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# The Circus Ship



## **Synopsis**

With stunning artwork and a rhyming text, the illustrator of the Mercy Watson books tells a tale of human-animal connection full of humor and heart. When a circus ship runs aground off the coast of Maine, the poor animals are left on their own to swim the chilly waters. Staggering onto a nearby island, they soon win over the wary townspeople with their kind, courageous ways. So well do the critters blend in that when the greedy circus owner returns to claim them, villagers of all species conspire to outsmart the bloated blowhard. With buoyant rhymes and brilliantly caricatured illustrations evoking the early nineteenth century, Chris Van Dusen presents a hugely entertaining tale about the bonds of community — and a rare hidden-pictures spread for eagle-eyed readers of all ages.

## **Book Information**

Lexile Measure: 660L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 40 pages

Publisher: Candlewick (September 22, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 076363090X

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Product Dimensions: 10.1 x 0.4 x 10.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.9 out of 5 stars 255 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #11,627 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #9 in Books > Children's Books > Cars, Trains & Things That Go > Boats & Ships #15 in Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > United States > 1800s #41 in Books > Children's Books > Arts, Music & Photography > Performing Arts

Age Range: 4 - 8 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

## **Customer Reviews**

PreSchool-Grade 1After their steamship en route to Boston is wrecked in a storm, a troupe of circus animals escapes bad treatment and disaster, finding its way to an island off the coast of Maine. The 1800s residents are surprised to find zebras eating their gardens and alligators lounging on woodpiles. Sympathies change when a tiger saves a toddler from a blazing shed. When a messenger announces that the cruel circus owner is returning to claim his menagerie, the citizens

assist the animals in disguises and camouflage that confound him, leaving the friends to a peaceful coexistence. Van Dusen's rhymed text keeps a rollicking beat. His illustrations burst with color and energy and utilize perspective and texture to add drama and humor. Period details create a counterpoint with elements like a gorilla in a lifeboat. The spread of the animals in "hiding" is pure genius. The book honors the real circus animals that inspired this story. •Gay Lynn Van Vleck, Henrico County Library, Glen Allen, VA END

Chris Van Dusen is the illustrator of the Mercy Watson books by Kate DiCamillo. He wrote and illustrated IF I BUILT A CAR, an E.B. White Read Aloud Award Winner. He lives in Maine.

Mr Van Dusen's books are wonderful- we have time all! Fun, lyrical rhymes with great inventive stories and cheerful hilarious art. Actually fun for the adult to read. My kids 2- 4 love his books. This circus one has an especially fun page where the townspeople are trying to hide the circus animals so the mean ringmaster can't force them back to work for him...the animals are all cleverly camouflaged and our preschooler's had great fun finding them all. This is an author that never seems to get lazy with his stories. Randy Riley's really big hit, and If I built a car are two of our favorites, but they are all great. King Hugo's really big ego is great too!

This has been my go-to baby gift for years. (Before it was too difficult to get in hardcover, I would give Each Peach Pear Plum...a wonderful book by the husband-and-wife team, Allan & Janet Ahlberg.) The Circus Ship's rhyming is clever, the illustrations are perfectly executed, and there is even a fun seek-and-find which is part of the story. Everyone I have given it to has told me that, after their child was old enough to understand it, The Circus Ship has become their favorite story. I collect children's books (I have hundreds) and Chris Van Dusen is the best! I highly recommend all of his books.

I heard great things about this book and bought it based on these recommendations as a birthday present for my niece. My own children (ages 2.5 and 5) saw it before I had a chance to wrap it and wanted to read it. They were both engaged as we read and we had to look back on the illustrations several times to spot all the little details Van Dusen includes in his work. I will more than likely be buying another copy for us to add to our own library!

There's barely been a month in my son's young life when he wouldn't sit for this whole book. He's

2.5 now, and we both love it. The illustrations are gorgeous and expressive. The story is great. And is this iambic pentameter? It's got a great rhythm and all the elements of a great drama .. act of God, a villain, charming victims, a third-act plot twist (Emma Rose!), and all in a format a 2-year-old can love. I love this book and it's a go-to gift.

My kids and I LOVE this book! It is based on a true historical event. This is the Author's personal favorite he said in a book signing I attended and I can see why. My kids learned about history and the illustrations are phenomenal!!!

This was a favorite book of the buyer at a local children's store - and we have to agree that it was fun, had a compelling story that rolled off the tongue and wonderful illustrations. All three children (2, 5 and 8) like it - but it's a favorite of the 5 year who especially loves the pages where you have to find all the silly places the animals are hiding from the ridiculously bad circus master. Recommend!

A favorite among all my grands and other young ones that I've shared it with. Illustrations are terrific and one page involves the reader in finding animals hidden...always great to add some interaction. Fun story line!

We love this book! Chris van Dusen is one of our favorite authors. His stories are so easy to read and rhyme in a great way. The illustrations are also fantastic! My kids love finding the animals in the pictures.

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