

The Butterfly Lion

Important information

Plot

A boy called Bertie adopts an orphaned white lion cub. He looks after the lion until he is sent away to an English boarding school and the lion is sold to the circus. Bertie meets Millie, a girl, at boarding school and they become fast friends. How will their friendship continue throughout their lives?

Themes

Friendship, dilemmas, family, companionship, loyalty.

Setting

Although the main story is set in Africa, the story is told by an old lady to a young boy named Michael, who attends the same boarding school that Bertie used to go to in England.

Context

Michael Morpurgo's storytelling has been described as 'magical'. He has written many children's books including Little Manfred, Cool! and Kensuke's Kingdom. The Butterfly Lion has been adapted into a stage play and toured the UK in 2013. The book is illustrated by Christian Birmingham. You can see some of his illustrations below.

What can this book teach us?

This book can teach us about friendship, loyalty and animals.

Quotes

"All my life I'll think of you, I promise I will. I won't ever forget you."

'The lion cub had nowhere to run to, and the hyenas were sidling ever closer.'

'They are inseparable until Bertie is sent to boarding school...'

'The lion had brought new life to their days, life and laughter.'

Writing genres covered

Diary writing

Setting description

Name of book: The Butterfly Lion

Date published: 1996

Author: Michael Morpurgo

Characters

Michael	The boy who listens to the story of Bertie and the butterfly lion.
Bertie	The boy who adopts the orphaned lion and is later sent away to boarding school.
Millie	A girl at boarding school in England who Bertie shares his story with.
Lion	An orphaned white lion cub rescued by Bertie in Africa, who is later sold to a circus.

<u>Key word</u>	<u>Definition</u>
African veld	Open country or grassland in southern Africa
Kopje	A small hill in a generally flat area
Boarding school	A school where students stay during term time, without going home in the evenings.
Orphan	A child/animal without parents to look after them.
Inseparable	Bertie and the lion are inseparable as they spend all of their time together.

