



# CRUCHLEY'S COLLECTION

Diana Cruchley is an award-winning educator and author, who has taught at elementary and secondary levels. Her workshops are practical, include detailed handouts, and are always enthusiastically received.

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## QUEEN OF THE FALLS



Chris Van Allsburg,  
Houghton Mifflin,  
©2010  
978-0547-31581-2

Annie Taylor was the first person to go over Niagara Falls in a barrel, the first to survive, the first woman for over 95 years, and the only woman to do it alone. This is her story - the story of a woman over 60 years of age who did an amazing thing.

## JOURNAL WRITING

Picture books lend themselves to a journal response, because they are really short to read and because they are often also useful for other writing purposes. Here are four suggestions for *Queen of the Falls*:

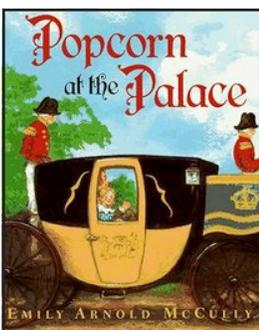
- A story about lying about my age.
- Being smart enough NOT to do a daring thing.
- Riding a roller coaster or any other “point of no return” - making a speech, acting in a play, etc.
- My bucket list. Things to do before I die and why I want to do them.

## CHRIS VAN ALLSBURG

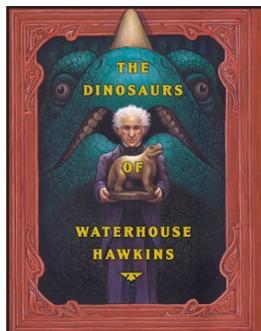
Chris Van Allsburg is also the author of *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick*, one of the most successful children’s books of all times. His books tend to be surrealistic. He has said that he thought *Queen of the Falls* was a departure, but realized as he proceeded that it is somehow surrealistic anyway. Discuss this idea with your students. At the very least, it’s a chance to be exposed to the word “surrealistic.”

## AMAZING HISTORIC FIGURES WHO ARE LITTLE KNOWN

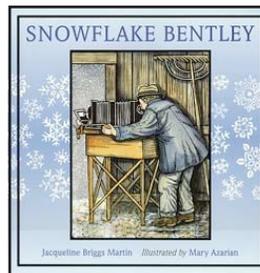
This is one of a series of picture books about amazing historic figures who are not well known, but who could be.



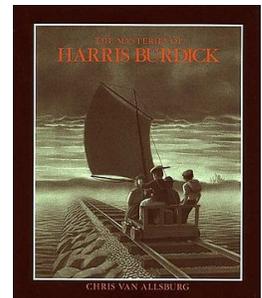
Maisie Ferris and her dad travel to England to interest royalty in promoting popcorn.



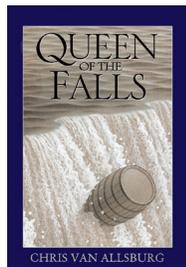
Waterhouse Hawkins was the first man, a Victorian, who put together a display of complete dinosaur skeletons.



William Bentley figured out how to take pictures of snowflakes before they melted.



Give students a list of interesting Canadian inventions and ask them to write a story about the person who made the invention following the models in these and other picture books. Check out [canadianscientistsca.com](http://canadianscientistsca.com) for Canadian inventors and *Shhh! Canadian Scientists and Inventors Rule which is in every school library in BC.*



# QUEEN OF THE FALLS, CONT.

## THE AGE ISSUE

Annie Taylor was 62 when she performed her feat - and she lied about her age and said she was 42. Before you read the story ask students to brainstorm what they think a person is like when they are over 60. I imagine you will get many stereotypes. The following people are well over 60: Hilary Clinton, Bill Clinton, George Bush, Mick Jagger, Harrison Ford, Clint Eastwood, Sigourney Weaver, Dame Helen Mirren, Jane Fonda, Meryl Streep, Cher, Diane Keaton, etc.

Then read the story so that they can see what a 62 year old did. Talk about: Why did she think she needed to lie about her age? Was she right that people would respect what she did a lot less if she were older? Why are these stereotypes of age around?

## START IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ACTION

This book is a brilliant example of starting a story in the middle of the action, and then going back to fill in the background and bring your reader back up to the beginning point of the story and beyond. In this case it starts with the falls, and something everyone is watching go over the falls. Then it goes back to Annie Taylor's life, leads her up to the falls, and then follows on with the rest of the story. After analyzing how it works, have students re-write a story they have written by starting at the action point and flashing back to the beginning.

## SCIENCE EGG DROP PROJECT

Annie Taylor knows, "*You can put an egg inside a can and let it drop to the floor. The can may not be damaged, but it's a different story for the egg.*" This is a classic science project. How do you protect an egg from breaking in a 20 foot drop.? One of the neatest demonstrations is Youtube *The Science Egg Drop Project* by Bradley who demonstrates 51 contraptions he built to protect an egg in a 19 foot drop. This can also make a good science challenge for your students.



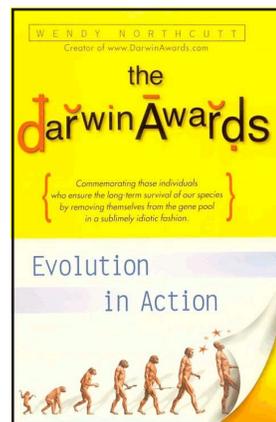
Bradley's first contraption of a tennis tube and cotton balls surrounding the egg.

## ILLUSTRATION

Select 3-4 of the pictures to make a one-page sample for students. Say that these are the illustrations of a non-fiction book. Ask them to look at the illustrations and try to date when the story took place just looking at the pictures. Ask them to justify their conclusions.

## THE DARWIN AWARDS

Annie Taylor was an unusual daredevil and daredevils can certainly lose their lives in their pursuits. Interest students in reading *The Darwin Awards* - which I have always found more sad than amusing. However, students do have a macabre fascination with them, and will read the whole book if you read a few samples to them. The book is dedicated to "individuals who ensure the long term survival of our species by removing themselves from the gene pool in a sublimely idiotic fashion."



## MAKING A WOODEN BARREL

Ask students to research how a wooden barrel is made. What are the steps? How do you make it waterproof? Why does it bulge in the centre? Why isn't it square like a box?