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# The Man Who Walked Between The Towers (Caldecott Medal Book)



## Synopsis

In 1974, French aerialist Philippe Petit threw a tightrope between the two towers of the World Trade Center and spent an hour walking, dancing, and performing high-wire tricks a quarter mile in the sky. This picture book captures the poetry and magic of the event with a poetry of its own: lyrical words and lovely paintings that present the detail, daring, and--in two dramatic foldout spreads-- the vertiginous drama of Petit's feat. *The Man Who Walked Between the Towers* is the winner of the 2004 Caldecott Medal, the winner of the 2004 Boston Globe - Horn Book Award for Picture Books, and the winner of the 2006 Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Children's Video.

## Book Information

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Series: Caldecott Medal Book

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Age Range: 5 - 8 years

Grade Level: Kindergarten - 3

## Customer Reviews

This effectively spare, lyrical account chronicles Philippe Petit's tight rope walk between Manhattan's World Trade Center towers in 1974. Gerstein (What Charlie Heard) begins the book like a fairytale, "Once there were two towers side by side. They were each a quarter of a mile high... The tallest buildings in New York City." The author casts the French aerialist and street performer as the hero: "A young man saw them rise into the sky.... He loved to walk and dance on a rope he tied between two trees." As the man makes his way across the rope from one tree to the other, the towers loom in the background. When Philippe gazes at the twin buildings, he looks "not at the

towers but at the space between them.... What a wonderful place to stretch a rope; a wire on which to walk." Disguised as construction workers, he and a friend haul a 440-pound reel of cable and other materials onto the roof of the south tower. How Philippe and his pal shang the cable over the 140-foot distance is in itself a fascinating-and harrowing-story, charted in a series of vertical and horizontal ink and oil panels. An inventive foldout tracking Philippe's progress across the wire offers dizzying views of the city below; a turn of the page transforms readers' vantage point into a vertical view of the feat from street level. When police race to the top of one tower's roof, threatening arrest, Philippe moves back and forth between the towers ("As long as he stayed on the wire he was free"). Gerstein's dramatic paintings include some perspectives bound to take any reader's breath away. Truly affecting is the book's final painting of the imagined imprint of the towers, now existing "in memory"-linked by Philippe and his high wire. Ages 5-8. (Sept.)Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information.

Kindergarten-Grade 6-As this story opens, French funambulist Philippe Petit is dancing across a tightrope tied between two trees to the delight of the passersby in Lower Manhattan. Gerstein places him in the middle of a balancing act, framed by the two unfinished World Trade Center towers when the idea hits: "He looked not at the towers, but at the space between them and thought, what a wonderful place to stretch a rope-." On August 7, 1974, Petit and three friends, posing as construction workers, began their evening ascent from the elevators to the remaining stairs with a 440-pound cable and equipment, prepared to carry out their clever but dangerous scheme to secure the wire. The pacing of the narrative is as masterful as the placement and quality of the oil-and-ink paintings. The interplay of a single sentence or view with a sequence of thoughts or panels builds to a riveting climax. A small, framed close-up of Petit's foot on the wire yields to two three-page foldouts of the walk. One captures his progress from above, the other from the perspective of a pedestrian. The vertiginous views paint the New York skyline in twinkling starlight and at breathtaking sunrise. Gerstein captures his subject's incredible determination, profound skill, and sheer joy. The final scene depicts transparent, cloud-filled skyscrapers, a man in their midst. With its graceful majesty and mythic overtones, this unique and uplifting book is at once a portrait of a larger-than-life individual and a memorial to the towers and the lives associated with them.Wendy Lukehart, Washington DC Public LibraryCopyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Beautiful illustrations and well told tale of the tight rope walk between New York's Twin Towers so many long years ago. There's intrigue, the stunning imagery, tension and triumph. The human spirit

is fierce and this book offers a clue to Phillipe Petit's mission. Page by page it's an adventure for the reader, too.

Wonderful account of the famous high wire feat between the World Trade Center towers. Richly illustrated and will excite the imaginations of kids, nice idea for a gift

This has so much meaning to those of us who lived through the 9/11 disaster. My husband and I collect Caldecott Medal winners & other beautifully illustrated books, and this is one of our favorites - always leaves us a little tearful at the end. And if you want to read the greatest first chapter ever written for a novel, read the beginning of "Let the Great World Spin" by Colum McCann - his (adult) description of the reaction on the street to this very same event is a miracle of the written word. Then you can read the rest of the book!

I've always loved buildings and although there will always be sadness about the fate of these most famous pair of landmarks, this book does an amazing job of conveying one fact: someone actually walked between them one day because he thought he could and carefully (for five years) planned his walk before doing it. The book does not explain why the towers fell which is great because if children are very young, they don't really need to know that. Illustrations are beautiful too.

We bought this as a gift for my nephew, who went and saw the movie and wanted the books based on the guy who walked between the towers. I flipped through the pages of the book and it is a really nice book. The illustrations throughout the book are great and it makes a great book to have in your collection.

I read this to my students on 9/11 they loved it! It was a cool way to talk about the towers in a positive happy light. Remembering what they were rather than focusing on all the terrible events of the day. My students are too young for me to explain much to them so I liked reading this along with talking about the disaster of that day.

This was highly recommended for my second grade class to read for 9-11. I thought it was only ok. The last page just mentions that the towers no longer stand. My students really couldn't tie the events of 9-11 with this book. I recommend the book "Fireboat" if you are looking to read a book for this purpose.

Very good for having the kids explain about why the illustrator drew the pictures a certain way and what mood did he want the readers to feel. Also good for little people when talking about Sept 11

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