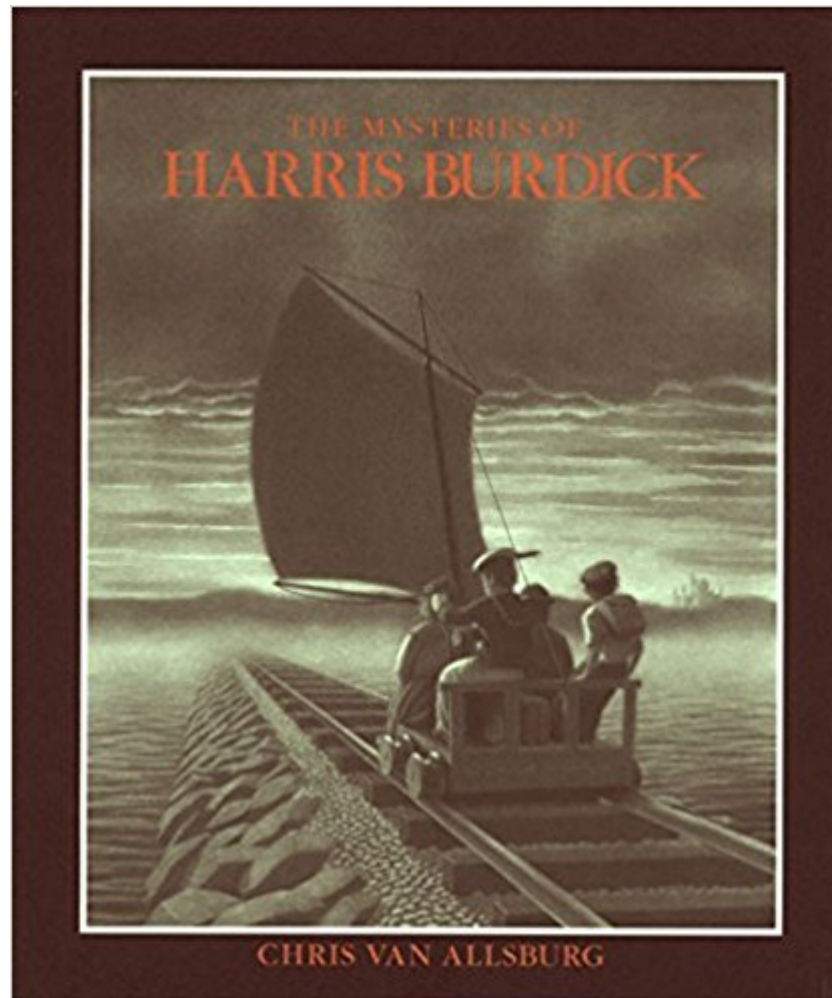




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# The Mysteries Of Harris Burdick



## Synopsis

Fourteen black-and-white drawings, each accompanied by a title and a caption, entice readers to make up his or her own story.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 760L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 32 pages

Publisher: Houghton Mifflin; 1st edition (September 24, 1984)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0395353939

ISBN-13: 978-0395353936

Product Dimensions: 9 x 0.4 x 10.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 222 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #12,360 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #93 in [Books > Children's Books](#)  
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Age Range: 4 - 7 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

## Customer Reviews

A new portfolio edition offers the artwork from Chris Van Allsburg's *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick*, originally published in 1984, in loose oversized sheets. The enigmatic black-and-white drawings are each accompanied by a title and brief caption: for example, a picture of a nun placidly sitting in a chair floating in a cathedral is labeled "THE SEVEN CHAIRS: The fifth one ended up in France." The portfolio also includes a 15th drawing, discovered under circumstances as mysterious as the original set. A new Internet site, set to launch on October 28, will encourage the use of the pictures to seed creative writing assignments. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Layered in mystery, this extraordinary book will stun imaginative readers of all ages." *School Library Journal*, Starred

