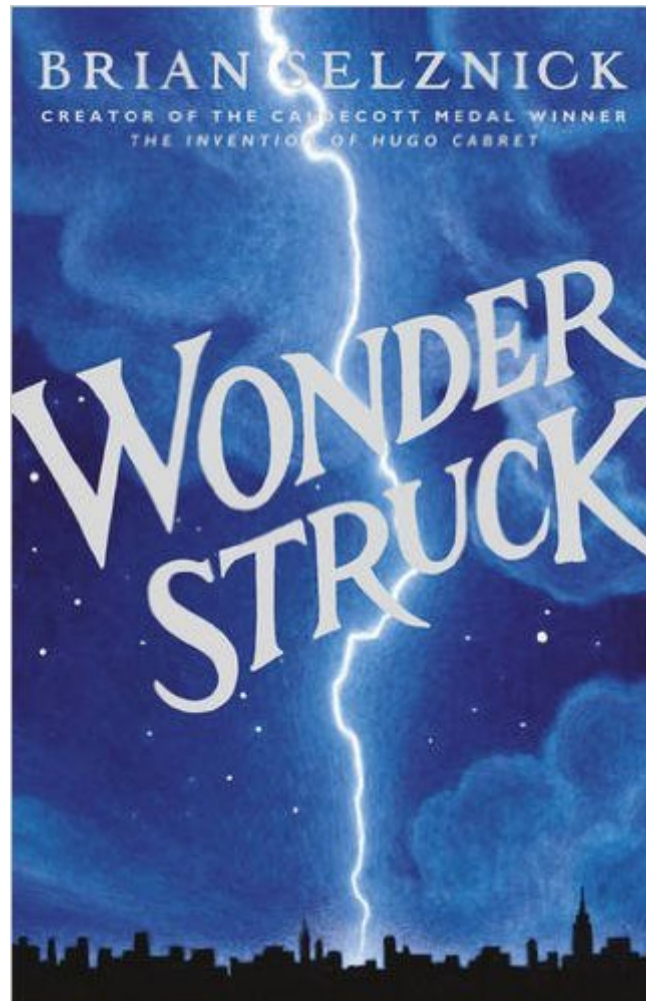


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# Wonderstruck (Schneider Family Book Award - Middle School Winner)



## Synopsis

From Brian Selznick, the creator of the Caldecott Medal winner *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, comes another breathtaking tour de force. Playing with the form he created in his trailblazing debut novel *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, Brian Selznick once again sails into uncharted territory and takes readers on an awe-inspiring journey. Ben and Rose secretly wish their lives were different. Ben longs for the father he has never known. Rose dreams of a mysterious actress whose life she chronicles in a scrapbook. When Ben discovers a puzzling clue in his mother's room and Rose reads an enticing headline in the newspaper, both children set out alone on desperate quests to find what they are missing. Set fifty years apart, these two independent stories--Ben's told in words, Rose's in pictures--weave back and forth with mesmerizing symmetry. How they unfold and ultimately intertwine will surprise you, challenge you, and leave you breathless with wonder. Rich, complex, affecting, and beautiful--with over 460 pages of original artwork--*Wonderstruck* is a stunning achievement from a uniquely gifted artist and visionary. <sup>^</sup>

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 830L (What's this?)

Series: Schneider Family Book Award - Middle School Winner

Hardcover: 608 pages

Publisher: Scholastic Press; F First Edition edition (September 13, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0545027896

ISBN-13: 978-0545027892

Product Dimensions: 2 x 5.8 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.8 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars <sup>^</sup> <sup>^</sup> See all reviews <sup>^</sup> (348 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #8,146 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #5 in <sup>^</sup> Books > Comics & Graphic Novels > Comic Books #37 in <sup>^</sup> Books > Children's Books > Arts, Music & Photography > Art #38 in <sup>^</sup> Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Orphans & Foster Homes

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Many of my friends are just discovering Brian Selznick's book <sup>^</sup> *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*,

