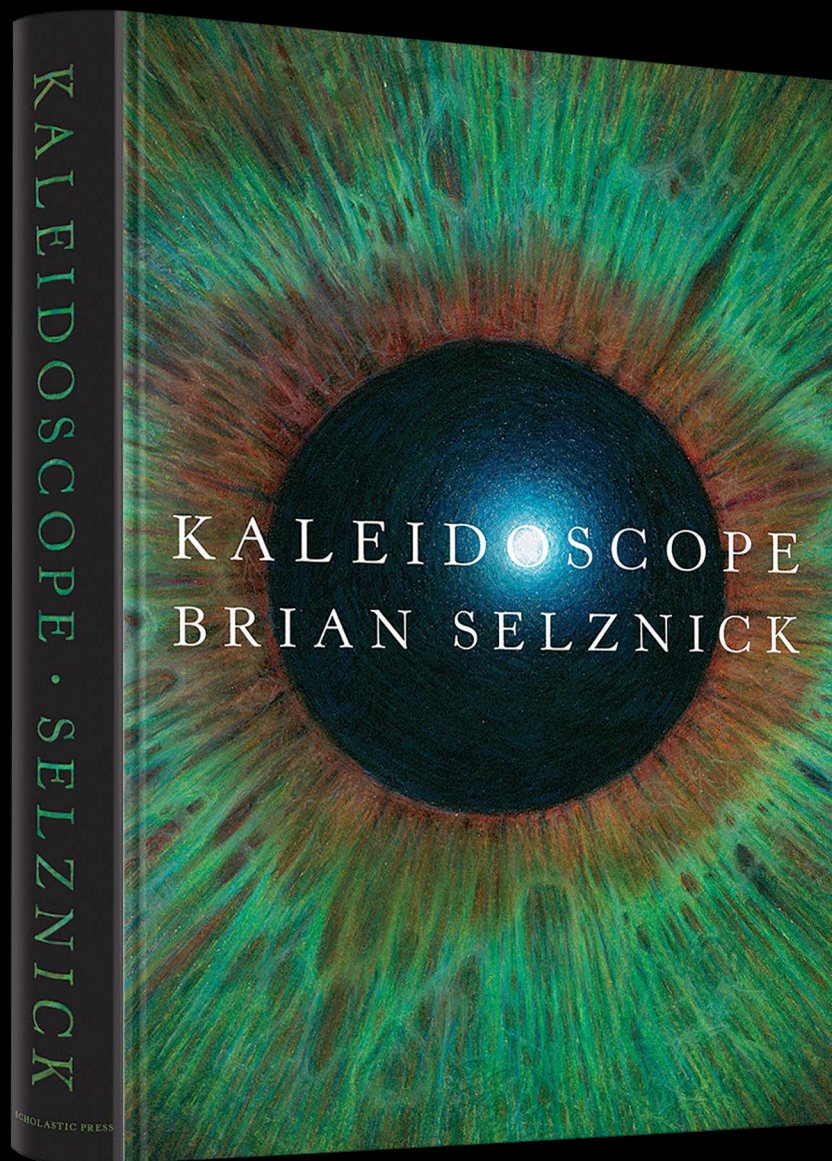




READING GUIDE

Ages 10+
Grades 4+

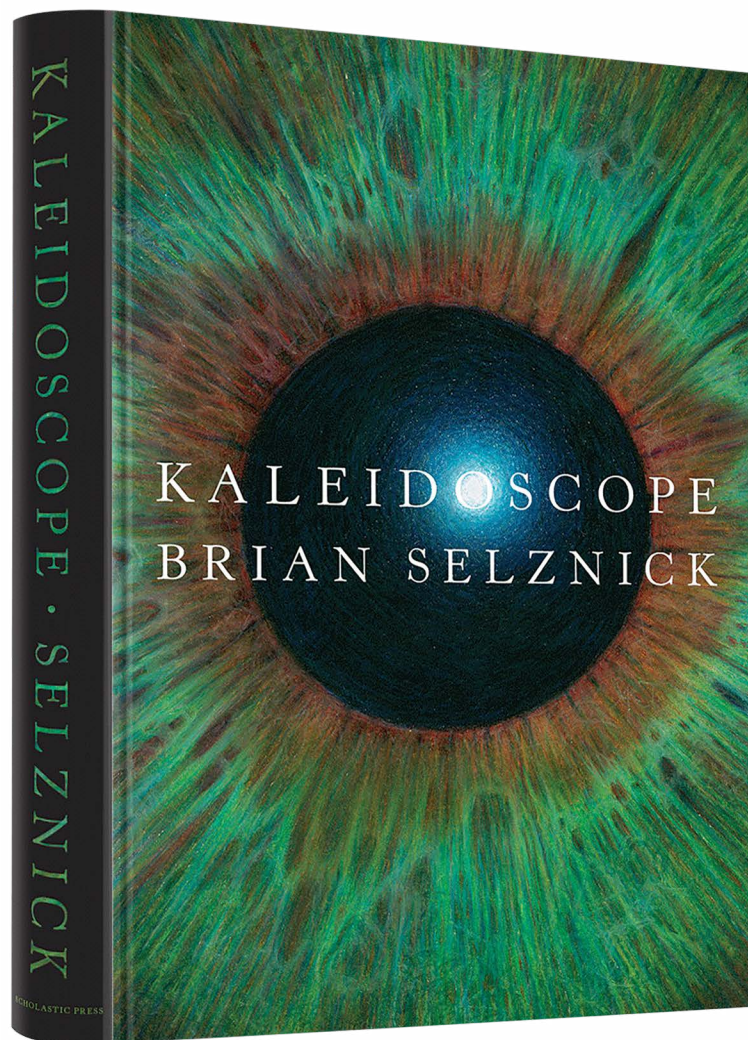


THEMES, EXPLORATIONS, AND EXTENSIONS



 SCHOLASTIC

ABOUT THE BOOK



HC: 9781338777246, \$19.99

Also available as an ebook and an audiobook

★ “Selznick examines the unique realities surrounding love and death . . . Each [chapter] is introduced by an exquisite, graphite illustration that is preceded by a symmetrical, kaleidoscopic version of the scene . . .

While Selznick trusts readers to draw their own conclusions about what is true, he offers rich companionship on the voyage.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ “Selznick has built dazzling worlds into which readers can momentarily drop. Yet with all the adventures that unfold, the emotions underlying the tales are what elevate them.”

—*Booklist*, starred review

An astounding new feat of storytelling from Brian Selznick, the award-winning creator of *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* and *Wonderstruck*.

A ship. A garden. A library. A key. In *Kaleidoscope*, the incomparable Brian Selznick presents the story of two people bound to each other through time and space, memory and dreams. At the center of their relationship is a mystery about the nature of grief and love which will look different to each reader. *Kaleidoscope* illuminates how even the wildest tales can help us in the hardest times.

Learn more about *Kaleidoscope* and see a video of the author at
scholastic.com/site/kaleidoscope.html



INTRODUCTION

Kaleidoscope is a unique reading experience, with chapters that form constantly changing images as you read through the novel. The art that bookends each chapter changes and reforms, just as the pieces in a kaleidoscope make new patterns with every turn. With this guide, explore how the connections within the novel shift and change through the reading and rereading experience. Throughout your exploration, consider how the words reflect the art, and vice versa.

