

Springboard^{into} Comprehension 5

Main Idea	Plagues Coral Reefs
Compare and Contrast	Air, Land, and Water Transport – Then and Now Olympic Game Technology
Fact and Opinion	The Cackleberry Creek Foghorn Defying Gravity
Cause and Effect	Animal Adaptations Severe Weather
Bias and Prejudice	Houdini – Man of Magic or Deceit?
Figurative Language	Prejudice on the Goldfields The Big Campaign The Loaded Dog

RA 11.5–12.5



Recount
Description

Houdini – *Man of Magic or Deceit?*



Written by Phill Simpson

Houdini –

Man of Magic or Deceit?

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This book is based on historical fact, but Commissioner Gregory Warren and Inspector Barnaby Whitcombe are fictitious characters. The letters and documents are also works of fiction.

Harry Houdini - A Collection



Many people who met Houdini noted his hypnotic eyes.

Harry Houdini was born in 1874 in Budapest, Hungary, under the name of Ehrich Weisz. When he was a young boy, his family emigrated to the United States. As an adult, Houdini built a career as a magician and became a famous performer who specialized in getting himself out of restraining devices, or **escape artist**.

Houdini awed audiences all over the world by quickly freeing himself from devices that were apparently impossible to escape from. He proved time and time again that he could struggle free of restraining devices such as handcuffs, leg irons, locked jail cells, and nailed crates. He even demonstrated his amazing abilities by freeing himself from an airtight tank that was filled with water! Wherever Houdini performed, he asked the local police to restrain him. He challenged people to find new and difficult devices for him to overcome. He escaped every time!

Part of Houdini's success as a magician was due to the fact that he kept himself in superb physical shape. To practise holding his breath for long periods of time, he had a special bathtub in his home. Although Houdini was right-handed, he trained his left hand until he was able to use it just as well as his right hand, making him **ambidextrous**. For freeing himself of rope tied around him, he did not need his hands, as he was able to tie and untie knots with his feet. Training all the parts of his body enabled him to perform the difficult movements for his escapes.

Houdini performed many extraordinary feats, or **stunts**. He even explained how some of his tricks worked in books and magazine articles, although he did not reveal how he went about performing his major audience-pleasers. Eventually, the talented Houdini took his work to the silver screen and performed in several motion pictures. These movies were packed with daring stunts and escapes.

Houdini saw himself as an entertainer performing seemingly impossible tricks, a first-class magician. He even wrote books exposing individuals who claimed to have supernatural powers as dishonest people who engaged in trickery and deceit, or **fraudsters**. Yet many people were still stunned by Houdini's abilities and left in wonder and amazement at his seemingly magical acts. However, other people saw him as nothing but a common fraudster himself. Even though he never claimed to have any magical powers, they questioned his honesty and principles.

The Great Houdini



COMMISSIONER GREGORY WARREN

Dearest Elizabeth,
You won't believe what I've just seen! The most amazing gentleman has just dazzled us with his performance. His name is Houdini, and it seems he can escape from anything.

I have just been to one of his incredible shows. He challenged a local police officer to use his own handcuffs to restrain Houdini. At first, I thought, what a ridiculous thing to do. I thought Houdini was a silly person.

The crowd was silent. Anticipation filled the air. Amazingly, it took him less than a minute, and he escaped! I cannot describe the wave of excitement and surprise that swept through the crowd. I wish you were here to see the show for yourself.

Then, I watched as Houdini performed what I believe to be the most remarkable escape of all. The local newspaper had challenged him to escape from a special set of handcuffs that had

taken a locksmith almost five years to make. It took Houdini over an hour, but unbelievably, he did it. Amazing! Everyone here is calling him the "Handcuff King."

Some of the audience were saying that his wife was his partner in "crime," his accomplice, passing him the key when she kissed him. I think that is absolute rubbish. Why would such an obviously talented man need to cheat? I have to see him again.

Yours truly,
Gregory



HE IS THE MAN WHO
CAN ESCAPE FROM
ANYTHING!

NO TRICKS! NO
MIRRORS! JUST USING
PLAIN SKILL.

GASP IN AWE AS HE
ESCAPES FROM THE
INESCAPABLE!

HOUDINI

You won't believe your eyes as Houdini escapes from a milk can filled with water. If he fails, he will meet his fate and drown!

Houdini's death-defying performance is not for the faint-hearted. Houdini will be handcuffed. Then, he will be sealed inside the container. Will he escape, or will he drown? Buy your ticket, and be there to see for yourself!

Share his terror as you, the audience, are asked to hold your breath along with Houdini. Can you outlast him? Many have tried, but all have failed.

There's more! Watch a bonus performance as Houdini is locked securely into a special water-filled box made of glass, wood, and metal, the famous **Water Torture Cell**. He will gasp as his feet are locked into stocks. He will cry out in terror as he is lowered upside down into the Water Torture Cell. You will watch his every move through the glass at the front of the tank.

How does Houdini master these marvellous escapes?

Only the great man himself knows. Come and see if you can outsmart the Great Houdini! **Maybe you can figure it out!**

EXPERIENCE THE EXCITEMENT!
HIPPODROME THEATRE, NEW YORK
FRIDAY JANUARY 22, 1912. ENTRY: \$1

HOUDINI

PRESENTS
HIS OWN ORIGINAL INVENTION
THE GREATEST SENSATIONAL MYSTERY
EVER ATTEMPTED IN THIS OR ANY OTHER AGE



\$1,000 REWARD TO ANY ONE PROVING THAT IT IS POSSIBLE TO OBTAIN AIR IN THE "UP-SIDE-DOWN" POSITION IN WHICH HOUDINI RELEASES HIMSELF FROM THIS WATER FILLED TORTURE CELL.