



## *If I Built a House*

The much-anticipated follow-up to the E. B. White Award-winning picture book *If I Built a Car*.

In *If I Built a Car*, imaginative Jack dreamed up a whimsical fantasy ride that could do just about anything. Now he's back and ready to build the house of his dreams, complete with a racetrack, flying room, and gigantic slide. Jack's limitless creativity and infectious enthusiasm will inspire budding young inventors to imagine their own fantastical designs.

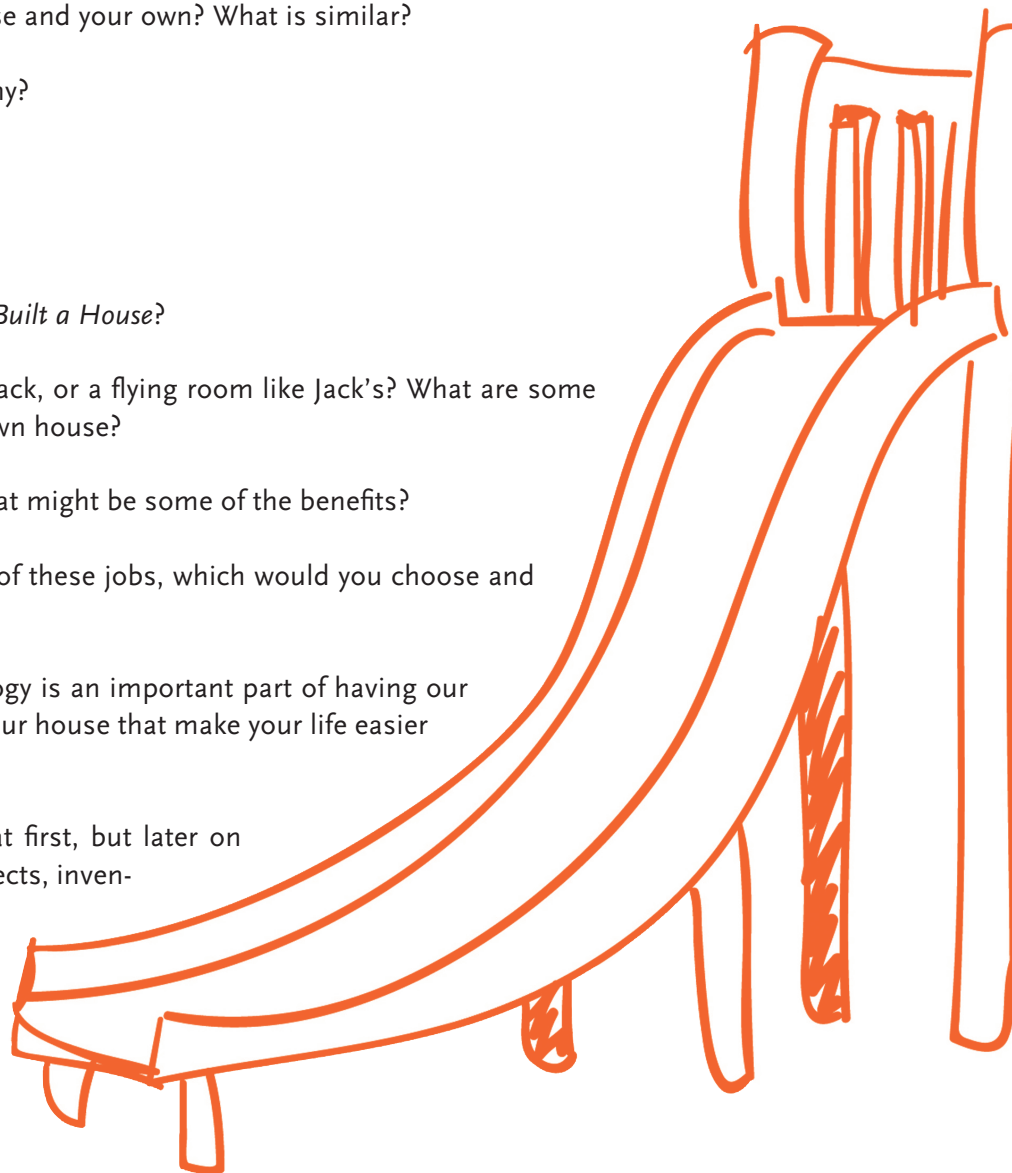
Chris Van Dusen's vibrant illustrations marry retro appeal with futuristic style as he, once again, gives readers a delightfully rhyming text that absolutely begs to be read aloud.