I love this book! I teach in an elementary school where at least once a week we do a quick write. At this time students are given a short prompt, usually a sentence, and are expected to write off of it for

a short length of time. As soon as this activity was brought into our curriculum, this book came to mind. Each page shows a beautiful black and white picture depicting some sort of mysterious occurrence. Instead of having each linked to each other, every picture tells its own story and has with it only one sentence, which adds to the mystery of the images. Not only does this make it a great tool for English Language Learners and visual learners, but the content of the artwork has been very engaging for my students and their creative writing. This is one of those unique books that can be truly interactive. Beyond just writing prompts, it's great for discussion and story telling. I've even seen it used up in high school leveled English classes to encourage creativity from students.

I first heard about this book when I was listening to the audio book version of Stephen King's *Nightmares & Dreamscapes*. He spoke about the inspiration of one of his short stories, I will paraphrase it here. He had received a copy of the book from a friend who thought that it would be something that he might enjoy. He opened it and was taken by the images along with the titles and short descriptions of novels that the images came from. He was inspired to challenge his family to each pick an image and to write a short story based upon the image. His short story was based upon the last image in the book, "The House On Maple Street". In addition to *Nightmares & Dreamscapes*, this story is part of a collection with 13 others written by prominent authors, you can find this collection here: [The Chronicles of Harris Burdick: Fourteen Amazing Authors Tell the Tales / With an Introduction by Lemony Snicket](#). This book is a collection of images, with the back story being that an author had showed up to a publishing house with a portfolio of images each based upon stories that he had written. After a promising first meeting the author (Harris Burdick) said to come back the next day with his stories, and the rest of images. He never returned. The collection are the only images and the titles of the books that may or may not have ever existed. This book is a great source of inspiration when the creative juices are not quite flowing, and is a perfect source of inspiration.

I have always admired Chris Van Allsburg's picture books. From the festive "Polar Express" to the evocative "Jumanji," they all inspire the reader with simple language and rich lush illustration. "The Mysteries of Harris Burdick" is no exception. Here are 14 unrelated pictures with 14 unrelated titles and attention grabbing sentences. One shows a pirate ship, another a house rocketing off into space, and still another a woman falling asleep reading a book that has suddenly become alive. A recent edition has come out with short stories attached by the author as well as other writers like

Louis Sachar and Stephen King, but I think the portfolio edition should satisfy all your inspirational story crafting needs. This book is great grist for the mind mill. It will have you thinking and guessing what next long after the final page is turned. So whether you're a creative writer or a teacher at any level of writing or even art (I know all my teachers and friends just couldn't get enough of this) you'll want to check this book out. Also, be sure to buy the portfolio edition which includes an extra 15th drawing tying it to one of the others in the collection. Again, great stories come from the molten core of the imagination, and great pictures to supplement them and get the mind going are always welcome. Happy writing and good luck!

As a longtime fan of the author, it, surprisingly, took me awhile to get around to finally reading "The Mysteries of Harris Burdick." It was great fun to discover this book was in keeping with Van Allsburg's earlier work, with a twist. I must say it required a couple of readings, cover to cover, at first. Each illustration compelled the reader to study it and puzzle over the caption. What exactly was this book about? How did one story connect to the next? The answers did not come readily. Who was this Harris Burdick? What was it about the illustrations that kept drawing me back? Was it the mysterious orbs in the young boys room, the bump under the rug, the ocean liner pushing into the canal? "Another Place, Another Time," said it best, "If there was an answer, he'd find it there." Clear as...? Not sure, but the entertainment value remains. Read this book, then read it again. Come to your own conclusions.

I will be able to use these wonderful pictures in my English classes to develop writing activities for which I will have my students practicing revision skills. For anyone who thinks they cannot come up with stories without giving it a lot of thought, think again. I will start each of my academic groups with a different picture to begin a story, then five minutes into writing, change pictures for each group so that they can continue the story with an entirely different picture. I participated in this activity and amazed myself with coming up with a great story without any prior thinking. I wish there were more "picture books" like this one.

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