perhaps because of the movie coming out in a few months time. In that delightful tale, we are whisked away to a Parisian train station, a boy with a few secrets, an even more secretive marvelous machine, and the redemptive powers of it all. Selznick somehow managed to blend a few of my favorite things in that story (trains! silent movies! kids!) into quite a modern and engaging story. The question is: would lightning strike again? The answer is, I'm so happy to report, a resounding yes. "Wonderstruck" is a blessing, a marvel, another masterpiece from this author/artist. In this book, we meet Ben, deaf in one ear, mourning the loss of his librarian mother from icy roads in Northern Minnesota in the 1970's. Living with aunt and uncle now, Ben longs to unlock many of his own mysteries, from his dreaming about wolves to the identity of his father. Ben starts his journey by returning one night to his house, in which going through his mother's things, he uncovers many things she had kept hidden from him, which soon launches his quest. In a second story, told not through text but pictures, we meet Rose, a girl living in 1920's New Jersey with views of New York City, who is starstruck by a silent film actress and longs to see her. Wonderstruck tells and shows the stories of these two people in ways that surprise and delight the reader through the story, none of which shall be revealed here. Selznick does many things in this book that, beyond the marvelous story he tells, show true craftsmanship. First, as it was true with Hugo Cabret, his illustrations are heartfelt and glorious. As an artist, he understands the importance of the eyes, and in each of his drawings that have characters in them, you are immediately drawn to them. It's so reflective of silent films, in which the performers told the stories with their eyes. Secondly, he starts Ben's and Rose's stories in two different ways: Ben uses words, Rose uses pictures. While the stories are occurring in different decades, he skillfully blends the end of one part of the first story, and seemingly starts the second one at a similar spot. I didn't notice he was doing this until halfway through the book, and by then, I was sold on his brilliance. Wonderstruck manages to take some more of my interests and blends them together: New York City, museums, dioramas, and Minnesota (that's where I was born). In fact, as I was reading this book, on my coffee table sits a book about the dioramas in the American Museum of Natural History: *Windows on Nature: The Great Habitat Dioramas of the American Museum of Natural History*. It's odd how life arranges itself to coincide with stories. Finally, a friendship forms between Ben and another boy (details not to be revealed here!) that so touched me, that it brought out the theme that Selznick always dwells on: relationships. I can't recommend this book highly enough; it's filled with honest people, real emotions, and at its heart, the human relationships we all strive to thrive upon. This is the book of the year.

In 1977 in Gunflint Lake, Minnesota Ben's mother just died. Ben has to share a room with his annoying cousin who makes fun of him for being born deaf in one ear even though his old house--the cottage he shared with his mom--is right down the road. Ben is drawn back to the cottage as strongly as he is to the wolves that chase him in his dreams. When a clue about the father he's never met points to New York City, Ben knows he has to follow it. In 1927, Rose is suffocating at home with her father in Hoboken, New Jersey. All Rose wants is to be able to go out by herself, like the other kids, and to watch Lillian Mayhew in silent films. When Rose learns that sound is coming to the movies and that Lillian Mayhew is starring in a play right across the river in New York City, how can she stay away? Will New York City reveal its secrets for Ben and Rose? Will either of them find what they're searching for in *Wonderstruck* (2011) by Brian Selznick? *Wonderstruck* is Selznick's second book told in words and pictures like his Caldecott winning *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*. In this book Ben's story in words intertwines in surprising ways with Rose's story told through pictures. Although the format is still brilliant and the story is once again clever and utterly original *Wonderstruck* lacks some of the verve and guileless charm of *Hugo Cabret*. The story is messier with a more immediate sense of loss and details that never tie together quite as neatly as they did in Selznick's earlier novel. \*New York's American Museum of Natural History plays a prominent role in this story adding a nice to dimension to the story that will make it especially appealing for some readers\*\* but *Wonderstruck* felt very busy as though it was tackling too much in one book. That is not to say that Brian Selznick is not a genius. He is--that fact is beyond debate. He combines words and pictures in a new way reinventing the whole idea of printed stories and blurring the line between prose fiction and picture books. His books are also always filled with historical details and facts that are well documented in a bibliography at the end of the story. *Wonderstruck* is a particularly fine pick for anyone with an interest in New York City or museums. \*I'm thinking particularly of Jamie's behavior in the book. Also the fact that Ben never felt much of a loss after the lightning strike. Did anyone else find that odd? \*\*Like everyone who went to my grade school in 1993. Our building had asbestos so for a few months while it was being removed my entire school was bussed to the AMNH and we had classes there. We ate lunch under the whale every day. True story. Possible Pairings: *The Graveyard Book* by Neil Gaiman and Dave McKean, *From the Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankenweiler* by E. L. Konigsburg, *Holes* by Louis Sachar, *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* by Brian Selznick, *Maniac Magee* by Jerry Spinelli

Two stories, set fifty years apart; interwoven. One told through pictures and the other told through words. The first story is of Ben, a young boy in the 1977 who just lost his mother and sets out to look

for his father. The second story follows Rose, a young girl from 1927's New Jersey who sets out to look for her idol, a movie star. Both children's search take them to New York City. Both children - deaf - are struggling to find what they are looking for in a world where hearing is normal and sometimes taken for granted. In a sense, they end up mirroring each other's search and face similar hardships. How their lives intertwine in the end, though I was able to guess, was still very bittersweet. I enjoyed the illustrations immensely. Brian Selznick sets out to tell a story through his pictures and he succeeds. The details in some of the pictures were amazing. I found myself looking forward to Rose's story even though I loved reading Ben's. Brian also gives the reader a glimpse into Deaf culture, a culture that I've never experienced, and opened my eyes to a different lifestyle. I appreciated the way he told the story, giving the reader a glimpse into a world that some might not be familiar with. The story also echoes with the longing we all have to belong somewhere, to be a part of something. *Wonderstruck* is, at its core, a story of acceptance and community. It's quite relatable and because of this, I think many people will enjoy reading it.

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