

# Identifying the Author's Purpose

## The Polar Express

By: Chris Van Allsburg

Grade Level: 3 / Guided Reading Level: N



### Get Ready To Read

- ✓ Learn about the book
- ✓ Get your brain ready to read
- ✓ Understand the meaning of important words found in the book

### Summary

It's Christmas Eve. A boy is waiting for Santa's sleigh. Instead, he sees a steam engine called the Polar Express. The train takes children on a magical journey to the North Pole where Santa and the elves give the first Christmas gift. The boy asks for one silver bell from Santa's sleigh. He tucks the bell into his pocket then loses it. He is sad. The next morning, there is a small box under the Christmas tree. Inside is the silver sleigh bell. The boy and his sister are delighted by the sound of the bell. Their parents cannot hear it. Only true believers can hear Santa's sleigh bells.

### Link to What You Know

- What are some of your special Christmas memories? What does your family do together at Christmas time?
- What does it mean to believe in something? What do you believe in?
- Have you ever lost something? How did you feel?

### Important Words to Know and Understand

**Nougat** – A sweet candy that usually contains nuts or pieces of fruit



### Learn About Comprehension Strategies

- ✓ Think about the text you read
- ✓ Know what to do when you get confused

### Why Readers Identify the Author's Purpose While Reading

**Readers identify the author's purpose to understand why an author wrote the book. Authors write books because they want to persuade, inform, or entertain their reader.**

When you read fiction (stories that are not real), the author usually includes a message or lesson that they want their readers to think about. When the author does this, they are trying to **persuade** you.

On the other hand, when you read nonfiction (books about real people, places, things, or events), the author answers questions about a specific topic. When the author does this, they are trying to **inform** you.

An author may try to entertain you by being funny, mysterious, or serious. Authors of both fiction and nonfiction can write to **entertain** you.

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### Identify the Author's Purpose While Reading

- ✓ Think about what the author is trying to tell you or make you think about
- ✓ Did the author write this book to persuade, inform or entertain you?

### Time to Read

Stop on the following pages. Think about the questions for each page. Then talk with a reading partner or write your thoughts down in your notebook.

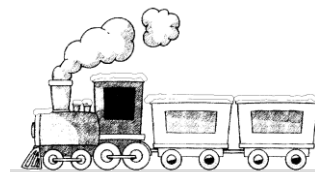
**Page 1** – Why do you think the author chose to begin the book by talking about the sound of the ringing bells?

**Page 19** – Why do you think the boy asked for one of the sleigh bells? Why was that so important to him?

**Page 27** – What is the author trying to tell you about believing? What words does he use to tell you? How do the pictures help share this message?

**Page 28** – What is the author trying to tell you about growing up? Which words help you understand his message?

**Page 29** – Why do you think the author wrote this book? What kind of experiences do you think the author has had that made him want to write a book about believing?



### Notice the Work You Did While Reading

- ✓ Think
- ✓ Talk
- ✓ Reflect
- ✓ Write

### Time to Reflect

**Think** – Chris Van Allsburg is the author of *The Polar Express*. What was his purpose for writing this book? Did he write the book to persuade, inform, or entertain you? How do you know?

**Talk** – Tell your reading partner what this book made you think about. What message did the author share with you? Remember to ask your partner to share their thoughts about the book too.

**Reflect** – Think about what you learned while reading *The Polar Express*. Think about the things you and your reading partner discussed. How does identifying the author's purpose help you be a better reader?

**Write** – Glue your Strategy Slip into your reader's notebook. Write about the work you did while reading *The Polar Express*. (Remember to include examples from the book!)

# Your Turn to Practice Identifying the Author's Purpose with The Polar Express

## Page 1:

Why do you think the author chose to begin the book by talking about the sound of the ringing bells?

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## Page 19:

Why do you think the boy asked for one of the sleigh bells?

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Why was that so important to him?

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## Page 27:

What is the author trying to tell you about believing?

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What words does he use to tell you?

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How do the pictures help share this message?

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Your Turn to Practice Identifying the Author's Purpose with The Polar Express

## Page 28:

What is the author trying to tell you about growing up?

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Which words help you understand his message?

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## Page 29:

Why do you think the author wrote this book?

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What kind of experiences do you think the author has had that made him want to write a book about believing?

