

Inkheart Study Guide

Inkheart by Cornelia Funke

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Plot Summary

Meggie Folchart lives alone with her father Mo, a book repair specialist. Her mother disappeared when Meggie was a baby. A late night visit from a mysterious man named Dustfinger sets off a series of events that bring Meggie and her father into confrontation with the sinister Capricorn. While imprisoned by the villain Capricorn, Meggie learns of her mother's true fate and of her father's secret ability to read characters and objects out of books and into real life. Meggie learns that she has inherited her father's special skill and together, with the help of Dustfinger, Meggie's great aunt Elinor and Fenoglio, the writer of Inkheart, they defeat Capricorn and Meggie is reunited with her mother.

The visit of a mysterious stranger named Dustfinger, leads Meggie Folchart's father, Mo, to decide to flee their small farm cottage and take refuge in the estate of Meggie's great aunt Elinor. On the way to Elinor's, Meggie learns from her father and Dustfinger that they are fleeing an evil man named Capricorn, who not only desires an object long possessed and hidden by Mo, but also wishes to forcibly employ Mo for a mysterious talent. Mo refuses to tell Meggie what this talent might be.

Once at Elinor's estate, which to Meggie's delight is filled with books, Mo is betrayed by Dustfinger, who arranges for his kidnapping by Capricorn's black jacket henchmen. However, the kidnappers fail to find the treasured object, a book called Inkheart, because it is in Elinor's possession when Mo is kidnapped. Dustfinger returns to the estate on Capricorn's orders and convinces Meggie and Elinor to attempt to rescue Mo from Capricorn's hidden village in the Italian foothills.

Meggie and Elinor are caught sneaking into the village and are brought before Capricorn. Capricorn burns hundreds of copies of Inkheart, retaining only one. While imprisoned, Mo tells Meggie and Elinor that he has a special ability to read characters and objects out of book and into real life. Anything read into existence in this manner swaps places with an object or person that is nearby when Mo reads. It is in this manner that, on the night he discovered that his talent extended to characters from books, Mo accidentally read his wife Theresa, Meggie's mother, into the book called Inkheart. At the same time, he read three characters out of the book, the cowardly performer Dustfinger, the evil Capricorn, and Basta, Capricorn's chief lieutenant.

Mo, Meggie, Elinor, and Dustfinger escape from Capricorn and travel to a nearby village where Fenoglio, the author of Inkheart lives. Basta follows and recaptures Meggie, along with Fenoglio. Dustfinger returns and attempts to sneak into the village and steal the only remaining copy of Inkheart from Capricorn, but is thwarted when his conspirator, a mute maid named Resa, is caught. While a captive, Meggie realizes that she shares her father's gift. When Capricorn learns of this, he decides to have her read his favorite assassin, the Shadow, out of Inkheart. The Shadow will the executive Dustfinger and the maid Resa, who Meggie realizes is actually her mother, Theresa.



Meggie and Fenoglio turn the tables on Capricorn by altering the text that Meggie will read and, as Mo sets fire to the village with the aid of a young man named Farid whom he read out of another book, Meggie reads the lines that put an end to Capricorn.



Chapters 1-5

Chapters 1-5 Summary

Chapter 1 - A Stranger in the Night

Meggie Folchart lives with her father Maurice in a small farmhouse filled with books. Her father is an expert bookbinder. Her mother disappeared when she was very little. One night, Meggie is reading in her bedroom by the window, when she thinks she spots someone standing out in front of the house in the storm. She runs and tells her father, who tells her that he knows the visitor and that Meggie should return to bed. Meggie decides to spy on her father and the stranger. She overhears her father address the stranger as Dustfinger. Meggie, peering down from the stairwell, thinks she sees the head of a small creature poke its head out of Dustfinger's backpack.

Dustfinger tells Mo, who he addresses as Silvertongue, that it is useless to run, that someone named Capricorn wants something from Mo and that he will do anything to get it. Dustfinger advises Mo to go to Capricorn and relinquish the item freely, and not to attempt to run.

Meggie questions Mo about Capricorn, but he refuses to fill her in, telling her not to worry.

Chapter 2 - Secrets

The next morning, Mo tells Meggie to pack up her book box for a trip. They will be visiting her aunt Elinor, who lives on a large estate in northern Italy. Meggie catches Mo studying a peculiar leather bound book while packing. They leave the farm in Mo's van, but Dustfinger is waiting for them at the gate.

Chapter 3 - Going South

Mo asks Dustfinger if Capricorn is still in the north. Dustfinger confirms this and, guessing that Mo is choosing to flee, asks for a ride part of the way south, so that he too can get clear of Capricorn. Meggie jumps out of the van and refuses to go further until she is told more. Dustfinger advises Mo to fill her in, at least some, as it is dangerous for her to be completely in the dark. Dustfinger tells Meggie that Capricorn is an evil, vicious man who wants something from Mo. He then introduces her to the creature in his backpack. The little creature, Gwin, looks very similar to a marten, though he has two small horns on his brow.

Chapter 4 - A House Full of Books

They drive south to Elinor's estate. Elinor's large manor is filled with books. Every wall in every room, including all of the hallways and landings, is composed of shelves. Elinor is reluctant to allow Meggie to touch any books, but after Mo assures her that Meggie



reveres books and would not damage them, Meggie is given permission to handle any of the books in the hallways, though certainly not those in the bedrooms or in Elinor's private library. Mo tells Elinor he is there to repair and bind the damaged portions of her library and Elinor assigns them all rooms, grudgingly allowing Dustfinger to stay the night.

Meggie spots Mo removing a wrapped object from the van. She guesses it is a valuable book and that Mo is going to hide it among Elinor's collection. Dustfinger finds Meggie spying on Mo and Elinor and asks her if she has seen Mo bring a book in from the van. She lies and says that she has not, but Dustfinger pushes Meggie into Elinor's library to try to get a look at what Mo and Elinor are doing.

Chapter 5 - Only a Picture

Meggie sneaks into library, where Elinor and Mo are examining a book. Elinor tells Mo that she did not think that there were any more in existence. They spot Meggie and allow her to take a peek at the book, though she is not allowed to read it.

The next day, Meggie tells Dustfinger that she saw Gwin in one of the book's illustrations. He tells her to ask Mo why he never reads aloud to her. When Meggie asks what Dustfinger does, he tells her he is a juggler and a fire-eater, and offers to give her a full show after dark that night. Meggie asks Mo why he never reads aloud to her, but he refuses to tell her.