BACKGROUND

The Scottish inventor of the kaleidoscope, David Brewster, wrote these words when he took out a patent for his new creation in 1817: “The name which I had given to a new Optical Instrument, for creating and exhibiting beautiful forms, is derived from the Greek words καλός, beautiful; εἶδος, a form; and σκοπεῖν, to see.”

Brewster’s invention would become a phenomenally popular craze in 19th century England and later in the United States. Long before it was considered a children’s toy, the kaleidoscope fascinated people at many levels of society, and in certain places was as ubiquitous as the cell phone is today. All ages were fascinated by the endless variety of patterns and the intricate details of a kaleidoscope’s construction.

PRE - READING ACTIVITIES

Research the history of the kaleidoscope: its invention in the 19th century, its popularity and theories about why it was so popular, and how it eventually came to be considered a child’s toy rather than an adult fad. What does this history tell you about human psychology? Start your research here:

atlasobscura.com/articles/the-forgotten-kaleidoscope-craze-in-victorian-england

Make your own: A kaleidoscope has two or more reflecting surfaces tilted toward each other at an angle, so that one or more objects or images on one end of the reflective surfaces are seen as a symmetrical pattern when viewed from the other end. Visit [wikihow.com/Make-a-Kaleidoscope](https://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Kaleidoscope) for directions and images to produce three kaleidoscopes at different levels of difficulty: easy, intermediate, and advanced.

Create kaleidoscope art:

- Create a drawing inspired by kaleidoscope images.
- Visit kaleidacam.com to download a kaleidoscope camera app for iPhone and iPad.
- For all computers and smartphones, use Lunapic.com to apply a kaleidoscope effect to an image of your own by uploading a picture, choosing “Effects” from the menu bar, and clicking the “Kaleidoscope” effect in the drop-down menu.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Discuss the fragment at the start of the book: “‘Go on’ he said. ‘Look through it.’ ... As I turned the kaleidoscope, the mirrors and colored bits of glass rearranged and fractured the world. ‘Now look at me,’ he said.” How does this conversation set the tone for your reading of the novel? How does the experience of looking through a kaleidoscope relate to the experience of friendship, loss, and life-changing events?

Most novels have a unifying plot in which the events of the story move forward in time. How do you experience the plot of *Kaleidoscope*? Is there an underlying story or something else that creates a unifying experience for you? Why do you think the novel is divided in three parts: Morning, Afternoon, and Evening?

In his author’s note, Brian Selznick mentions a particular place that inspired him: Port Eliot in the UK (porteliot.co.uk). Which of the chapters do you think were specifically inspired by Port Eliot? What other settings do you think may have a basis in places that exist or are imagined? As you read, what places are you reminded of from your own life experiences?

Who are the most important characters for you in *Kaleidoscope*? Discuss the different ways that James appears throughout the book. What does James represent to the narrator? What does James represent to you?

The first-person narrative in every chapter means that as readers, there are things we don’t know about the main character, including their name, age, or gender. Did you notice this when reading the book? Why do you think the narrator is not named? How do you picture the narrator? Do you picture the narrator as being the same or changing from chapter to chapter? Does your reading of the chapter or the book change as you consider other possibilities for the narrator’s identity?

Do you see the story as a single narrative told from different angles? Do any or all of the chapters feel separate from the rest? If it is one story, who are the narrator and James?

Discuss why some of the characters are not named, e.g., the knight, the giant, or the genie—while others do have a name, e.g., Mr. Gardner. Do the unnamed characters remind you of any you may have encountered in other stories, perhaps in folk tales? What is the significance of those older stories in your own experience? How do they help inform your understanding of the moments throughout this novel?

The worldwide Covid–19 pandemic that began in 2020 affected people everywhere. Consider some of the cataclysmic events that occur in the novel and how they change the lives of the characters forever. How does *Kaleidoscope* as a whole, or elements within the novel, work as metaphors for experiences of the pandemic?

Themes can emerge from characters, setting, or plot—or a combination of all of these. What important themes can you identify in *Kaleidoscope*? Keep in mind that emerging themes may be different for each reader and may even be different for you when you read the book at different times. Share which themes emerged for you at this particular moment. Reread the book and look for themes you still see and new ones you can add.

Consider the different settings in the chapters of this book—garden, old house, library, forest, cave, ship, etc. Which of the settings is most vivid to you? Do any of them make you uncomfortable? Which, if any, feel familiar to you?

Consider the recurring theme of the apple throughout the novel. What do you think James means when he says, “The entire universe can be found inside an apple” (p. 104)? If you cut an apple in half horizontally, what do you find at the center? Compare that simple experiment to each of the kaleidoscope images between the chapters, and consider the importance of the star images in nature, in art, and in the universe.

Discuss the use of opposites throughout the book, e.g., the moon and the sun, youth and age, inside and outside, a giant and a small boy, love and loss. How do these juxtapositions help you to understand the narrative in the book? Consider the quotation at the beginning: “To fall in love is to make an appointment with heartbreak.” How does that relate to the second quotation: “Everything changes, nothing ends”? What do these quotations mean to you after reading *Kaleidoscope*?

Using one or more of these prompts, write a response to one of the speculative scenarios listed:

- Brian Selznick invented the Book of Dreams for himself as a child trying to stop his own nightmares. If you invented a system to stop nightmares, what would that be?
- If you had a special imaginary friend, what would they be like?
- If you could travel to anywhere or any when in time and space, where would you want to go and why?

Albert Einstein’s Special Theory of Relativity determined that time is relative, that the rate at which time passes depends on one’s frame of reference, and that our perception of time can change based on our physical place in the universe. Discuss this theory in relation to the first chapter, “Trip to the Moon,” and the last chapter, “The Mind of God.” How is the passage of time similar and/or different in these chapters? How does this theory affect your understanding of other chapters in *Kaleidoscope* and of the novel as a whole? Discuss the meaning of the final sentence in the novel: “The Past and Future mean nothing, and the time is always now” (p. 192).



