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Singing For Mrs Pettigrew: A Storymaker's Journey



Synopsis

This collection by the 2003–2005 Children's Laureate, Michael Morpurgo, contains short stories, essays and commentaries to illuminate the craft of storytelling. Analyzing all aspects of writing – character, plot, sources and inspiration, retelling and biography – it is perfect for anyone, young or old, who loves great stories and wants to know more about the art of telling tales.

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Customer Reviews

This collection of short stories, essays and commentaries was written by Michael Morpurgo, the Children's Laureate of Britain from 2003 to 2005. Morpurgo believes that everyone loves a good story, and with effort and practice, most folks can become good storytellers. He gives some background about his early life, and explains how a love of words and a very active imagination combined with life experience and education to make him the highly respected writer/storyteller he has become today. Some of the stories, such as "My Father is a Polar Bear" and "The Giant's Necklace," have peculiar titles. Let's face it, a real polar bear couldn't write a story about his father.

And if giants really existed, would they wear or even own necklaces? How would it be possible for a person to be "Half a Man"? Curious readers will wonder where and how the author got his unique (and very odd) ideas. Morpurgo explains that memory is an important part of a story and that a story can't be hurried into being. One such tale, "Meeting Căfăzanne," illustrates this idea quite well. A young Parisian boy named Yannick spends part of one spring in Provence with his uncle's family, who runs an inn and teaches him the restaurant business. He works as a busboy and kitchen helper, and even learns how to make a pretty good crăfăme brulăfăe. One day, the restaurant staff excitedly prepares for a visit from a famous person. Yannick wonders what all the fuss is about as he makes dessert. The customer is so pleased with Yannick's delicious crăfăme brulăfăe that he leaves a special gift instead of a tip. Not knowing the identity of this famed stranger, Yannick doesn't realize that he's destroying something precious when he burns the paper tablecloth. The title leads the reader to believe that the individual in question is Căfăzanne. In another story (the aforementioned "The Giant's Necklace"), Cherry is making a very long necklace, stringing together pink cowry shells. The necklace already contains over 5,000 shells, but it still isn't long enough to suit Cherry, who explains she is making it for a giant. In her determined attempt to gather more dainty shells, she encounters two souls who seem so sad and lonesome. We soon discover that they're confined to working in a rather secretive tin mine. Oh, and they're also ghosts. Or so they tell Cherry, anyway. Does the giant's necklace ever get finished, and does Cherry safely return home? Everyday happenings fuel Morpurgo's imagination. Is there a child who hasn't at one time or another fallen off a bicycle? That memory is the starting point for the title story. Mrs. Pettigrew, a very quiet woman, lives in a railway car quite near the sea and is considered different from the townsfolk because she came from somewhere near China. She has animals and a garden, and loves the little seaside place she calls home. But progress in the form of a new atomic power plant to be built on her property threatens her very way of life. Who will sing for Mrs. Pettigrew, and why? Morpurgo's wonderful imagination and uncanny ability to paint a picture with just the right words pull the reader into his amazing stories, which just beg to be read aloud. --- Reviewed by Carole Turner

This book is a collection of short stories and how the author came to write them. Almost all the short stories are very touching with love and compassion deeply felt. Complimenting that with the author's essays on writing makes this book even more valuable as a guide and an inspiration for anyone who want to learn to write.

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