Chapters 1-5 Analysis

One of the first details that the writer impresses upon the reader is the importance of books to the Folcharts. Very little detail is given about the house that Meggie and her father live in. What the reader is told is that the house is crammed with books. Meggie herself has a special book box in which she keeps her most prized works. Her father and her relate to the world through books and often share information to each other with metaphorical references to literature. This trait will come in handy later when they are in peril.

Meggie is revealed to be a rather impetuous child and her curiosity borders hard upon simply being nosy. She disobeys several orders from Mo to return to bed, in order to eavesdrop on the adult's conversation. Mo seems to expect her spying, for when Dustfinger leaves, Mo visits his daughter's room. Meggie, who had been listening to the conversation, has raced up to her room and leaped into her bed, pretending to be asleep. Mo reaches in and feels his daughter's feet. They are cold and he confronts her about her spying. Meggie displays similar impetuous and even reckless behavior many times in the story. To some degree, this is a character trait of all young children, but Meggie seems to be a more extreme embodiment of it.

We learn very little about the day to day life of the Folcharts and they abandon their home in the first chapter and do not return. It is quickly explained that Meggie is used to



moving about and no detail is given about her school life. The reader is made to believe that Meggie has no friends except her father and her books.

The description of Elinor's estate is as meager as that of the Folchart's farmhouse. Once again, the overriding detail is that of the book collection. The reader is given an early clue about the origins of Dustfinger and Gwin when Meggie spies the martin in the pages of the mysterious book.



Chapters 6-10

Chapters 6-10 Summary

Chapter 6 - Fire and Stars

Elinor has a burglar alarm that she agrees to turn off so that Meggie and Dustfinger can be out on the grounds after dark. Elinor lets Meggie out and watches the performance from her bedroom window. Dustfinger puts on a dazzling display of juggling and fire manipulation.

During the performance, a group of Capricorn's men break into the house. Meggie, hearing crashing from the manor, returns to investigate. Elinor intercepts her and pulls her into a side room, telling her that there is no hope of resisting the men, who are armed. The phone line has been cut and Elinor is unable to call the police. The men take Mo prisoner and leave. Meggie breaks free from Elinor's grip and chases them to the gate, but to no avail.

Chapter 7 - What the Night Hides

Dustfinger, hiding in the darkness of the grounds, sees Meggie chase the car of the abductors to the gate. He feels sorry for her, but does not reveal himself to her. He slings his backpack, containing Gwin, over his shoulder and slinks away into the night.

Chapter 8 - Alone

Elinor and Meggie discover that Dustfinger has fled the scene. Elinor gets the police to visit the manor, but they are little help.

Chapter 9 - A Poor Exchange

Meggie resolves to rescue her father. She takes money out of Mo's abandoned wallet and writes a note for Elinor. She sneaks into Elinor's room to leave the note, but sees the older woman asleep on her bed with Mo's peculiar book lying open beside her. Meggie awakens Elinor and accuses her of stealing the book. Elinor admits that she swapped the book for another similarly bound volume, but just so that she could read it. She tells Meggie that the book is not old, and was published only 38 years ago. It is called Inkheart and she urges Meggie to read it.

Chapter 10 - The Lion's Den

The following day, Meggie takes Inkheart out on the grounds to begin reading, hoping to divine some hint of where to search for Mo. Before she can begin, Dustfinger returns and tells her that he followed the truck far enough to tell that it was not heading for one of Capricorn's northern camps, but to a village Capricorn controls in southern Italy.



Meggie asks Dustfinger to take her to the village, where she will try to exchange the book for her father. Elinor overhears them and demands to accompany them.

Chapters 6-10 Analysis

Dustfinger's weaknesses are apparent from his betrayal of Mo. These early actions seem to indicate that he is a cowardly, self-serving man. Once the full details of his predicament are revealed, it will be seen that he is far from cowardly. Indeed, he commits many daring acts later on. However, he is self-serving and remains so throughout the book. He is not a heartless man and when his self-serving actions cause others pain, he feels remorse. He is by far the most complex, and conflicted character in the book.

Funke demands that her readers suspend considerable disbelief about her characters getting help from the law. The police are approached several times in the book, and we are told that they show little interest because the crimes involve books. However, it seems extremely unlikely that the police would ignore an armed kidnapping and so in this first instance, the reader is left feeling skeptical.

Meggie shows her impetuosity once again, not because she thinks to track down her father on her own, but because she is ready to chase after his kidnappers alone, with no plan, few means and no clue as to where her father has been taken.



Chapters 11-15

Chapters 11-15 Summary

Chapter 11 - A Coward

That night, Dustfinger sneaks into Meggie's room while she is asleep and rummages through her book box looking for Inkheart. Finding it, he starts to read, but then stops. He calls himself a coward under his breath, and puts the book back.

Chapter 12 - Going Further South

Dustfinger shows them the location of Capricorn's southern retreat, some 300 miles south, along the coast in southern Italy. He admits that he does not know how to drive and Elinor decides that they will take her car. Meggie packs only two books for the trip, and they set off.

Chapter 13 - Capricorn's Village

They drive down the coast, eventually arriving at a dirt road leading up away from the coast into the countryside. Capricorn's village is up the road, past a barrier which Dustfinger leaves the car to move aside. Dustfinger is still trying to convince Elinor that Capricorn is dangerous. She is convinced that he is just a rich, eccentric book collector.

Once at the village, they are immediately intercepted by Basta, the captain of Capricorn's black jackets, the name Capricorn's henchmen have acquired based on their standard uniform of jeans and a black leather coat. Basta takes them to the biggest house in the village.

Chapter 14 - A Mission Accomplished

Basta leads them into Capricorn's house, which is guarded by men armed with shotguns. There are women servants throughout the house and the village. One of them is clipping Capricorn's toenails when Meggie and Elinor are brought into his room. Capricorn asks Dustfinger why he brought Elinor along, when he was told to only bring the book and the girl. Capricorn relieves Meggie and Elinor of Inkheart, telling them that they will remain his prisoners and that he has no intention of releasing Mo.

Chapter 15 - Good Luck and Bad Luck

Meggie and Elinor are taken to the prison in the village where Mo is being held. They tell him of Dustfinger's betrayal and Mo decides to fill them in on the whole story.



Chapters 11-15 Analysis

Dustfinger's unwillingness to read to the end of Inkheart hints again about his origins and foreshadows his eventual fate. The reader is still kept in the dark and thus has no way of knowing that Dustfinger's reluctance in this particular matter is far from cowardly.

