

All Aboard! The Polar Express Reading Adventure!

Materials Needed:

- The book 'The Polar Express' by Chris Van Allsburg
 - Paper (plain and construction)
 - Crayons or markers
 - Scissors (child-safe)
 - Glue stick
 - Optional: Hot chocolate ingredients, bell
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Get Ready for the Journey! (Introduction - 5 mins)

Ask your student: Have you ever been on a train? What noises does a train make? What happens on Christmas Eve? Tell them today you're going on a magical train ride by reading a special book called 'The Polar Express'. Ring a bell if you have one and say, "All aboard!"

Reading the Story (15-20 mins)

Read 'The Polar Express' aloud together. Use expressive voices for the different characters (the boy, the conductor, Santa). Pause at interesting parts to look closely at the illustrations and ask prediction questions like, "What do you think will happen next?" Encourage your student to join in with repeated phrases if they can.

Checking Our Tickets (Comprehension Check - 10 mins)

After reading, ask some questions to check understanding:

- Who is the main character? (The young boy)
- Where does the Polar Express train go? (To the North Pole)
- Who is waiting for the children at the North Pole? (Santa Claus)
- What gift does the boy ask for? (A silver bell from Santa's sleigh)
- What happens to the bell on the way home? (He loses it through a hole in his pocket)
- What special Christmas gift does he receive the next morning? (The bell!)
- Who can still hear the bell ring? (Those who truly believe)

Train Talk (Vocabulary - 5 mins)

Introduce a few key words from the story. Write them down and talk about what they mean:

- **Conductor:** The person in charge of the train.
- **Express:** A fast train with few stops.
- **Barren:** Empty, without trees or plants (like the desert of ice).
- **Polar:** Relating to the North or South Pole.
- **Believe:** To accept something as true.

Try using them in sentences!

Story Sequence Track (Sequencing Activity - 15 mins)

Cut 4-5 strips of paper. On each strip, write or draw a key event from the story (e.g., Boy hears the train, Gets on the Polar Express, Arrives at North Pole, Meets Santa, Gets the bell, Loses the bell, Finds the bell on Christmas). Mix up the strips. Ask your student to put the events back in the correct order, like laying down train tracks. Glue them onto a larger piece of paper in sequence.

End of the Line! (Wrap-up & Fun Extension - 10+ mins)

Talk about the magic of believing. Ask: What does it mean to believe in something you can't always see? Optional Activities:

- Make pretend train tickets for the Polar Express.
- Draw a picture of your favorite part of the story.
- Write a sentence about what you would ask Santa for.
- Enjoy a cup of "Hot, Hot, Hot Chocolate!" just like in the book.

Great job on your reading adventure today!