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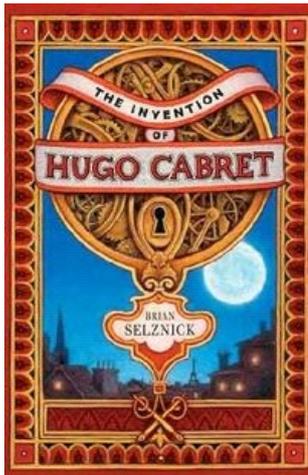
The Re-Invention of Hugo Cabret: The Boy Who Loves Movies Gets One of His Own

February 1, 2012 | [Not Quite Miss Rumphius](#) | [Comments \(1\)](#)



Hello Everyone,

I'm **Not Quite Miss Rumphius** and this is the blog for the Children's Department at North York Central Library. Welcome back!



Brian Selznick's giant door stopper of a book, *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, has a perfectly nice cover. But it's not ever going to be the most inviting book to pick up, especially for a child who's thinking about reading a really big book on their own for the first time and isn't quite sure they can pull it off. But never fear -- as mothers everywhere are fond of saying, it's what's inside that counts.

And what insides this book has! Author Brian Selznick lays out an engrossing story about a twelve-year-old boy, Hugo Cabret, an orphan who is living within the cavernous walls of a Paris train station in 1931. Hugo yearns for a way to reconnect with his beloved father who has recently died. And he thinks he may have found the way to do this, through a mechanical man called an automaton that his father was working on at the time of

his death.

First, however, Hugo must repair the automaton, with all its complex clockwork and intricate parts -- no easy task. At the same time, Hugo must avoid detection by the cruel Station Inspector. How Hugo overcomes his difficulties and breaks free from his small, lonely world is due to three things: his knack for fixing things, his love of movies, and a chance encounter with a shopkeeper who, like Hugo, has a few secrets of his own.

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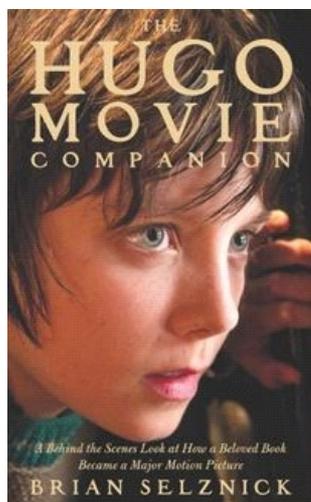
Selznick fits all the parts of this story together like the inner workings of one of the huge, smooth-running clocks that Hugo maintains. But it's the unique format of this book with its many black-and-white pictures -- not pure novel, not picture book, not graphic novel either -- that makes this book as marvellous as it is.

The illustrations, which are also by Selznick, don't just add to the story. They *are* the story. Like still frames from a movie, the illustrations show different vantage points -- up close on one page, now far away on another page. You feel like you could fan through the book's pages, like you do with a flip book, and watch all those images come to life.



It's because of those pictures, and the clever way they're used, that the reader moves smoothly and effortlessly through Hugo's often dangerous, always interesting world. We experience what Hugo experiences, at the same time he does.

It seemed almost inevitable that a book that celebrates movies, and one that uses movie-making techniques to tell its story, would be made into a movie itself. And, of course, that's exactly what has happened. But Hugo -- the movie uses a shortened version of the book's title -- isn't just any movie. It's a movie by famous filmmaker Martin Scorsese and most reviewers agree that he has done a terrific job of remaining true to the book while at the same time giving the story a new life on film.



Even if you haven't seen it, you probably already know some things about Hugo, including the fact that it recently nabbed an armful of nominations for the 2012 Academy Awards. What you may not know is that there is a companion book to the movie, and it's definitely worth your time, even if you're not planning to watch Hugo on the big screen anytime soon.

Think of this book as more than something that goes along with the movie. It's also a delightful companion to the original book. It's the place where Brian Selznick talks about where he got the idea for the story, how he came up with Hugo's name (it came from a toy he loved when he was a boy) and his connection to the world of movies (he's related to David O. Selznick, the producer of *Gone with the Wind*.)

There's a section written by Martin Scorsese about the early days of movie-making and another section on real-life filmmaker Georges Melies, who plays a key role in both the movie and the book. And there's also an excellent chapter on automatons, those weird mechanical beings that can walk tightropes, play the piano, write poems and that seem, well, almost alive.

In short, this companion has something for everyone -- for anyone about to read the book, for someone who has read the book and wants to know more about Hugo's world, and for those people who have seen the movie and are interested in a behind-the-scenes look at how movies are created. It's filled with photos and drawings, sample pages from the screenplay and the musical score, costume sketches, and much, much more.

Best of all, it's easy to pick up and carry around, and just right for dipping into again and again. It's the perfect book about a movie about a book that celebrates movies. (And you know how common those are.)

Happy looking and happy reading,

Not Quite Miss Rumphius

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