Capricorn is described as a cliché of evil, the tall, thin wicked man, pale of skin and cold of eye. The most famous such figure is probably Dracula, from Bram Stoker's classic novel, but more recently in children's literature, the plotting Count Olaf from Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate events* and the evil wizard Voldemort from J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series are both tall, thin, and pale. Perhaps this common portrayal of evil stems from the idea that monsters are the embodiment of the evil inside each one of us, our heart of darkness, the shadows of our souls; shadows, are often cast as spidery forms, elongated and emaciated. The sallow skin is simply meant to invoke sickness, disease and, behind each of these, death.



Chapters 16-20

Chapters 16-20 Summary

Chapter 16 - Once Upon a Time

Meggie was three years old when Mo found Inkheart in a used book store. He frequently read aloud to his wife and one night she chose to hear Inkheart. During his reading, several characters, Dustfinger, Capricorn and Basta, appear in the room. Basta seems to be threatening Dustfinger at knifepoint, with Capricorn watching. All three appear disoriented by the change of location. Basta attempts to draw his sword and drops it. Mo picks it up and uses it to hold them at bay. He notices that Meggie's mother has disappeared. Capricorn, mistaking Mo for a wizard that has displaced him by magic, demands to be returned. Mo forces Capricorn and Basta from the house with the sword.

Mo discovers that two of the family's cats are also missing and deduces that the 3 characters from the book were swapped for the two cats and Meggie's mother. Dustfinger, after pleading with Mo to return him, flees the house. Over the next few days, Mo makes many attempts to read his wife back out of the story, but succeeds only in drawing out of the book a bat, a cloak, which he eventually uses to line Meggie's book box, and a little transparent man who fades away after a few days. Mo discovers that the mailman was swapped for the transparent man and, fearing that he will lose Meggie too, he resolves to not make any further attempts.

Dustfinger returns and begs Mo to send him back, as his talents are ill-suited for this world, and he will starve in this strange country. Mo takes Meggie and slips away; he begins to relocate frequently, finally shaking off Dustfinger after a few years.

Mo finishes his tale and Basta returns to check on the prisoners. He hints that Capricorn has found a new reader, capable of bringing material out of books, and that the man has already read out several more of Capricorn's henchmen.

While pretending to be asleep, Meggie overhears Mo admit to Elinor that it is not the Inkheart book that gives him the creative reading power. He can do it with any book and he has always been able to do it, though the night when he read the characters out of Inkheart was the first time his ability had produced anything other than small objects and it was the first time that he noticed there is a material quid pro quo involved.

Chapter 17 - The Betrayer Betrayed

In the morning, Cockerell and Flatnose, two of Capricorn's henchmen, escort the prisoners to the village chapel, which has been converted into a scarlet throne room for Capricorn. Dustfinger is there and at Basta's command he starts a fire. Capricorn enters with six men, all carrying boxes filled with the copies of Inkheart he has managed to procure. He believes, with the addition of Mo's copy, that he now has all of them in existence.



Mo promises to stay and be Capricorn's reader if he will allow Meggie and Elinor to go. Capricorn refuses, and begins burning all of the copies of Inkheart. A panicked and aghast Dustfinger attempts to rescue one of the books and burns his hands. Dustfinger is taken prisoner and removed from the room, but Gwin escapes.

Capricorn's reader, Darius, enters with books that he has selected containing treasure. Capricorn tells Mo that Darius is a poor substitute and that the people he has read out of Inkheart for Capricorn have emerged with one deformity or another. Moreover, Darius has failed to read any treasure out of books. Capricorn demands that Mo read from Treasure Island.

Chapter 18 - Treasure Island

Mo succeeds in reading some doubloons and jewels out of Treasure Island. Elinor is tense the whole time, worried that Long John Silver will appear, but Meggie whispers to her father after he is done that she noticed that he seemed to slightly mispronounce the name of the murderous pirate.

At Capricorn's insistence, Mo then reads from 1001 Arabian Nights. A young boy appears and attempts to run, but is caught by Capricorn's men. Capricorn orders Mo to return the boy to the book, but Mo says that he cannot. Capricorn orders the boy imprisoned with the others, then commands Mo to keep reading. Mo says that fatigue provoked the mistake and that he should stop for the day. Capricorn consents. He tells Elinor that she is superfluous to his plans and Basta moves toward her threateningly. Meggie intervenes, telling Capricorn that Elinor's extensive knowledge of books could be helpful in locating more literary treasure.

Chapter 19 - Gloomy Prospects

That night, Dustfinger steals Basta's keys and his knife. He breaks Mo, Elinor and Meggie out of prison. They free the boy from 1001 Nights and try to convince him that they are not devils and that it is in his best interests to come with them. They manage to reach Elinor's car, but are seen and shot at as they drive off.

The boy tells them his name is Farid. He tells them that he still believes that he is a dream and has remained quiet so far because he believes it unlucky to speak in a dream.

Chapter 20 - Snakes and Thorns

They make it to the coastal road, closely pursued by a van carrying Basta and Flatnose. On the way to the nearest town, Elinor's car blows a tire and they are forced to hide the vehicle as best they can and take cover in the hills overlooking the road. Basta and Flatnose spy the car and, stopping to investigate the area, they decide to head downhill, toward the coast to look for their former captives. Mo and company head inland and Meggie falls asleep in Mo's arms on the trek.



Chapters 16-20 Analysis

Meggie once again plays the role of snoop. The author goes through the trouble of setting up the half-trust, as if preparing to keep her main in the dark, but then quickly dispels the confusion. This is typical of the story, which does not seek to hold its reader or its characters in ignorance for very long. This will be seen again in the Meggie's quick intuitive identification of the mysterious maid Resa.

Capricorn's betrays Dustfinger for the last time. The burning of the many copies of Inkheart finally convinces the fire-eater that he can no longer make a deal with this devil. From this point onward, when Dustfinger's loyalty wavers, it is because he is directly seeking to meet his own needs, which entails no longer working through Capricorn.

We learn for the first time that Mo has at least some control over the manifestation phenomenon. He slightly mispronounces Long John Silver's name in a bid to keep the pirate from appearing. What is not really indicated is what items and persons in the cathedral have been swapped for the treasure and for Farid.



Chapters 21-25

Chapters 21-25 Summary

Chapter 21 - Basta

They stop for a rest at a dilapidated house. Meggie, Elinor, and Farid sleep, while Mo and Dustfinger keep watch. Not long later, Mo awakens Meggie and quickly signals her to remain silent. There are men coming up the road. Basta and Flatnose arrive at the house, being towed by a troop of dogs. Mo, Dustfinger, Farid and Elinor manage to overpower Basta, though Mo sustains a bad bite from one of the dogs. Farid is in favor of killing the men, so that they cannot follow further. However, Mo decides to tie them up in the old house. Dustfinger removes Basta's lucky talisman.

