

Inkheart
by
Cornelia Funke

Meggie's father, Mo, is a book binder with a secret. He encourages Meggie's love of literature by supplying her with endless books to read, but she can never remember her father reading aloud to her. For as long as Meggie can remember, it's just been her and her father moving around every few years as he plied his trade. One day a mysterious stranger with an even stranger pet arrives to warn Mo that he and Meggie are in danger of discovery by Capricorn, a cruel and evil man. Mo takes Meggie to the house of his missing wife's aunt Elinor to hide, but they are betrayed, kidnapped, and taken to Capricorn's hideout.

Meggie discovers why. Mo is able to read so vividly that the characters and objects in the book jump out into the real world, but there is a downside to this gift: something in the real world disappears into the book each time something appears. Capricorn wants to use this gift to his advantage by having Mo read gold and treasure into the world as well as something very sinister. Before they are safe again, Meggie will learn more of Mo's secrets and discover something special about herself.

Everyone loves a good story. Even before we could read, our parents or teachers made stories come alive as they read aloud to us. Cornelia Funke has taken this skill even further by imagining a world where people can read characters literally alive into our world. **WARNING:** Some brief, mild language

Vocabulary

supercilious

Meggie couldn't decide whether it was mocking, **supercilious**, or just awkward.

incredulity

Dustfinger looked first at Mo, then at Meggie with an expression of **incredulity** on his face. "You haven't told her?"

boisterous

It filled the night air as if it had been only waiting for Meggie's footsteps: strange music, a carnival mixture of bells, pipes, and drums, both **boisterous** and sad.

surreptitiously

One of Capricorn's men picked them up and **surreptitiously** pocketed them.

scrutinized

The old man **scrutinized** Mo's face until he turned his head away and looked out of the narrow kitchen window.

inconspicuously

"I could follow you **inconspicuously**. How would he know who I am?"

crestfallen

Fenoglio returned with a tearful Pippo on his back. The other two children followed their grandfather, looking **crestfallen**.

malevolent

The red walls looked even more threatening on this overcast day and the expression on the doll-like face of Capricorn's statue seemed even more **malevolent** than before, if that were possible.

besotted

We all know how **besotted** he is with his daughter.

conspiratorial

He lowered his voice and spoke in a **conspiratorial** whisper.

gawp

"Then don't **gawp** so stupidly, look at the book.

copious

He described the precise situation of the office and accompanied it with **copious** directions how he was to walk straight up the passage.

derision

Basta in particular was the object of enough scorn and **derision** for ten men, and from his failure to react at all one could only guess at the depths of his despair.

rostrum

The old woman who they all called Magpie had difficulty dragging her up on to the **rostrum**, which the Black Jackets had set up in the middle of the field.

dilapidated

So, he sat on the tiles of the **dilapidated** roof, his back against the cold chimney.

Activities

1. Standing outside Elinor's library, Meggie thinks: "They were promising her a thousand unknown stories, a thousand doors into worlds she had never seen before." Have you ever felt this way when you walk into a library? Discuss with your teacher why or why not.
2. Research the art of restoring books. What kind of special training would you need? Do you need a college degree?
3. Many of us have e-readers instead of physical books. What are the pros and cons of each? Which do you prefer?
4. "A few birds were quarreling among the red flowers of the rhododendron, and there stood Dustfinger looking lost to the world, and juggling." Find a how-to book about juggling and learn to juggle.
5. There is a skill to reading out loud and, as with any other skill, in order to improve, you must practice. Practice reading out loud when you are alone and then reading aloud to others. Children make a great audience!
6. *Epigraphs* are quotations or sayings used at the beginning of books or chapters in books to act as a summary, emphasize a theme, foreshadow events, etc. How does the author of *Inkheart* use epigraphs? Do you think the epigraphs add to the book or do you think they are unnecessary?
7. *Inkheart* is a book about literature and writing. There are many references to other books. Were there any you were unfamiliar with? Perhaps one used in the epigraphs sounds interesting to you. Find a copy and read it.
8. If you could read a character or characters out of a book, which book would you choose? Write a short story about reading someone out of a book.
9. If you could read yourself into a book, what book would you choose?
10. "She didn't even know the names of the authors of some of her favorite stories, let alone what they looked like." Make a list of your favorite books. How many names of the author do you know? Research some facts about each author.
11. Did the ending of the book satisfy you? If not, write how you would like it to end.
12. *Inkheart* is the first book in the Inkheart trilogy. Read the other two books to find out what happens to your favorite (and not so favorite) characters.

Teacher's Help:

Vocabulary

supercilious – contemptuous, haughtily disdainful

incredulity – inability or unwillingness to believe

boisterous – noisy, rough, unrestrained

surreptitiously – secretly or stealthily

scrutinized – to carefully examine

inconspicuously – not noticeably

crestfallen – dejected, discouraged

malevolent – evil, harmful

besotted – infatuated, obsessed

conspiratorial – secretly involving an evil plan

gawp – to stare at or gape

copious – abundant, plentiful

derision – ridicule, mockery

rostrum - pulpit

dilapidated – broken down, ruin