

Catch the Reading Bug!
Famous Literary Bugs
Newport Daily News, 7/26/08

On a recent, sunny Saturday afternoon, I was fortunate enough to play hostess to a literary luncheon held in the park adjacent to the Newport Public Library. In attendance were famous literary bugs past and present, each one buzzing with excitement over this year's summer reading program, "Catch the Reading Bug". As you read the following summary of that day, see if you can guess the titles of the books in which the bug characters appear. There are clues throughout which will help you figure it out.

Chester Cricket, famous winged musician, was the first to arrive having caught a ride in a picnic basket with some visitors from Connecticut. He was a little disoriented at first but quickly recovered and graciously helped me set up for the picnic. He was followed closely by V.H. Caterpillar, notorious for his hearty appetite and love of a free meal. He hungrily eyed the feast we'd laid out and could hardly wait to dig in. Miss Spider arrived shortly thereafter in her new car with her tea set in tow which she declared a "must have" for all social gatherings. She was overheard telling the partygoers, "Itsy Bitsy sends his love. He wanted to come but couldn't make it down the waterspout." Worm, an earthy character who rose to fame with his tell-all diary, was also on hand to document the joyful occasion and was seen furiously jotting down notes in his tiny journal.

When all the guests had arrived, we sat down to eat. After feasting on one apple, two pears, three plums, and four strawberries, V.H. Caterpillar demanded to know, "What else is there to eat?" and continued to work his way through the picnic goodies, devouring pizza, sausages and watermelon. Worm then unveiled a delicious mud pie saying, "I dig mud pie. It's my favorite dessert." Following lunch, Chester Cricket put his wings together and Worm led a rousing yet brief

(due to his lack of appendages) rendition of the Hokey Pokey which V.H. Caterpillar passed on due to a stomachache. It was then that Inspector Hopper arrived, late and a bit frazzled, having spent an intense morning in the field working on his latest mystery: the case of the missing library book. He solved the case but had a close encounter with the library's bookdrop and remained jumpy for the rest of the day.

Later, discussion turned to the ongoing summer reading program at the Newport Public Library. Everyone was aflutter over the work of Dr.'s Flytrap and Beetle and were pleased that so many children have offered to help investigate the infestation of reading bugs. Inspector Hopper was overheard telling Chester Cricket, "It's no mystery why so many children love to read - there are so many great books about bugs." Miss Spider was also very enthusiastic about the theme saying, "It's high time bugs were celebrated and recognized for being amazing creatures. If only my good friend Charlotte Cavatica were around to see this."

As the sun began to set, partygoers gradually crawled, hopped and flew away but promised to stay in touch. Miss Spider gave everyone the address of her new website shouting, "The world wide web. Can you think of anything better?" Everyone had such a wonderful afternoon sharing stories and catching up on old times. All of my famous literary bug friends assured me that our paths would cross again one day - I only have to watch where I step.

Suggested Reading:

The Cricket in Times Square by George Selden

Diary of a Worm by Doreen Cronin

The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle

Inspector Hopper's Mystery Year by Doug Cushman

Miss Spider's New Car by David Kirk

Charlotte's Web by E.B. White