They walk on to a nearby village and Mo tells Dustfinger about the remaining copy of Inkheart.

Chapter 22 - In Safety

Once in the village, Elinor gets some money out of an ATM. She gets hotel rooms for herself, Mo and Meggie, but Dustfinger and Farid set off on their own. Elinor gives Mo the contact number for a book dealer who happens to live in a nearby villa and who might be able to find him another copy of Inkheart. She does so only after securing a promise from Mo that he will not attempt to steal back the book in Capricorn's possession. Mo confesses to Meggie that the man whom Elinor wants him to contact is not actually a book dealer, but is in fact the writer of Inkheart.

Chapter 23 - A Night Full of Words

Elinor gives Meggie a book which she claims has no bad characters in it and should be safe for Mo to read aloud. It is a book of poetry for children. Elinor then sets off alone for home.

Meggie and Mo find Dustfinger performing on the streets for money. Farid has taken to being the fire-eater's apprentice. Mo tells Dustfinger that he is going to visit the writer of Inkheart. Dustfinger decides to accompany him, but requests that Mo not tell Fenoglio, the author, who precisely he is.

Meggie has Mo read from the book Elinor gave to her. Meggie then, once alone, tries to read the way her father does.

Chapter 24 - Fenoglio

They drive to the Fenoglio's village. Dustfinger and Farid decide to wait in the car and Mo and Meggie walk up to Fenoglio's villa. Fenoglio is an elderly, but vigorous man. When Meggie and Mo arrive, he is playing games with his three young grandchildren.



He informs Mo that he does not have a copy of Inkheart left. He loaned all of his copies, including his original draft to a museum for an exhibition. The museum was then robbed and the Inkheart material specifically removed. Fenoglio is thus suspicious that Mo would ask after it specifically.

Mo attempts to feign innocence with a story that he is interested in the book as a collector, but the wise old author quickly sees through his ruse. Mo hints that he is prohibited from telling the full story by a promise, but eventually relents and mentions Dustfinger. Fenoglio brags of the wonderful characters in Inkheart and how he had found it so difficult to kill off Dustfinger. Meggie listens in shock as he describes Dustfinger's death at the hands of one of Capricorn's henchmen. In the book, Dustfinger dies trying to save Gwin. Meggie asks him what happens to Capricorn and is shocked to learn that Capricorn survives.

Chapter 25 - The Wrong Ending

Mo tells Fenoglio the whole story and agrees to take Fenoglio to meet Dustfinger.

Chapters 21-25 Analysis

Again, as in the last section, a state of ignorance is quickly dispelled when Mo reveals to his daughter almost immediately that the man they will be traveling to meet is not a book collector, but is in fact the author of Inkheart.

Though it never says so directly, several clues indicate that the book that Elinor gives Meggie is *Where the Sidewalk Ends* by Shel Silverstein. This is confirmed later in the story.

Fenoglio is a brilliant man, quick of wit and energetic for his age. There is something self-centered about him and Meggie is immediately distrustful of him. He is vainglorious and arrogant. Mo's betrayal of Dustfinger is ironic, because one of the reasons that Mo has avoided attempting to send Dustfinger back into Inkheart is that he knows the man's fate in the story. However, in a very real sense, the knowledge of that fate is nearly as bad, and Mo has here set in motion a series of events likely to lead to Dustfinger discovering his fate. The betrayal seems almost inexplicable and we are left to believe it is the force of Fenoglio's personality and the cowardice of Mo that brings it about.



Chapters 26-30

Chapters 26-30 Summary

Chapter 26 - Shivers Down the Spine and a Foreboding

Mo devises a plan that will allow Fenoglio to see Dustfinger, but only from a distance. The old man will walk his grandchildren home to their mother's, lingering in the village square, where Mo left the car. Mo will then return to Dustfinger and tell him that the author did not have a copy of the book.

Dustfinger notices that Mo looks guilty as he approaches the car. Mo tells Dustfinger that Fenoglio has no copies of Inkheart. Dustfinger knows that something is up. He asks Meggie if she has learned his fate in the book and can tell by her reaction that she has. Meggie tells him he cannot go back into the book. Fenoglio, observing all of this from a distance, decides to come over. Dustfinger pulls out Basta's knife and warns them all to stay back, then runs. Farid follows him.

Once they are away from the village and into the hills, Dustfinger tells Farid that it is not safe to follow him, for he intends to return to Capricorn's village and attempt to steal the last copy of Inkheart. Farid tells Dustfinger that he will accompany him at least as far as the village and implores Dustfinger to instruct him in fire manipulation.

Chapter 27 - A Good Place to Stay

Mo has a plan to bring Meggie's mother back, and it involves help from Fenoglio. Mo tells Meggie that they will be staying at Fenoglio's villa for awhile. Mo will work to rebind Fenoglio's shabby book collection and Fenoglio will work on his part of Mo's plan.

Chapter 28 - Going Home

Elinor returns home to find all of her books pulled off of their shelves and scattered in heaps on the floor. Her personal library is empty and a dead rooster hangs from the window, which is open to the garden. Outside, she discovers the smoldering remains of a heap of burned books, all the best books of her great collection. She collapses by the charred heap and weeps.

Chapter 29 - Only an Idea

Fenoglio sets Mo and Meggie up in a small apartment. Mo is appalled at the state of Fenoglio's books. He goes to work rebinding and repairing, while Fenoglio spends long hours in his study. Meggie entertains Fenoglio's grandchildren, who are all younger than her. Meanwhile, she practices reading aloud the children's book of poems that Elinor gave her.

Chapter 30 - Talkative Pippo



Elinor calls Mo and tells him about the vandalism of her library and that Meggie's book box was not destroyed and is safe under Elinor's bed. Elinor intends to return to Capricorn's village with the police and prosecute him. Mo drives to the airport to pick up Elinor. While he is away, Basta kidnaps Meggie and, after she tells him that if he kills Fenoglio, the author of Inkheart, all of its characters, including Basta himself, will cease to exist, he takes Fenoglio captive as well. Basta carves his name on the apartment wall so that Mo will know who took Meggie and Fenoglio.

Chapters 26-30 Analysis

The destruction of Elinor's library is easily the most heart-rending moment of the book. This is partly brought about by the fact that Funke has treated books with such reverence throughout the story. At this point, she has established that the burning some many books is not at all unlike murder.