EXPLORATIONS

Historical Research

Research Lucian of Samasota, a Middle Eastern writer of the 2nd century A.D., and his book *A True Story*, which was the inspiration for the first chapter in *Kaleidoscope*. This book is considered by many to be the first science fiction story ever written. Discuss why that story would inspire a 21st century author to retell it today. Which other famous authors (and filmmakers) have told stories about a trip to the moon?

Scientific Methods

Choose one of the scientific phenomena from this novel that you are interested in and learn more about it; for example, the migration of butterflies, the periodic chart of elements, the invention of the telephone, the process of metamorphosis, or space travel. How does a deeper understanding of the scientific phenomena bring light to how you interpret that chapter and *Kaleidoscope* as a whole?

Exploration and Research

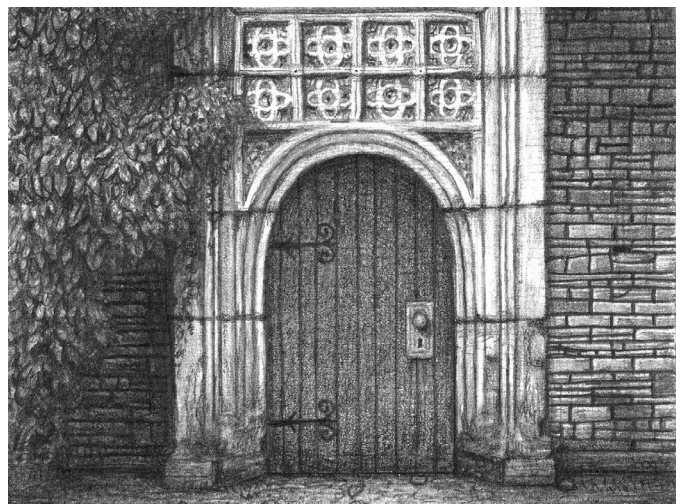
Research information about the Franklin Expedition that left England in 1845, starting with this article: [nytimes.com/interactive/2016/03/20/magazine/franklin-expedition.html](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/03/20/magazine/franklin-expedition.html). Why was this exploration important? Discover what researchers and archaeologists learned, and continue to learn, in recent years about that long ago journey? The chapter titled “The Ice” is set in 1845. Why do you think the author chose to refer to that particular journey?

Archaeology

In the chapter titled “The Sphinx,” the narrator and James visit an old movie set buried in the desert in California. Learn about the actual site of that set at altaonline.com/dispatches/a3782/demilles-lost-city. Then compare that “dig” in California to the discovery of an actual Egyptian tomb that was found at about the same time the movie was being made by reading articles like history.com/this-day-in-history/entrance-to-king-tuts-tomb-discovered and bbc.co.uk/newsround/49047475 and books like Candace Fleming’s *The Curse of the Mummy’s Tomb: Uncovering Tutankhamun’s Tomb* (Scholastic Focus). How does that story continue to be important for the world?

The World of Brian Selznick

Compare *Kaleidoscope* to the three earlier books that Brian Selznick refers to as his “trilogy”—*The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, *Wonderstruck*, and *The Marvels*. Unlike a traditional trilogy, these books are connected not by character and plot, but by themes and ideas, and they each explore ways that words and pictures can be combined to tell stories. What themes and/or images from those earlier books do you find echoed in *Kaleidoscope*?



Autobiography

Do the interactions of characters in the novel remind you of friendships in your own life? Retell the story of a friendship that you have experienced either as it really happened or using metaphors and imaginative allegories. Can you convey that same story in several different ways?

What Happens Next?

Choose a few of the sections or chapters in this book that intrigue you and write more about what else might happen. For example: Does the boy get all the books organized in “The Library”? What wish would you ask for in “The Genie of the Cave”? Does the narrator eat the apple offered by the dragon in “The Garden”? Would you eat that apple?

Musical Accompaniment

Choose a few favorite chapters from this book and create a playlist of music to accompany the action and/or mood of those chapters. Explain your choice of music for each chapter. How does this music express the feelings the chapter elicits in you?

Dramatic Movement

Choose one chapter in the book, and along with a partner or a group, act out that chapter as a charade, a dance, or a mime performance. How do you feel about what happens in that chapter when you act it out instead of reading it on the page?

Time and Space through Illustration

Check out picture books that explore ideas of time and space in imaginative ways and help you experience those ideas creatively. Some possibilities are: *Black and White* by David Macaulay, *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak, *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick* by Chris Van Allsburg, and *Flotsam* by David Wiesner.

Time and Space in Fiction

Read other novels that play with ideas of time and space in various ways and compare them to the ideas you find in *Kaleidoscope*. Some examples might be *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll, *The Dark Is Rising* by Susan Cooper, *The Phantom Tollbooth* by Norton Juster, *The Giver* by Lois Lowry, and *When You Reach Me* by Rebecca Stead.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Photo credit: Slimane Lalami

Brian Selznick is the Caldecott Medal-winning creator of the *New York Times* bestsellers *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, adapted into Martin Scorsese’s Oscar-winning *Hugo*, *Wonderstruck*, adapted into Todd Haynes’s eponymous movie, and *The Marvels*. Among the celebrated picture books Selznick has illustrated are the Caldecott Honor Book *The Dinosaurs of Waterhouse Hawkins* by Barbara Kerley, and the Sibert Honor Book *When Marian Sang* by Pam Muñoz Ryan. His books appear in over 35 languages. He has also worked as a bookseller, a puppeteer, and a screenwriter. He divides his time between Brooklyn, New York and San Diego, California.

ALSO BY BRIAN SELZNICK



HC: 9780439813785, \$24.99

Also available as an ebook and audiobook

2008 Caldecott Medal winner

National Book Award Finalist

#1 *New York Times* Bestseller

New York Times Best Illustrated Book

Los Angeles Times Favorite Children's Book of the Year

TIME Magazine's 100 Best Children's and Young Adult Books of All Time

★ "A true masterpiece."

—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

★ "Fade to black and cue the applause!"

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ "Complete genius."

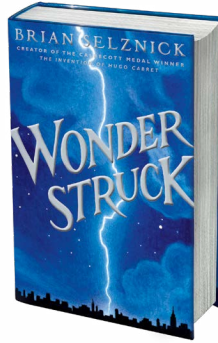
—*The Horn Book*, starred review

★ "Breathtaking . . . shatters conventions."

—*School Library Journal*, starred review

★ "An original and creative integration of art and text."

—*The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, starred review



HC: 9780545027892, \$29.99

Also available as an ebook and audiobook

2012 Schneider Award Winner

#1 *New York Times* Bestseller

New York Times Notable Children's Book

ALA Notable Children's Book

Parents' Choice Gold Winner

Publishers Weekly Best Book

"Engrossing, intelligent, beautifully engineered and expertly told in word and image."

—*The New York Times Book Review*

★ "A gift for the eye, mind, and heart."

—*Booklist*, starred review

★ "Visually stunning, completely compelling."

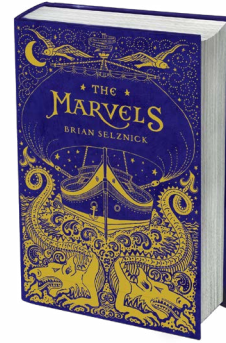
—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ "Innovative . . . has the makings of a classic."

—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

★ "A thing of wonder to behold . . . an emotional experience that neither the words nor the illustrations could achieve on their own."

—*School Library Journal*, starred review



HC: 9780545448680, \$32.99

Also available as an ebook and audiobook

New York Times Bestseller

New York Times Notable Children's Book

Indie Bound #1 National Bestseller

Guardian Children's Book Prize Finalist

Publishers Weekly Best Book

★ "Selznick continues his quest to shake up notions of illustrated novels, wordless storytelling, and the intersection of text and pictures."

—*The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, starred review

★ "Caldecott Medalist Selznick takes his groundbreaking narrative format to new heights . . . bittersweet, astonishing, and truly marvelous."

—*Booklist*, starred review

★ "... epic theater celebrating mysteries of the heart and spirit."

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ "[A] powerful story about creating lasting art and finding family in unexpected places."

—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

★ "Memorable, momentous."

—*School Library Journal*, starred review

Visit thebrianselznick.com for a full listing of Brian Selznick's books and more!

Learn more about *Kaleidoscope* at scholastic.com/site/kaleidoscope

Discussion Guide prepared by
Connie Rockman, Youth Literature
Consultant, and Bill Derry, Teacher/
Librarian Consultant.

 **SCHOLASTIC**
scholastic.com

SCHOLASTIC and associated logos are trademarks
and/or registered trademarks of Scholastic Inc.