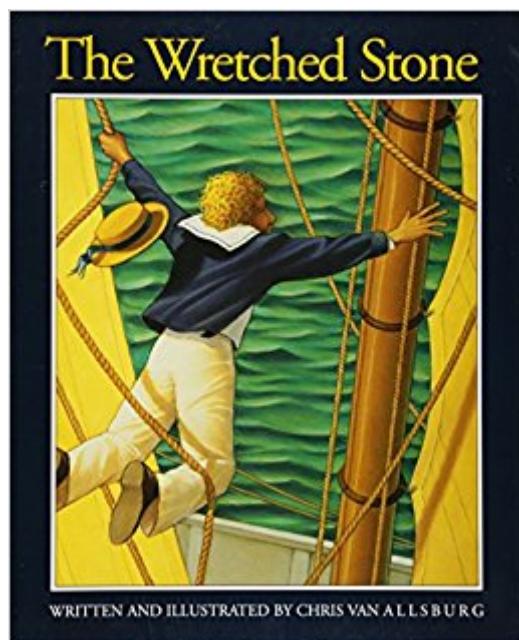


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The Wretched Stone



Synopsis

In a story recounted through the daily log of Captain Allan Hope, the sailors aboard the Rita Anne become mesmerized and transformed by a mysterious glowing rock, and only music and books can restore them to normal.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: AD580L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 32 pages

Publisher: Houghton Mifflin; 1st edition (October 28, 1991)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0395533074

ISBN-13: 978-0395533079

Product Dimensions: 8.9 x 0.4 x 11 inches

Shipping Weight: 15.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 49 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #69,470 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #44 in Books > Children's Books > Cars, Trains & Things That Go > Boats & Ships #567 in Books > Children's Books > Mysteries & Detectives #1973 in Books > Children's Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Fantasy & Magic

Age Range: 4 - 7 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

Customer Reviews

A captain's log records the puzzling transformation of his ship's sailors after a glowing rock from an uncharted island is brought aboard. They turn into apes, insensate to the captain's orders and "fascinated by the rock." A storm nearly scuttles the ship but also breaks the stone's hold over the men, who return to normal--except for an inordinate fondness for bananas. Once again, Van Allsburg voyages into an unknown territory that is mystical and eerie--though his somewhat overblown prose substitutes unsettling obfuscation for dramatic storytelling. His sharp-edged, ultra-realistic paintings are a marvel in their own right, from the otherworldly luminiscence of the ominous island to the deep indigos used to create the stillness of the ship and sea by night to oddly angled, even dizzying perspectives of the ship's hold and mast. All ages. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Grade 2-4-- Van Allsburg's latest offering may be seen as preachy or provocative, allegorical or obvious, but like much of his previous work, it is bound to attract attention and stimulate discussion. Written in the form of a ship's log, the book outlines the unusual events that take place aboard the Rita Anne after the discovery of a glowing stone on a mysterious, deserted island. In a few brief entries, Captain Randall Ethan Hope notes his initial pleasure in the cultured and convivial crew, details the finding of the luminous stone, and divulges its terrible transformative effect--his shipmates have been turned into primates. When a sudden storm blows up, the Captain expects the worst. However, the ship survives long enough for the men to be rehabilitated and subsequently rescued. The stone is sent to the bottom of the sea by Captain Hope and all on board swear themselves to secrecy. The dramatic illustrations increase the suspense and surprise inherent in the unlikely adventures described. Visual humor, although used sparingly, also adds to the appeal of the colorful paintings. While this picture book could be read merely as an exotic ocean adventure, literacy advocates and fans of book discussions will enjoy ruminating over the symbolism of the mysterious glowing stone and arguing over the interpretation of Van Allsburg's oblique message.

--Lisa Dennis, The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh

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The Wretched Stone is the second book I have read in the Van Allsburg line of books. The glowing stone that fascinated the sailors could have been compared to television "in the old days." Nowadays, it could be compared to smart phones or one of the many other pieces of technology that we have in abundance. That glowing stone could be taking us all over if we aren't careful. A wonderfully well written book that really makes you think. Also, maybe a bit intense for younger children.

A favorite by Chris Van Allsburg. I read this to first graders as a cautionary tale about too much screen time. My 5 yr. old grandson needs strict limits with screen time. He got the message with this lovely book. I gently used dabs of double-faced tape to keep the key pages a surprise for more impact. The book has wonderful illustrations that encourage inferences by leaving key ideas out of view.

This is by far my favorite book to share with students. I love to see the connections they make.

Even my eight-year-old grandchild got the message of this wonderful allegory. The Wretched Stone is an important story with a message-- a great reminder lesson for children and adults alike, about

the dangers of watching too much television. It's so easy to slide into the passive oblivion in front of the tube. We need to tear ourselves and our children away from the "glowing orb." The sailors on the ship became captive to a glowing stone that said nothing. Anything like that around your house?

The Wretched Stone sends the perfect message to kids today (and adults) who are glued to the TV, computer, video games, or other electronics. Van Allsburg uses pictures and journal writing to imply what happens when you give up books, music, and conversation. Excellent for inferring lessons and children of all ages.

As an Elementary school librarian, this was always one of my favorite books to read aloud to my students ages K-3rd. They all loved the story, then I was thrilled during discussion time to see the light go on as they came to realize just what that 'wretched stone' was. They were all appalled when they thought about how much time they spent, sitting around staring at the TV in their house. So I had to order a copy to have in my own home to read to my Grandchildren.

If you have trouble getting your kids to turn off the tv...here is a wonderful adventure book to show the kids how too much television viewing can turn you into an "ape"! Filled with metaphors for older children (8 and up) to figure out: Could the strange island where they found the wretched stone once have been inhabited with intelligent life? Perhaps all that is left (after pollution, technology) is unedible vegetation, undrinkable water, stinky odors--but the "stone" remains, ("rough textured, gray with portion that is flat and smooth as glass,"), sound like a tv? How about the lightning that knocks out the "power" of the stone/tv? And I love the part where..."It seems that those who knew how to READ recovered more quickly." Another recommended "anti-tv" book for kids: "Fred's TV" by, Clive Dobson.(may be out of print, but can still get in online!)

My favorite book to use in the classroom. Keeps the kids guessing about the real meaning.

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