The dead, hung rooster is a symbol that Capricorn uses to mark his acts of terror. It is intimated in the text that he used this same symbol in his own world, inside the Inkheart story. It is a powerful symbol and implies that the victim of the act is as helpless as a chicken before a butcher.

The characters enjoy a very brief respite before they are right back into the fire. Instead of being a series of near escapes, this story is one of full escapes, but short-lived freedoms.



Chapters 31-35

Chapters 31-35 Summary

Chapter 31 - In the Hills

Dustfinger and Farid begin spying on Capricorn's village, using the burned out house on an overlooking hill as a base of operations. Capricorn is clearly away from the village on other business. Dustfinger plots to sneak into the village in the night, though he suspects that Capricorn will have taken Inkheart with him. Farid finds a photo of one of the village maids in Dustfinger's backpack and the two argue about whether the young boy will accompany Dustfinger on the raid.

Chapter 32 - Back Again

Basta takes Meggie and Fenoglio to the church in Capricorn's village, where they meet Mortola, the elderly woman Capricorn has left in charge of the village. Mortola strips Basta of his rank of head lieutenant and demands that he turn over the village keys, which he does. Basta takes Meggie and Fenoglio to the prison. Fenoglio tells Meggie that Mortola is Capricorn's mother, though he suspects that Capricorn has hidden this fact from everyone else in the village. Meggie tells Fenoglio that Capricorn intends for Mo to read another villain out of Inkheart and Fenoglio thinks that he has a notion as to who this would be.

Chapter 33 - Capricorn's Maid

Dustfinger and Farid sneak into the village, skulking along the rooftops. Dustfinger makes contact with a maid named Resa. Resa is deaf, but it appears it was she that taught Dustfinger how to read. Farid recognizes her as the maid whose photo is in Dustfinger's backpack. Resa communicates with pen and paper, telling Dustfinger about Mortola relieving Basta of his keys and about the imprisonment of Meggie and Fenoglio.

Dustfinger and Farid sneak out of the village. Dustfinger tells Farid that Capricorn made Resa a maid five years before. Though Dustfinger disagrees with him, Farid believes that Resa bears a strong resemblance to Meggie.

Chapter 34 - Capricorn's Secrets

Capricorn returns and Meggie and Fenoglio are dragged before him. Capricorn is skeptical of Fenoglio's claims of authorship and speaks of doing away with the unnecessary old man. Basta, fearful of Meggie's warning, argues against the action. Fenoglio tries to convince Capricorn by giving him details about Capricorn's life that are not even in Inkheart. Capricorn, still doubting the old man, decides to keep him for his entertaining storytelling.

Chapter 35 - Different Arms



Dustfinger and Farid, spotting Mo and Elinor approaching the village in Elinor's car, intercept them. They hide the car and return to the burned house overlooking the village. Dustfinger says that the village is on high alert and that it would be next to impossible to smuggle Meggie out. He tries to convince Mo to wait while he attempts to lift the book. With Inkheart in their possession, he argues, they will have more leverage for dealing with Capricorn. Mo rejects the plan, but Dustfinger ties up Mo and Elinor at knight point. He tells Farid to guard them while he sneaks into the village to attempt the theft of the book.

Chapters 31-35 Analysis

Dustfinger is aware that the shack overlooking the village is a particularly good hiding place because he was there when the house was burned. Basta, on Capricorn's orders, was burning the houses in the hill surrounding the commandeered village and taking the inhabitants captive to work as slaves. This particular shack was owned by an old woman who cursed Basta before burning with her house. Dustfinger, who knows that Basta is a deeply superstitious man and will no longer get near the building, uses this information to his advantage. This is not the last time that Basta's superstitious nature will be used against him.

The reader learns little about Mortola, who is also called the Magpie. What is clear is that she is a vicious woman, who is proud of her murderous, cunning son. Mortola has been read out of Inkheart by Darius, but it seems that in this instance he has not botched the job, as we are not made aware of any physical defects she received from the crossover.

The reader is given a large hint about the identity of the maid Resa almost immediately, when Farid suggests to Dustfinger that Resa bears a strong resemblance to Meggie.

When Mo first tells Meggie that they are going to see the writer of Inkheart, she is momentarily confused because she has grown accustomed to the idea that the writers of books are long dead. When she later identifies Fenoglio to Basta, he too cannot believe that writers of books could be among the living. Capricorn, as well, labors under this delusion and he remains suspicious of the old man because of it.



Chapters 36-40

Chapters 36-40 Summary

Chapter 36 - In Capricorn's House

Meggie and Fenoglio are now being held in a room in Capricorn's house. Meggie talks of escape, but Fenoglio, remembering that every one of the guards in the village is armed with a shotgun, tells her that they must wait.

Chapter 37 - Carelessness

Dustfinger sneaks into the village and tries to rendezvous with Resa, but is caught by Mortola, Basta and Flatnose. Mortola tells him that Resa's treachery has been discovered.

Chapter 38 - A Quiet Voice

Meggie attempts to escape, but is caught before she even makes it out of the house. Fenoglio finds a flashlight and a stack of books under the bed. Meggie guesses that the room had belonged to Darius. Meggie, while reading from one of the books, accidentally reads a character, Tinkerbell, into existence. Basta visits the room, seeing the fairy, throws his jacket over her and catches her. Basta deduces that Meggie possesses the same gift as her father and takes her to Capricorn.

Chapter 39 - The Punishment for Traitors

Capicorn is delighted with the news, as he no longer needs Mo. He tries to manipulate Meggie by suggesting that her father is making no attempt to rescue her. Capricorn shows Meggie two people imprisoned in a net, Dustfinger and the mute maid Resa. Meggie thinks that she recognizes Resa, who, Capricorn tells her, was imperfectly read out of Inkheart by Darius. Capricorn tells the village and Meggie that Dustfinger and Resa will be formally executed for treason in two days.

Chapter 40 - The Black Horse of the Night

Meggie tells Fenoglio her suspicions that Resa is her missing mother, Theresa. Fenoglio guesses that Capricorn will force Meggie to attempt to read a character called the Shadow out of Inkheart.

Chapters 36-40 Analysis

Tinkerbell is of course the famous faerie from J.M. Barrie's series of plays centered on the character Peter Pan. Each chapter in Inkheart is prefaced by a literary quote, and Barrie's work is quoted perhaps more than any other. Basta is unwilling to actually harm

Tinkerbelle, because he believes it is very bad luck to do so. Meggie is fascinated by her father's ability and has been secretly trying to duplicate it. However, now that she has succeeded, and in effect lured Tinkerbelle into captivity, she feels guilty. The title of Chapter 38, A Quiet Voice, refers to the fact that Tinkerbelle's voice is too soft to hear.

The planned executions place a dramatic deadline on the action, and give the events a point of culmination.



Chapters 41-45

Chapters 41-45 Summary

Chapter 41 - Farid

Seeing that Dustfinger has not returned, Farid agrees to untie Mo and Elinor if and only if they allow him to go alone into the village to scout for Dustfinger. Mo gives the boy a coded message for Meggie, and Farid, taking Gwin with him, slinks off into the darkness.

Chapter 42 - A Furry Face on the Windowsill

Flatnose brings breakfast to Meggie and Fenoglio. He is excited about the coming executions. He is quickly followed by Darius, who has been asked to test Meggie's reading abilities. He tells her that he read Resa, Flatnose and others out of books for Capricorn, but that his attempts were always flawed. Darius tells them that Mortola will arrive soon to observe and that Meggie will be reading from Hans Christian Anderson's the Tin Soldier. Fenoglio tells Meggie to agree only if they allow her to keep the Tin Soldier and to allow Fenoglio to have pencil and paper. With Mortola watching, Meggie succeeds in reading the Tin Soldier out of the book. She is told that she will be allowed to keep him once Capricorn has seen him. Meggie forgets to ask for pencil and paper.

After Darius and Mortola leave, Meggie spots Gwin on the windowsill, a note attached to his collar. The note is written in the elvish language of elves in the Lord of the Rings. She reads the note to Fenoglio and they craft a response, telling Mo of her new ability, of the Shadow and the impending executions. Meggie decides not to mention her suspicions about Resa. She attaches the note to Gwin and shoos him away.

Chapter 43 - A Dark Place

Basta moves Dustfinger and Resa to the crypt beneath the church to await execution. Dustfinger taunts Basta about his foolish superstitions and the new talisman he has made. Resa finds out from Dustfinger who Meggie is and the reader finds out the Dustfinger is well aware of the relationship between the two.

Chapter 44 - Farid's Report

Farid returns to Mo and Elinor with Meggie's message. Farid has stolen a black jacket and a maid's uniform from a clothesline on the way out of town. The three begin working on a plan to free the captives. Farid suggests using fire as a diversion, but Mo is worried that the rain-starved village and the surrounding hills will catch fast.

Chapter 45 - Telling Lies to Basta



Basta brings the Tin Soldier back to Meggie. Fenoglio gives Basta a phony hex to use on Mortola. In exchange, Basta arranges for Fenoglio to be provided with pencil and paper, though he tells the old man that he will have one of the literate maids telling him everything the old man writes.

Chapters 41-45 Analysis

The elvish writing is not written out for the reader, but the idea of using it to send secret message is conceivable as Tolkien developed it as a real language and it has since been supplemented. Being able to read the language indicates that Meggie is an obsessive, almost fanatical reader. Indeed, she comments to Fenoglio that her father's grasp of the language is weak, indicating that she herself has given it far more than a cursory study.

The Tin Soldier is a character from Hans Christian Andersen's work *The Steadfast Tin Soldier*, which is a bittersweet fairytale about a one-legged toy soldier that falls in love with a one-legged toy ballerina. The soldier is ultimately consumed in a fire with his love. The soldier, as a character who meets a bad end in a literary story, is meant to remind the reader of Dustfinger.

Dustfinger is not the only one exploiting Basta's superstitious character. Fenoglio, who wrote Basta as a character who is dominated by superstition, knows that he too can manipulate the villain. Basta's motivation for hexing Mortola stems from her stripping him of the village keys, an act which humiliated him in front of the black jackets he is supposed to command.



Chapters 46-50

Chapters 46-50 Summary

Chapter 46 - Woken in the Dead of Night

Fenoglio writes into the night, waking Meggie in the early morning to tell her that he has finished a new story for the Tin Soldier. He wants Meggie to attempt to read the soldier back into the new story. This was Mo's idea for how to retrieve Meggie's mother. Meggie succeeds in reading the Tin Soldier into the new story. Fenoglio hatches a plan to have Meggie read a modified version of the Shadow into existence for Capricorn. While they are talking, they hear shouting and gunfire in the village.

Chapter 47 - Alone

Elinor, waiting in the house overlooking the village, hears shots and fears that Mo and Farid have been killed scouting the village. Dressed in the maid outfit that Farid stole, Elinor sneaks toward the edge of the village, but quickly runs into Mo and Farid. Farid has a small nick from a ricochet, but the two are otherwise alright. Mo begins to reconsider Farid's idea to use fire as a distraction.

Elinor waits until Mo and Farid are asleep and then, leaving them a note, returns to her car, intending to get help from the police.

Chapter 48 - The Magpie

It is morning and the executions are scheduled to take place at sundown. Fenoglio has been writing all night. Basta takes Meggie to Mortola, who produces the copy of Inkheart from a chest guarded by two snakes. She tells Meggie to familiarize herself with the part of the story that she will be reading tonight. Meggie will be reading the Shadow into existence to perform the executions. Meggie pretends to read. She asks Mortola and Basta about the shooting the night before, fearful that her father has already been killed trying to rescue her. Basta lets slip that Cockerell is a terrible shot, but Mortola will not tell Meggie whether anyone was killed.

Meggie threatens to bite her own tongue so that she will be unable to read aloud, if she is not allowed to see Dustfinger again before the ceremony.

Chapter 49 - Basta's Pride and Dustfinger's Cunning

Basta takes Meggie to the crypt to see Dustfinger and Resa. Dustfinger tries to slip a note from Resa through the bars to Meggie, but Basta discovers the attempt. Basta cannot of course read the note, and Dustfinger tries to convince him that it is a request for wine. Meggie snatches the note back from Basta and he lashes out at her as she passes the note back to Dustfinger. Basta puts a knife to Meggie's throat as Dustfinger



taunts him with the piece of paper. Dustfinger, recognizing that it is a hollow threat, continues to taunt Basta and succeeds in getting the henchman to enter the cell.

As Basta bears down on him, Dustfinger tells the superstitious man that he has learned some fairy magic and begins pretending to recite a curse. Basta attacks, but Resa hits him with a stone from behind, confusing him enough to allow Dustfinger to disarm him. Dustfinger locks Basta in the cell. He tells Resa to take Meggie up the stairs, so that she does not have to watch him kill Basta. Basta, calling for help, has succeeded in alerting the guards. Dustfinger charges up the steps to try to head them off, but instead slips past the guards and escapes. Flatnose arrives in the crypt. He shuts Resa back in an empty cell and tells Basta that he cannot let him out because Dustfinger has escaped with the keys. He then escorts Meggie back to her room in Capricorn's house.

