

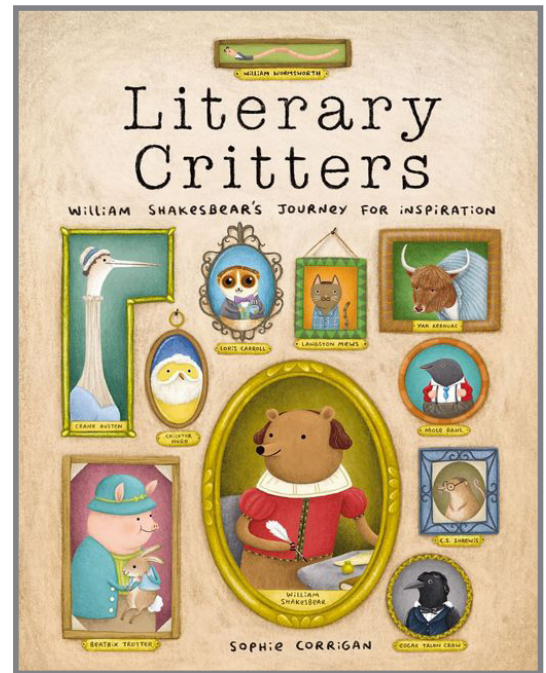
Literary Critters: William Shakesbear's Journey for Inspiration

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SCIS: 5414689

ISBN: 9780310734093

RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower Primary



SYNOPSIS

Literary Critters is a truly unique picture book, introducing young readers to classic literary figures and encouraging them to use their imaginations. As William Shakesbear visits his fellow Literary Critter Guild members, he's greeted with lots of advice from his author friends and has some adventures along the way.

This playful story promotes literacy and storytelling as quirky playwright William Shakesbear sets off to find some inspiration for his new play. Along the way, Will asks his Literary Critter friends about what inspires them to write including Mole Dahl, Crane Austen, Beatrix Trotter, Edgar Talon Crow, Yak Kerouac, C.S. Shrewis, Langston Mews and more. He also invites young readers to become part of the Literary Critters Guild and continue growing in their love for all things reading, writing and books.

ABOUT THE CREATOR

Sophie Corrigan is a freelance illustrator and author from Lancashire, UK. She has illustrated many diverse items from books to calendars to T-shirts and more! When not illustrating and maintaining her online art shops, Sophie spends the spare time she has going to shows, watching nature programs, eating vegetarian food, hanging out with her pet cockatiels and occasionally crafting cute things from wool and clay.

STUDY NOTES

- Take a picture walk through the book. Do you think this story is fiction or nonfiction? Give reasons and examples to support your answer.
- Describe the main character and the problem the character faces in this story. Where in the book do you find out details about the problem in the story?
- Where does the main character live in the story? What is he putting off doing until he solves his problem?
- What do you think the word 'inspiration' means? Do you know the meaning of this word?
- On William Shakesbear's journey he meets many literary friends. In what ways are William and Mole Dahl the same? How are they different from one another?
- What solution does Beatrix Trotter offer William to help him solve his problem? Why doesn't he follow Beatrix's suggestion?
- Look at the page where William meets with Edgar Talon Crow in Edgar's treehouse. How is this page different from the other illustrations in the book? What do the colours used to create this illustration make you feel as a reader?
- Who are some of the Literary Critter Guild friends who attend Loris Carroll's mad tea party?
- Langston Mews suggests that William should write a poem. What does he say the flowing river water sounds like?

- After his long journey, William finally settles in his cave for a long winter's nap. What images come to William in his dreams? Do you think these images could inspire William? Why or why not?
- What does William find outside the entrance to his cave once he wakes from his long hibernation?
- What lesson do you think William learns in this story? What message might the author have wanted the reader to learn from the story?
- The story begins with a letter to the reader from William Shakesbear describing his lack of inspiration and his need to search for writing ideas. Write a friendly letter back to William. Describe what you do when you feel uninspired. What strategies do you use to come up with new ideas for stories, plays and poems? Share with William what you will be reading and/or writing next.
- William travels to visit many different authors in the hope that one will give him useful strategies for finding his inspiration for writing again. In your opinion, which author gave William the best advice?
- All of that travelling from author to author makes William very tired. He finally heads home to settle in for a nice, long nap. Once asleep, he dreams about things discussed with his author friends—everything from tiny wardrobes to cups of tea to funny bunnies. If you were to dream of some of your favorite books, what parts of these stories would appear in your dream? Draw a picture of this book-inspired dream. List the titles of the books that are represented in your dream on the back of your illustration.
- The author of *Literary Critters* has cleverly disguised the names of real authors with animal-inspired names. For example, William Shakesbear is the animal version of human poet and playwright William Shakespeare. Can you find these guild members' famous human author counterparts?
 - Wagatha Christie
 - Beatrix Trotter
 - Mole Dahl
 - Edgar Talon Crow
 - Loris Carroll.

Choose one of the children's authors from the list above, or another from the story, to research. Find out how your selected author became a writer, what stories were written by your author, and any other interesting facts. Compile all of your information into a report then share your author report with your classmates.

- William Shakesbear went on quite a journey to find writing ideas from other authors. Read the quotes below and match the advice to the author who gave it.
 - 'Get yourself a pet!'
 - 'Why not write about being a supersleuth, sniffing out clues to solve a mystery!'
 - 'The best teacher is experience.'
 - 'Look around, my friend. I often find inspiration in the shadows.'
 - 'Just follow a path and go with it. You might find creatures, kings, and queens, maybe even a tasty box of Turkish delight—inspiration is everywhere!'
 - 'Just make it OUTRAGEOUSLY fantastical. A little magic can take you a long way!'
- There are lots of stories mentioned throughout *Literary Critters*. What kinds of stories do you like best? Make a list of the books you've read, or would like to read, that fit these themes:
 - Magical stories
 - Animal stories
 - Friendship stories
 - Spooky stories

Then compare your list with a friend. Who knows, you might find some new books to read or inspire you!

- Select an element from William's fantastical dream, like the running carrot or artistic cookie, and write a story or poem about it.