



**Title:** A Picture Book of Harry Houdini

**Author:** David A. Adler & Michael S. Adler

**Illustrator:** Matt Collins

**Age Range:** 7-9

**Topics/Themes:** Magic, determination

**See video of this book read aloud here:**

- [A Picture Book of Harry Houdini \(Pt.1\)](#)
- [A Picture Book of Harry Houdini \(Pt. 2\)](#)

**Items Needed for Center:** device to show video

★ 3rd Grade Common Core Reading Standard ★

Determine the main idea of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea.

I. INTRODUCTION (PREP QUESTIONS)

- Ask students what a **magician** is. Have you ever seen a magician's performance? What is the difference between the magic in fairy tales and the magic that a magician does?
- Tell students that Harry Houdini is considered to be the greatest magician who ever lived. Flip to the back cover and briefly show students titles of other picture book biographies that David Adler has written, including persons that the students will remember from previously-read books: Helen Keller, Amelia Earhart, Thomas Jefferson, and certainly other persons as well (Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, etc.).

II. INTEGRATIVE STRATEGIES

DURING READING

- Pp. 2-3: Read; have students use context clues to define **tense**.
- Pp. 4-5: Read; help students understand **rabbi** (a person who is trained to make decisions about what is lawful in Judaism, to perform Jewish ceremonies, or to lead a Jewish congregation), **synagogue** (a place of worship for people of the Jewish faith), and **Hebrew** (the language of ancient Hebrew and modern Israel).

Second paragraph: Using **cause** → **effect**, have students relate the **effect** (Houdini's father lost his job as a rabbi) with the possible **cause** (he never learned English). Remind students that an **effect** is what happens and a **cause** is what makes something happen.

Have students define **scarce** using context clues.

- Pp. 6-7: Read; discuss with students what a **locksmith** does. Ask students how this early exposure correlated to the success of Houdini as a magician.

- Pp. 8-9: Read; ask students to discuss their feelings about a 12-year-old running away. It says that Ehrich later rejoined his family in NYC. Help students wonder/understand how Ehrich would have even know where his family was since there were no telephones, computers, etc., and that Ehrich was living on the streets.
- Pp. 10-11: Read first sentence and ask students if **memoirs** reminds them of other words; have students define. Continue reading. Discuss significance of Ehrich's name change.
- Pp. 12-13: Read; have students define **helpless** using the context clues and cite additional information (Bess had to help Houdini with knowing which shirts to wear, which he didn't follow anyway during an entire week away). Ask students how Bess seems to feel in the illustration (frustrated, shocked, etc.).
- Pp. 14-15: Read; ask students to identify another **cause** → **effect** in the second paragraph (**effect**: newspaper stories of his escapes brought people to his shows; **cause**: Houdini always went to the police stations, asked to be locked up but then would quickly escape).
- Pp. 18-19: Read; have students define **emerged** (first paragraph) using context clues.
- Pp. 20-21: Read; have students define **illusions** (first sentence) using context clues.
- Pp. 22-23: Read; in second paragraph have students identify words that help define **spiritualists** (*people who said they could speak to the dead*). Ask students how and why Houdini felt about spiritualists, and what he did about it (**exposed** them, helping students to understand what **exposed** means).

### III. INTEGRATIVE STRATEGIES

#### POST READING

- Why do you think Harry Houdini is still considered to be the greatest magician of all time? What kind of tricks did he do that earned him that reputation?
- If Harry Houdini were alive today, would you like to attend a performance? Why or why not?
- Have students predict what might have happened had Houdini not died so prematurely (age 52).

### IV. SMALL GROUPS

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2SslgXp00aA> (7:05)

At the end of the video, there is a running written list of various items from which Houdini escaped that should be read to the students.