Chapter 50 - No Luck for Elinor

Elinor's explanations, filled as they are with stolen and burned books, to the police in the nearby town, get her little help and much derision. One officer agrees to come back with her to the village, but once they arrive, the officer escorts her straight to Capricorn, informing him that Elinor has been spreading malicious lies about him. After the officer leaves, Capricorn tells Elinor that he is easy to control because he has three children and that all police officers should have children. When Elinor asks after Mo, she is told he was shot dead along with Farid, while trying to enter the village.

Elinor is taken to the crypt and put in the cell with Resa. Basta is informed that he will not be released, but will take Dustfinger's place at the evening's event.

Chapters 46-50 Analysis

Fenoglio rewrites the story of the Tin Soldier with a happy ending, where the soldier and the ballerina marry and live happily ever after. The success of this idea suggests that there is hope for Dustfinger.

Meggie is sick with fear after overhearing the gunfire in the night. She is certain that her father has been killed trying to rescue her. She feels some personal guilt for this. Not only is Mo attempting to rescue her, but her ability to read for Capricorn has made it so Capricorn can tell his men to kill Mo.

While in Mortola's room, Meggie learns why the woman has earned the nickname of the Magpie. She is a collector. She has collected objects belonging to and likenesses of every person her son has harmed or killed. This fetish for objects of the victim is common among psychopathic killers, but it is an interesting twist to have the fetishism occur in the parent of a killer.

Basta's fear of the supposed faerie hex now leads to his final disgrace and imprisonment. A kind reading of Dustfinger's escape and abandonment of Resa and Meggie would posit that he is saving himself because he does not feel that he will be

able to overpower the guards and that he intends to save them later. However, his actions could also be interpreted as a further example of his cowardice.



Chapters 51-55

Chapters 51-55 Summary

Chapter 51 - A Narrow Escape

In the abandoned house, Farid and Mo fashion large torches and cut their hair short. They are forced to hide while a patrol searches the house. The patrol finds the bloody bandages Farid was using for his arm.

Chapter 52 - A Fragile Little Thing

Dustfinger, while hiding out in Basta's empty house in the village, discovers Tinkerbell, who Basta imprisoned in a jar. He nurses her strength back with a saucer of milk, but cannot understand her tiny voice when she speaks. She hovers by the window, eager to escape, but he warns her that it is, at present, too dangerous, and keeps the window closed.

Chapter 53 - The Right Words

Fenoglio revises his work all day until finally, as dusk approaches, he presents Meggie with a single paragraph to slip into her reading. Before she can read it, Mortola enters with supper and a dress for Meggie to wear for the ceremony. Mortola refuses to allow Fenoglio to accompany Meggie to the execution.

Chapter 54 - Fire

Mo and Farid watch the occupants of the village gather in the football field for the ceremony. They sneak down into the emptied village. They will set fire to Capricorn's house as soon as they can confirm that Meggie is no longer inside. They spy Mortola leaving the building with Meggie and note that only one guard has been left behind. They approach the guard, telling him that they have been sent to fetch Capricorn's armchair. After they fail to convince the guard that they are black jackets from Capricorn's north estate, Mo subdues the guard, though not before the guard informs them of Dustfinger's escape.

While rooting through Dustfinger's backpack looking for matches, Mo finds the picture of Resa and recognizes her as his wife, Teresa. Farid tells him that she is the maid who is to be executed tonight and that he thinks that Dustfinger and she are in love. Mo and Farid set their fire and Mo runs through the village proclaiming it.

Chapter 55 - Treachery, Loose Talk, and Stupidity

Teresa, Elinor and Basta are brought out onto the field in a cage. Capricorn arrives, with Fenoglio in tow. Meggie is already in place on the stage. Capricorn makes a speech, warning the village they are about to witness the consequences of treachery in his



service. The church bells begin to toll and Capricorn sends Flatnose with a group of henchmen to discover why. Elinor suspects the disruption is the work of Mo and Farid. Capricorn then announce that all other prisoners were shot when they attempted to escape and shows the crowd the bloody bandages retrieved by the patrol. Elinor assures Teresa that Capricorn is lying, but both Teresa and Meggie are downcast at the news.

Chapters 51-55 Analysis

Fenoglio tells Meggie that his new paragraph will still read the Shadow into existence, but will do so in such a way as to bring about Capricorn's downfall. The maids and servants in the village are all afraid of Meggie, believing her to be some kind of witch.

Theresa is Elinor's niece and the two are accidentally reunited by imprisonment. They spend the night talking, Theresa writing out her questions and responses. Theresa's muteness is a result of Darius failing to correctly read her back out of Inkheart. Capricorn has hinted more than once that Resa is his favorite maid and that he has enjoyed her service. As this is a children's book, this service is of course not elaborated upon. However, any adult reader will surely see that there is an implied sexual meaning.



Chapters 56-59

Chapters 56-59 Summary

Chapter 56 - The Shadow

Mortola tells Meggie that if she does not read the passage correctly, Fenoglio will be summarily executed. Flatnose returns and leaves with more men to attempt to control the fire, which Capricorn tells those remaining to ignore, reiterating that Dustfinger, the fire-handler, is dead. Mo manages to signal to Meggie that he and Farid are observing the scene. Meggie announces that she is about to begin and must not be interrupted, hoping that Mo will overhear her warning.

Fenoglio signals Meggie and then begins to struggle with the henchmen holding him, hoping to create a distraction that will allow Meggie to perform the slight of hand necessary to slip the page she has hidden in her sleeves into the book. Mortola spots Meggie's attempt, but is restrained by Darius, who clamps a hand over her mouth. In the confusion, Meggie reads the new passage and the Shadow appears. Capricorn shouts for the book to be taken from Meggie, but before she can be reached, Meggie arrives at a line describing Capricorn falling over dead. She hesitates, unsure if she can read the line. At that moment, a hand grabs the page from her. It is Mo, who reads the line; Capricorn collapses. The line also caused all who had burned and murdered for Capricorn to disappear.

Chapter 57 - A Deserted Village

Half of Capricorn's men have disappeared, and the rest flee into the forest. Meggie reads the final section and the Shadow disappears. Mortola is still there, confused about what has happened to her son. Fenoglio has disappeared and Meggie worries that he has been read into the book.

