



di Rosa

Preparing for your Art Lit Visit

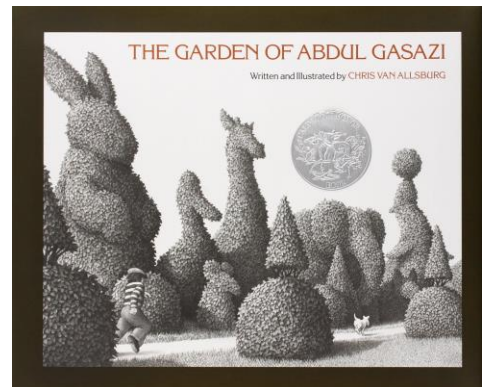
Thank you for enrolling your students in Art Lit, an art and literacy tour, at di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art. To make the most of your visit, please read this book to your class in advance of your scheduled field trip. Use the guided reading questions to assist student learning and consider extending learning through one of the ideas proposed in the “extend and engage” section.

Reminder: Please return your book when you visit di Rosa.

***The Garden of Abdul Gasazi* by Chris Van Allsburg**

About the Author¹

Chris Van Allsburg is the winner of two Caldecott Medals, for *Jumanji* and *The Polar Express*, as well as the recipient of a Caldecott Honor Book for *The Garden of Abdul Gasazi*. The author and illustrator of numerous picture books for children, he has also been awarded the Regina Medal for lifetime achievement in children's literature. In 1982, *Jumanji* won the National Book Award and in 1996, it was made into a popular feature film. Chris Van Allsburg was formerly an instructor at the Rhode Island School of Design. He lives in Rhode Island with his wife and two children.



Summary

When young Alan Mitz is asked to take care of Miss Hester's unruly dog Fritz while she visits cousin Eunice, he has no idea what adventures are in store for him. Fritz keeps Alan busy all morning by attempting to chew up Miss Hester's furniture. When the two both settle in for a nap, Alan makes sure to hide his hat from Fritz, who is known to love chewing hats above even furniture!

Later, Alan dutifully takes Fritz for his afternoon walk. Fritz leads the way across a little white bridge. Alan stops to read a sign that declares, "ABSOLUTELY, POSITIVELY NO DOGS ALLOWED IN THIS GARDEN," signed by the mysterious Abdul Gasazi, retired magician. Just as Alan turns to leave, Fritz breaks free and runs past the sign and through the door to Gasazi's garden. Alan chases Fritz but when he slips and falls, he loses sight of the little dog. He follows Fritz's paw prints deep into the garden, along a path leading into a forest. Finally, Alan comes to a clearing and sees the massive home of Abdul Gasazi. Believing that the magician has captured Fritz, Alan bravely knocks on the door and is welcomed into Gasazi's home by the great man himself.

After apologizing and explaining his predicament to the magician, Alan asks for Fritz. Gasazi beckons for Alan to follow him outside, where they come upon a group of ducks. Expressing his dislike of dogs, the magician tells poor Alan that he has turned Fritz into one of the ducks. As Alan tearfully takes the duck that is Fritz and heads for home, a gust of wind blows his hat off of his head. The duck swoops out of Alan's arms, catches the hat, and flies away into the distance. A miserable Alan walks back to Miss Hester's house only to learn from Miss Hester that Fritz was in fact waiting in the front yard when she returned from cousin Eunice's house. She tells Alan that the magician has simply played a trick on him. Relieved, Alan says goodbye and heads for home. After he

¹ From <https://www.amazon.com/Garden-Abdul-Gasazi-Chris-Allsburg/dp/039527804X>

leaves, Fritz trots up to Miss Hester with Alan's lost hat in his mouth! Was Gasazi playing a joke, or was Fritz really temporarily turned into a duck?!²

Why we selected *The Garden of Abdul Gasazi*

As a nature preserve, di Rosa is home to many types of birds, including the occasional duck. This, along with the many interesting sculptures to be found throughout the property create similarities to Gasazi's garden. Both di Rosa and Van Allsburg's book will leave students' imaginations soaring.

Ways to connect *The Garden of Abdul Gasazi* to di Rosa

Questions to Ask Students³

- Why do you think Fritz breaks free of the leash to go into Gasazi's garden? Do you think he knows what he is doing?
- Do you think Gasazi really turned Fritz into a duck, or was he playing a trick on Alan? What in the book makes you think that?
- Imagine that Alan goes back to talk to Mr. Gasazi about the incident. How will the magician react? Will they become friends?
- Imagine that Fritz didn't come back to Miss Hester's house. What would Alan have done? Or imagine that Fritz did come back but he remained a duck. How would Alan have explained that to Miss Hester?
- What if a magician lived down the street from you in your neighborhood? Would your magician be a kind or a grouchy character? What kind of powers might your magician have? Write about what might happen if you were to visit this person.

Resources

<http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/features/thepolarexpress/tg/garden.shtml>

Extend and Engage⁴

- Have students write or tell stories about special animals in their lives.
- Have students write or tell Fritz's continuing adventures.

² From <http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/features/thepolarexpress/tg/garden.shtml>

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid