

The Bookstore Mouse

Recommended for Grades 4-6

Book Summary: The Bookstore Mouse

Cervantes is a mouse who lives in a bookstore. He loves words so much that he even eats them. One day, Cervantes' house amid the books is disturbed and he finds himself hiding behind a bookshelf to escape from the cat. While under the bookshelf he finds an old book and starts reading. He finds himself drawn deeper and deeper into the story. The story is that of a boy who is a scribe in a monastery, but circumstances lead him into the role of a knight who must defeat a dragon.

[SPOILER] The boy does defeat the dragon called Censor. This story is a commentary on words and how they can be used and how they affect our lives. We see people literally eating words, using words as weapons, etc. In this story, the literal and the figurative are blurred.

Author Biography: Peggy Christian

Peggy Christian was born in Lakewood, Colorado. She grew up enjoying the outdoor sports of the Rocky Mountains, but also with a love of reading. She attended the University of Puget Sound where she earned her BA in English. She also studied abroad in Ireland for a year. She moved to Montana where she got her master's degree in linguistics.

She ran an antiquarian bookstore and worked on the ski patrol in Tacoma, Washington. In her current home of Missoula, Montana, she has worked as a skiing instructor and volunteered in Glacier National Park where her husband was a backcountry ranger. She also taught English as a Second Language to foreign students. Several years ago her family was able to live in New Zealand for three years, where she studied bookbinding and continued writing. She now resides in Missoula, Montana with her husband and two teenage sons who are avid outdoors men.



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Discussion Questions

1. When you first started reading this book, what did you think of the idea that you could literally eat words and they would taste the way they were used? Did this make sense to you? What about the idea that words can be weapons when Cervantes throws balls of paper at the cat? (p. 5-6)
 2. Cervantes starts reading to forget his problems in the real world. Do you think this is a good thing to do? Does it matter why you read or just that you are reading? (p. 15)
 3. When Cervantes is reading and comes across a word he doesn't know, he is thrown out of the world of his imagination and into the real world. Does this happen when you are reading? Does it pull you from the story? What do you do when you come across words you don't know?
 4. Sigfried gets in trouble for not using the exact words, but just using words with the same meaning. (p. 27) Do you think that the exact word should be important or is it just important to give the general meaning? What situations is it important to use one or the other?
 5. When they meet up with the giant, could you understand what the giant was saying? Did you look up the words or just skip them like Cervantes did earlier? Did it matter if you could understand what the giant is saying since Cervantes doesn't?
 6. The giant says that it is a man's manner of speech that defines him, but Sigfried says it is his ability to be understood. (p. 79) Is it the way you talk or what people understand that matters the most?
 7. The only way to defeat the Censor is to sneak the stories out. Does this seem true in today's world? Can you think of any situations where sneaking a story out defeated censorship?
 8. Cervantes won't teach the cat how to read or he will lose his advantage. (p. 131) Can you think of other times in history where people have not been taught to read so that they could be kept at a disadvantage? (slavery, women, etc)
 9. In real life, have you ever censored something? Has someone censored something from you? Are there times when censorship is okay or is it always bad?
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