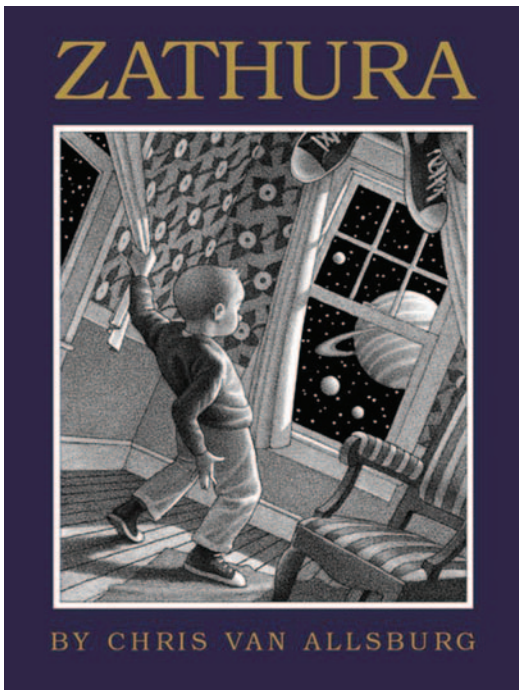


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See the major motion picture,  
*blasting into movie theatres this November!*

## ZATHURA

Written and illustrated by

**CHRIS VAN ALLSBURG**

the Caldecott Medal-winning author of  
*The Polar Express* and *Jumanji*

Chris Van Allsburg has become Hollywood's most reliable source for family entertainment, and for good reason. This fall another one of his books will make its big-screen debut for the third time, and all signs point to a third blockbuster. *Zathura*, directed by Jon Favreau and starring Tim Robbins, blasts into movie theaters on November 11, 2005. Van Allsburg's first book to be adapted into a movie, the Caldecott Medal-winning *Jumanji*, grossed \$100 million at the box office in 1995 and went on to become one of Sony Pictures' best-selling family titles on video and DVD. *The Polar Express*, his second Caldecott Medal winner, took in more than \$280 million in box office sales worldwide last year. This year, the movie properties inspired by Van Allsburg's books barrel toward the half *billion* dollar mark with *Zathura*, the October re-release of *Jumanji* on video and DVD, and the November video and DVD release of *The Polar Express*. Van Allsburg's magic continues into the fall of 2006, the projected release date of his next movie, *The Widow's Broom*. And that's not all ...

With combined book sales of more than 9 million copies, he is a driving force in publishing. *Zathura* hit bestseller lists when it was first published in 2002, and it's sure to visit them again this fall, along with an exciting selection of six movie tie-in editions for children at every age. This year also marks the twentieth anniversary of Van Allsburg's masterpiece, *The Polar Express*, which spent the better part of late last year as the number one best-selling children's book in the country.

More

When **Zathura** was published three years ago, it was the first book Van Allsburg had written and illustrated in seven years — his longest hiatus since he began publishing. Despite the break, or perhaps because of it, the story was full of the power, mystery, and appeal that forged him a place in the pantheon of children’s authors. **Zathura** starts where 1982’s *Jumanji* ends, in a clever final twist that sees the perilous game fall into the hands of Danny and Walter Budwing. Readers had to wait twenty years to find out that when the brothers get home, they find another game, *Zathura: A Space Adventure*, wedged in the bottom of the *Jumanji* box.

**Zathura** unleashes intergalactic challenges that require even the quarreling Budwing brothers to work as a team. While Walter ignores his younger brother, Danny, and watches TV, Danny explores the mysterious game. After a roll of the dice, a game card pops out of the board’s edge: “Meteor showers, take evasive action.” Before Danny can warn Walter, a rock the size of a refrigerator falls through the ceiling and crushes the television. Soon their yard and everything beyond it is outer space, and with game cards causing gravity shifts, robots and aliens in attack mode, black holes, and time shifts, they are in for the ride of their lives before they can return to Earth.

**Zathura** is unique among Van Allsburg’s work because it brings so much of his personal life into its pages. The Budwing house is based on his own in Providence, Rhode Island, and his two daughters served as models for the drawings of Danny and Walter Budwing. Their sibling relationship fuels the dialogue between Walter and Danny — from their bickering born out of boredom to their cooperation born out of necessity. This personal dynamic enlivens the fantastic child’s-eye perspective that has become Van Allsburg’s trademark.

Chris Van Allsburg’s phenomenal publishing career began twenty-six years ago with some modest drawings. His wife thought they had a strong narrative quality and Houghton Mifflin agreed. In 1979 they published *The Garden of Abdul Gasazi*, which earned Van Allsburg unprecedented praise (“This is without question one of the best —and most original — picture books in years.” — *New York Times*) and a Caldecott Honor Award, a rare achievement for a first-time author/illustrator. Fifteen books later, Van Allsburg is one of America’s most awarded children’s author/illustrators and a creative powerhouse in Hollywood.