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**Why do you think Chris Van Allsburg wrote this book?**

To Persuade      To Inform      To Entertain



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Answer Key for Identifying the Author's Purpose with The Polar Express

## Page 1:

Why do you think the author chose to begin the book by talking about the sound of the ringing bells?

Answers will vary. Sample answers include: I think the author began the book this way because the bell was an important part of the boy's memory of Christmas. The boy loved the sound of the bell.

## Page 19:

Why do you think the boy asked for one of the sleigh bells?

Answers will vary. Sample answers include: I think the boy asked for the bell because he loved that sound.

Why was that so important to him?

Answers will vary. Sample answers include: It would help him remember the good things about Christmas. He would remember about believing. Maybe he could show his friends who didn't believe.

## Page 27:

What is the author trying to tell you about believing?

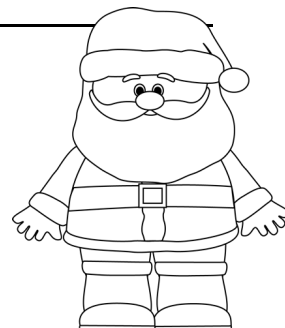
Answers will vary. Sample answers include: The author is trying to tell that if you believe, you can hear the bell.

What words does he use to tell you?

Answers will vary. Sample answers include: He uses words like "it's broken" and "that's too bad" to show that the parents could not hear it.

How do the pictures help share this message?

Answers will vary. Sample answers include: I think the picture shows that the children believe and they can hear the bell.



# Answer Key for Identifying the Author's Purpose with The Polar Express

## Page 28:

What is the author trying to tell you about growing up?

Answers will vary. Sample answers include: I think the author is trying to tell you that when you grow up sometimes the magic of believing goes away.

Which words help you understand his message?

Answers will vary. Sample answers include: The words that help me are: my parents had not heard the sound.

## Page 29:

Why do you think the author wrote this book?

Answers will vary. Sample answers include: I think the author wrote this book to entertain.

What kind of experiences do you think the author has had that made him want to write a book about believing?

Answers will vary. Sample answers include: I think the author had an experience about believing. I think he realized that it was more fun to believe in Santa.

This made Christmas time more fun than being grown up and not believing.

**Why do you think Chris Van Allsburg wrote this book?** Answers will vary.

To Persuade      To Inform      To Entertain



## The Polar Express: Identifying the Author's Purpose

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**What does the boy teach you about Christmas and Santa?  
Why do you think so?**

I can figure out the lessons or morals of the stories that I read and explain that message using details from the story.

CCSS: RL.3.2

## The Polar Express: Identifying the Author's Purpose

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**The Polar Express: Identifying the Author's Purpose**

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**What does the boy teach you about Christmas and Santa?  
Why do you think so?**



## Identifying the Author's Purpose

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Who is the author of your book?

What was the author's purpose for writing this book? How do you know?

To Persuade       To Inform       To Entertain

I know because...

What do you think the author wanted you to think about while reading this book?

Draw a picture of the most important thing the author made you think about while reading.

### Directions:

1. Answer each of the questions.
2. Carefully cut on the dotted line.
3. Glue, tape, or staple into your reader's notebook.

# Common Core State Standards Correlation

## The Polar Express Lesson Plans, Resources, and Activities

The lesson plans, resources, and activities for use with *The Polar Express* correlate with the following English Language Arts Common Core State Standards for third grade.

### Identifying the Author's Purpose Lesson Plan and Resources

#### Reading: Literature

**RL.3.2** – Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.

**RL.3.6** – Distinguish their own point of view from that of the narrator or those of the characters.

**RL.3.10** – By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories and poetry, at the high end of the grades 2-3 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

#### Reading: Foundational Skills

**RF.3.3** – Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.

**RF.3.4** – Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.

#### Writing

**W.3.8** – Recall information from experiences or gather information from print and digital sources; take brief notes on sources and sort evidence into provided categories.

#### Speaking & Listening

**SL.3.1d** – Explain their own ideas and understanding in the light of the discussion.

**SL.3.2** – Determine the main ideas and supporting details of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

**SL.3.3** – Ask and answer questions about information from a speaker, offering appropriate elaboration and detail.

#### Language

**L.3.6** – Acquire and use accurately grade appropriate conversational, general, academic, and domain-specific words and phrases, including those that signal spatial and temporal relationships (eg, *After dinner that night we went looking for them*).