

The Cricket in Times Square by George Selden

Parent Child Book Discussion Questions

Grades 4-5

August 2008

snack ideas: chocolate bar), blt sandwiches, strawberry coke floats

1. General likes/dislikes and favorite parts of the book.

2. At the beginning of the book, how does Mama Bellini feel about Chester?

How are Mama and Papa Bellini different in the story?

(Discussion: Why would Mama think bugs carry diseases. Is this true?)

Some fleas, ticks, mosquitoes and flies carry diseases like malaria, lyme disease, west nile, etc.

Flies hang out in garbage. Dung beetles, ya know. Many insects eat rotting/decaying material-- things we consider dirty. What GOOD things can insects do for us? (honey, silk, pollinating fruits, enrich soil ,etc)

(Discussion: Are crickets good luck? What other superstitions mean luck?)

In China, crickets are good luck. In parts of Europe it's bad luck to have one LEAVE your house and good luck as long as it stays in

Killing a spider is bad luck.

Ladybugs landing on you is good luck. Count the spots-- that's how many months of good luck.

In Bulgaria, it is actually bad luck to see a butterfly-- it means you will soon be sick.

Black cat-- bad luck

Bats in china are good luck

Bird poops on your car= good luck

Rabbit's foot-- good luck (but not for the rabbit)

First Robin of spring-- flies up is good luck, flies down is bad

horse shoe-- good luck

3. What did Chester think of NYC? What made him feel more comfortable and why did he decide to stay?

4. Mario goes to Chinatown to get a pagoda cage for Chester. At the bottom of page 42, Sai Fong tells the story of the first cricket. How is Chester like the cricket in this story?

5. Chester lets Tucker sleep in his cage. What does Tucker use for a blanket and pillows. Why?
What happens the next morning?
6. Why does Tucker let Chester have his life savings?
(Activity-- everyone come up with a different combination of coins that can be used to make \$2.)
7. Mr Smedley comes to the news stand every Sunday. What does he like to read, and why doesn't he want to hold Chester? What are your favorite magazines?
8. Why does Chester "sing" for the first time? How does his singing affect others?
9. When does Chester change his mind about how he feels in the city? Would you like being famous? Why or Why not? What would be the good/bad parts of fame.
10. Chester decides to go home to Connecticut. Do you think he will be happy there? Do you think he will return to NYC? Why or why not? Will Tucker and Harry go to the country?

Ideas for Activities:

1. Make a cricket using a marshmallow for the body, pipe cleaners for the legs and antenna and m& m's for the eyes.....then they can eat them. Use licorice for the legs and antennae also.
2. Each child can take a turn, saying "If I were a cricket, I would....."
Let their imagination roam.
3. For any child in the book club, have gthem share their experiences and memories they've had in New York City.