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\$18.00  
32 pages  
Originally published 2002

## About the Author

# CHRIS VAN ALLSBURG



Photo © Constance Brown

Parents, educators, and children have been known to develop a kind of obsession with the books of CHRIS VAN ALLSBURG. His work appeals to such diverse audiences because it is neither simplistic nor formulaic. Van Allsburg doesn't write with an eye toward what an eight-year-old child might enjoy, but rather what he himself would like. The only consistent element of his books is the fascinating, often mysterious, and occasionally menacing way he approaches the question "What if?" What if a boy awoke one night to find a massive steam engine in front of his house? What if a roll of the dice on a simple board game could actually bring the game to life? What if a witch had to retire her flying broom?

Chris Van Allsburg was raised in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He attended the University of Michigan with the vague idea of studying law, but the art courses he took as a lark proved more interesting than anything else he studied. In 1972, he graduated with a degree in sculpture and moved to

Providence, Rhode Island, where he continued his study of sculpture at the Rhode Island School of Design. Shortly after he received his graduate degree, Van Allsburg began to show his sculpture in New York City galleries, where their surreal imagery quickly won him a reputation as an artist to watch. He didn't begin drawing until 1979, when his teaching commitments at RISD and a cold studio too far across town kept him from his sculpture.

The black-and-white artwork he created in carbon pencil and charcoal appealed to his wife, Lisa, who used pictures books in her elementary school art classes. She felt her husband's pictures had the quality of illustration, and with the encouragement of a friend, the illustrator David Macaulay, she decided to show the work to children's book editors. In Boston, Lisa visited Walter Lorraine at Houghton Mifflin, Macaulay's editor. Lorraine looked at a drawing, which showed a lump in a carpet and a man raising a chair to hit it (an image much like the one printed in Van Allsburg's *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick*) and said, "If he can get this much storytelling content into one piece of art, I know he can create a children's book." Lisa Van Allsburg walked out with the promise of a contract, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Houghton Mifflin has published fifteen of Van Allsburg's books: from his Caldecott Honor Award-winning first book, *The Garden of Abdul Gasazi*, to his most recent space adventure, *Zathura*. The success of Van Allsburg's *Jumanji* and *The Polar Express* is no less than phenomenal: both received Caldecott Medals, *Jumanji* was made into a movie in 1995, and *The Polar Express*, a classic with millions of copies sold, was a blockbuster release in 2004. His third movie, *Zathura*, will be released on November 11, 2005, followed in the fall of 2006 by *The Widow's Broom*, for which he wrote the screenplay. *The Sweetest Fig* is also in development for the big screen.

Chris Van Allsburg lives in Providence, Rhode Island, with his wife, Lisa, and their two daughters, Sophie and Anna.

# # #

## A Q&A with **CHRIS VAN ALLSBURG**

**Q.** How involved were you in the process of *Zathura* being made into a movie?

**A** I read the screenplay and its revisions and then offered suggestions. However, I was not really involved in the movie story's development.

**Q.** Was that different from your involvement in the *Jumanji* and *Polar Express* movies?

**A** Yes. In the case of *Jumanji*, I wrote a draft of the script that established the story's structure and its time-skipping conclusion. However, that draft was subsequently rewritten by others, greatly altering what I'd laid out. With respect to *The Polar Express*, my involvement was more like the experience I had with *Zathura*.

**Q.** Do you ever feel a sense of loss when one of your books is made into a movie, or is it a sad but excited feeling, like a parent dropping his child off at college for the first time?

**A** Relinquishing the film rights of a book is more like selling your home. You may have spent years perfecting your house's design and décor, only to discover a new owner is eager to tear out the things that you think are the most charming.

You can't move out of your house and require the new residents to leave everything untouched. You can't sell the film rights to a book and expect that the studio or filmmakers will not want to do a little "redecorating."

In the case of my own works, because they are invariably rather small houses, the new owners need to put up very large "additions." The challenge then is to make sure that the greatly enlarged house still has some of the feeling and appeal of the original structure.

**Q.** With all the success your books have had in Hollywood, do you find yourself writing and illustrating like you always have, or do you now think about how a book might translate into a movie?

**A** When I write or illustrate, my concern is simply to make the best book that I can. If doing that produces something that lends itself to a film story, so much the better. I wouldn't choose subject matter or a graphic style because it seems to translate easily to film. That would lead to choices that might not make the best book.

**Q.** You took a seven-year hiatus between *Bad Day at Riverbend* and *Zathura*—the longest in your publishing career. What were you working on?