**CHRIS VAN DUSEN** was born in Portland, Maine, and spent his childhood drawing with his brothers (his specialty was aliens, robots and monsters). Dr. Seuss and Robert McCloskey were his heroes; he loved the rhythm of Dr. Seuss' words and was fascinated by the meticulous detail of Robert McCloskey's illustrations. Van Dusen studied fine art at the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth. During a part-time job at a magazine for teenagers, he began drawing cartoons and illustrations, and his career as an illustrator was born. Van Dusen's illustrations have appeared in magazines like Nickelodeon, Family Fun, and Disney Adventures. His first book, *Down to the Sea with Mr. Magee*, which he both wrote and illustrated, was published in 2000. His works include *Learning to Ski with Mr. Magee* and *A Camping Spree with Mr. Magee*; the *Mercy Watson* series (written by Kate DiCamillo); *THE CIRCUS SHIP*; *KING HUGO'S HUGE EGO*, and *Randy Riley's Really Bit Hit*.

\* reproduced from Maine's Humanities website,  
<http://mainehumanities.org/special-programs/One-Evening/pop-vandusen.html>

1. Look at the cover of *If I Built a House*. What is different about Jack's house and your own? What is similar?
2. What can you infer (guess at, using clues) from the cover of the book? Why?
3. What is your favorite part of Jack's house? Explain your reasoning.
4. Are all of Jack's creations possible? Why or why not?
5. What questions would you ask Chris Van Dusen about the creation of *If I Built a House*?
6. If you built your own dream house would you have a giant slide, a racetrack, or a flying room like Jack's? What are some things that you think would be as cool as what Jack came up with for your own house?
7. What might be some of the problems with having a house like Jack's? What might be some of the benefits?
8. What are the careers that have to do with houses? If you could have any of these jobs, which would you choose and why?
9. A lot of what Jack dreams up are fun, fantastical inventions, but technology is an important part of having our houses built and running smoothly. Name several technologies at work in your house that make your life easier and explain your reasoning.
10. Sometimes people who dream big dreams like Jack get made fun of at first, but later on become famous for their creations. Come up with several examples of architects, inventors, builders, artists, etc. who went on to do amazing, unique things in their lives.
11. Why is the field of building important to us? What might happen if there was a shortage of people skilled in these fields?
12. Would you want Jack as a friend or neighbor, why or why not?

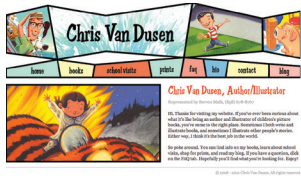


## ACTIVITIES

1. Research architectural design from the past, present, and depictions of some potential future houses like Jack's. Compare and contrast the designs.
2. Create your own future house like Chris Van Dusen did and build or paint a model of it to share with your class.
3. Interview a person who works in some area of the housing field. Write up an article about what you learned for your school or local paper.
4. Write a letter to Chris and Jack, telling them about your impressions of their dream house.
5. Using the list of careers from #8, do more in-depth research on one of the careers of your choice.
6. Using your findings on #10, do a report on one of the "big dreamers."



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## LINKS FOR CHRIS VAN DUSEN:

Chris Van Dusen: <http://www.chrisvandusen.com>

Reading Rockets: <http://www.readingrockets.org/books/interviews/vandusen>



## OTHER LINKS OF INTEREST:

ArchKidEcture: <http://www.archkidecture.org/learn.html>

YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ebPw14YjvDo>

How Stuff Works: <http://home.howstuffworks.com/home-improvement/repair/house.htm>

Academy of Applied Science: <http://www.aas-world.org>

Architecture - It's Elementary: <http://www.k5architecture.org>



## VAN DUSEN LINKS

