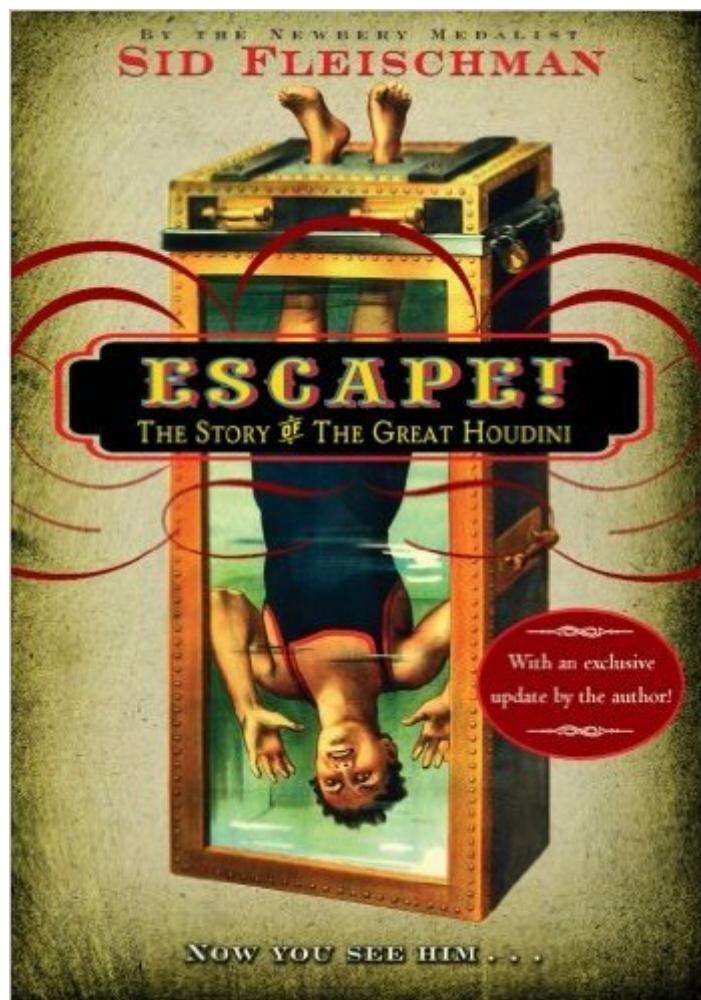


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# Escape!: The Story Of The Great Houdini



## **Synopsis**

How did he walk through walls, escape drowning, and shatter iron chains that were tightly wrapped around him? The rare photos in this book might help you figure it out. So might the exclusive update about the rumor that Houdini was poisoned. But just remember, a true magician never reveals his tricks. . . .

## **Book Information**

Lexile Measure: 940 (What's this?)

Paperback: 240 pages

Publisher: Greenwillow Books; Reprint edition (April 22, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0060850965

ISBN-13: 978-0060850968

Product Dimensions: 7 x 0.5 x 10 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 starsÂ  See all reviewsÂ  (33 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #427,457 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #37 inÂ  Books > Children's Books > Activities, Crafts & Games > Games > Magic #97 inÂ  Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Performing Arts #842 inÂ  Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > United States

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## **Customer Reviews**

Oh me, oh my, another Houdini biography? A person could be forgiven for giving a groan at hearing that yet another such beast was being churned out of the publishing houses. Even the library with the poorest stock of literary biographies for children will find that it has at least one moth-eaten old bio of that greatest of self-promoters. So it was with great trepidation that I examined Sid Fleischman's newest contribution to the world of non-fiction. Admittedly, the man had his credentials in order. Not only can he boast to have met and conversed often with Houdini's wife, Bess, but he has actually been a magician himself. How many other biographers of the mysterious man can say as much? And then reading through "Escape!" I found the book to be an entirely enjoyable lark. Relying a great deal on Fleischman's trademark easy-going voice and writing style, the book sets out to debunk as many Houdini myths as it possibly can while simultaneously reestablishing its

subject to be the amazing genius he truly was. Fleischman doesn't flinch from the less enjoyable aspects of Houdini's life, but neither does he degrade the man who could arguably have been called America's greatest entertainer. Born Erich Weiss in Hungary in 1874, Houdini's family moved from Budapest to the United States when he was four. Times were tough, even in Appleton, Wisconsin where the family took up residence. At 12, Erich ran away from home, later rejoining the family in New York City. He came into the world of magic slowly, but when he concentrated on the subject he applied himself fully. Fleischman's book shows how Houdini was both a great magician and a great self-promoter.

Escape! The Story of The Great Houdini, a magician's tale conjured from a magician's top hat, is a showman's spirited triumph. Sid Fleischman, himself a magician as documented in The Abracadabra Kid, fills each page with enchanting insights not possible by writers outside the magic circle. Beyond that, the reader of both Fleischman books will soon discover many similarities between the author and his subject. Both Jews, both taken up by the magician's wand at an early age, both showmen, both devoted to lifelong sweethearts, and both eager to extend a hand to those just coming up the pike. No wonder Fleischmen had to write this book. In addition to facts and figures found in traditional tellings, Fleischman reveals absurdities of the magic trade in the same way that the Great Houdini did at the turn of the last century. Though an illusionist to the very end, Houdini grew to loathe spiritualists who preyed on the grieving relatives of young men lost in WWI and went to considerable lengths to expose them. Fleischman continues the debunking. Through the vagabond subject's experiences, the author deftly slips the history of the era--WWI, the advent of movies, the demise of vaudeville--into every chapter. Comparing the value of dollars then and now Fleischman gives the reader a strong sense of both history and economics. Inflation is no illusion. Literary allusions and theatrical terms abound in context, without confusing the unfamiliar reader. Fleischman's trademark promotion of reading slides in unexpectedly as he shows time and again how much this grammar school dropout relied on his books to improve upon his language, his image, his birthdate, and his country of origin and to sharpen his trade skills and to build his 5,000-book collection.

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