**A** I was writing multiple drafts of a screenplay for *The Widow's Broom* (a project that may or may not go into production soon). I was spending time with my daughters. I was making some posters; I was getting the *Polar Express* film rolling; I designed a house for a piece of property I ended up not buying. I built a model of a flying boat with a four-foot wingspan, made entirely of erector set parts, and then I built a five-foot-tall model of a Ferris wheel, also made out of erector set parts. I kept busy.

## A Q&A with **CHRIS VAN ALLSBURG** (cont.)

**Q.** Your books are as popular with adults as they are with children. Why do you think that is?

**A** Possibly because I don't write my books for children. I never wonder, before I start working on a book, what children would like to read and look at and then try to produce it for them. I simply attempt to tell a good story and then use the pictures to bring the story to life. I know, because they are picture books, my efforts look as if they are intended for children, and I suppose in a sense they are. But they are not formulated, so to speak, for children.

**Q.** Where do you get your inspiration?

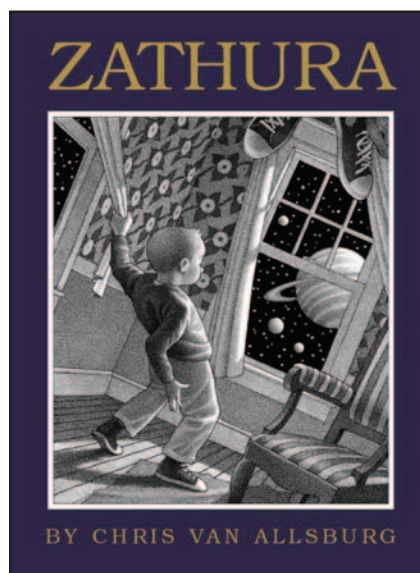
**A** Everywhere. The memory of vague disappointment as a child that board games were never as exciting a promised; the sensation one has on a boat when the sails fill and the vessel is pulled along so swiftly it seems as if it could rise out of the water; an early-morning encounter with two tiny insects on my kitchen counter; the possible cause of an Indian summer that delays the arrival of my favorite season—fall.

**Q.** You got your start in sculpture and often show pictures of your pieces when you speak. With all of the success your books have achieved, are you still inspired to sculpt?

**A** I still draw pictures of things I would like to make. I no longer have sculpture studio, so it is not simply a matter of taking a few months and going off to make something.

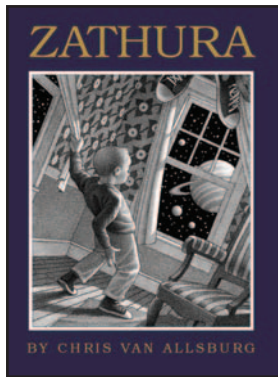
**Q.** Are you working on a new book?

**A** Even when I'm not actually sitting at the drawing board writing or making pictures for a book, I believe I am working on a book. I always have ideas and often contemplate them quietly and imagine the books those ideas could become.



# Let your imagination roam!

Chris Van Allsburg's innovative, award-winning books capture the imagination, pique the senses, and amaze the mind.



**Zathura (2002)**  
**ISBN 0-618-25396-3**  
**\$18.00**

**New York Times Bestseller**  
**November 11, 2005 major**  
**motion picture release**  
**starring Tim Robbins**



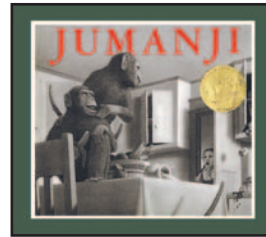
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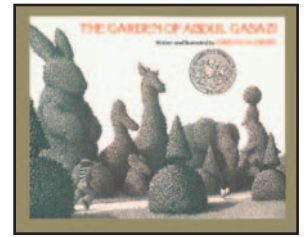
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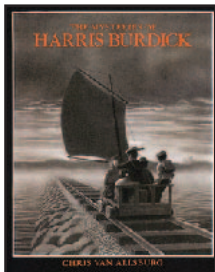
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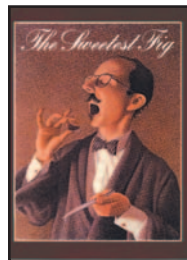
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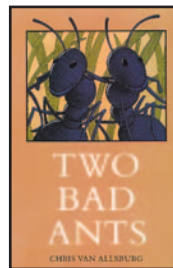
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**The Stranger (1986)**

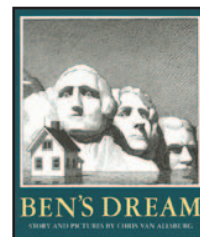
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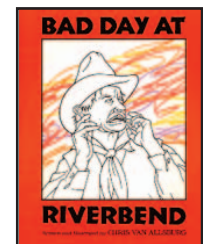
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