Farid opens the cage to release Elinor and Resa, but Basta, who, like Mortola, has also been left behind, grabs Resa and threatens to kill her if he is not allowed to leave safely. He shoves Resa at Farid and Mo and dashes away into the forest. Mortola slips away in the confusion.

Meanwhile, Meggie's final reading has brought into life all of the creatures that the Shadow killed. The field is now full of mythical creatures.

Chapter 58 - Homesickness

Dustfinger watches the whole event from Basta's roof along with Tinkerbelle. He sees Fenoglio disappear as the Shadow appears and sees Mo place the remaining copy of Inkheart in his jacket. When the Shadow disappears, Dustfinger tells Tinkerbelle that it is now probably safe to join the others and she happily flies down into the crowd, which now includes many other fairies.



Mo, Meggie, Elinor and Farid sleep in the field that night with the new host of creatures. Dustfinger sneaks down and removes the copy of Inkheart from a sleeping Mo. Farid awakens and asks if he can come along to wherever Dustfinger is going and remain his apprentice. The two collect Gwin and Dustfinger's backpack and leave.

Chapter 59 - Going Home

Elinor offers her estate as a haven for the now displaced creatures. Half of the new creatures, including Tinkerbell, decide to remain in the village. Mo, Meggie and Elinor return to Elinor's estate with a busload of creatures. Darius comes along as well, Elinor having accepted his proposal to help rebuild her library. After a few weeks at the estate, Mo and Meggie make their final decision to remain and Meggie resolves to become a writer.

Chapters 56-59 Analysis

It is unclear why Basta and Mortola do not disappear along with others that have killed and burned for Capricorn. At least in Basta's case, his being exempt from this group is inconceivable. It is clear that the escape of Basta and Mortola, the disappearance of Fenoglio and the theft of the last Inkheart by Dustfinger, are all actions that set up the story of the second book of the series.

Meggie is actually glad that Tinkerbell decides to remain behind in the village. Though initially fascinated with the little fairy, Meggie discovers that Tinkerbell is actually very vain and is constantly shaking her bells in an attempt to get attention. In the end, a number of the mythical creatures wander off from Elinor's estate and it can be assumed that some do from the abandoned village as well. This too could be a problem set up for use in the next books in the series.



Characters

Meggie Folchart

Meggie Folchart is an inquisitive, and at times impetuous young girl, who has had a love of books instilled in her by her father. She has few friends, in part because of how often she and her father have moved about and in part because of spending most of her time with her nose in a book. She, like her father, relates to the world around her through literature and it is not an exaggeration to say that her most fulfilling relationships are with literary characters. Meggie's impetuosity and relentless curiosity get her into trouble, but also grant her the bravery to seize opportunities in dire situations.

Her mother disappears when she is very young and she has never been told the whole story of this disappearance. She eventually learns the truth and, what is more, she learns that she shares her father's singular ability to read characters and objects out of books and into the real world.

Meggie has a strong sense of right and wrong as well as a deep concern for justice. She is disturbed by the seeming injustice of the fates of the various characters from the Inkheart book, feeling that it is unfair that the cowardly, but good-hearted Dustfinger meets a bad end, when the evil Capricorn walks free.

Maurice Folchart

As a young man, Mo Folchart learned that he had a unique ability to read objects out of books. At first, he did not notice that there was always a quid pro quo in the transfer and that an object near him would always disappear when the literary object appeared. This ability only manifests itself when he reads aloud.

One day, while reading a book called Inkheart to his wife Theresa and his infant daughter Meggie, Mo learns that his ability is not limited to objects, when he accidentally reads three characters out of the book, at the same time, tragically, losing his wife into the story.

Mo has never read aloud to Meggie, fearing of course that he will lose his daughter in the same way that he lost his wife. Mo is a quiet, skittish man, who does not have his daughter's bravery.

Dustfinger

Dustfinger is a performer with an almost supernatural control over fire. He has an unusual pet named Gwin, who looks much like a ferret or a martin, except that he has a small set of horns on his head. Dustfinger, who was employed for his performing



abilities by Capricorn, has been subsequently tyrannized by the villain and his henchman Basta.

Once in the real world, Dustfinger is homesick for the world of Inkheart. He feels that his skills are not appreciated in the real world and that he will starve. He is therefore obsessed with the book Inkheart, even though he fears to actually read it himself, sensing perhaps intuitively that it will contain in its pages a bad end for him. Even when he learns that this is so, he still seems to prefer the chance to be sent back to his own world to face whatever awaits him than to remain any longer in the new one.

Clever and resourceful, Dustfinger is nevertheless often undone by his cowardice. This trait is ultimately ironic, because it is by an act of bravery, attempting to rescue his pet Gwin, that Dustfinger meets his end in Inkheart.

Gwin

Gwin is a mischievous martin-like creature in the care of the performer Dustfinger.

Capricorn

The evil ringleader from the story Inkheart, Capricorn is obsessed with power and wealth, but is also delighted by pointless cruelty. He is tall, thin and pale of skin.

Elinor Loredan

Elinor is a spinster who has used her family's largess to amass a great library of rare books. Her large manor house is piled with her books, which she considers her children, and she guards and cares for them lovingly. She is the aunt of Meggie's mother Theresa.

Basta

Basta is the leader of Capricorn's henchmen. Vicious and cruel, Basta is plagued by superstitious beliefs and fears.

Cockerell

Cockerell is a prominent member of the so-called "black jackets," Capricorn's henchmen. Cockerell is a specialist at pillaging and burning.



Flatnose

Flatnose is the second lieutenant, after Basta, in Capricorn's forces, and he delights in cruelty almost as much as his master.

Darius

Darius is a book enthusiast whom Capricorn discovers to have an ability similar to Maurice Flochart. Darius's gift is imperfect, however, and characters that he reads out of books often exhibit physical or mental flaws.

Farid

Farid is a young Arab man whom Mo reads into existence out of the famed story collection 1001 Arabian Nights. Farid befriends Dustfinger, becoming the performer's apprentice.

Fenoglio

The elderly writer of Inkheart is quick-witted and energetic, sure of his abilities to the point of narcissism.

Mortola, the Magpie

The chief maid of Capricorn's village, Mortola is in fact Capricorn's mother, read out of Inkheart by Darius. She delights in her son's cruelty and acquires her nickname because she collects pictures and objects related to people that Capricorn has harmed or killed.

Resa

A maidservant in Capricorn's village who is actually Theresa Folchart, Meggie's mother. She is read back out of Inkheart by Darius, an action that results her in being rendered mute.

Tinkerbell

The famous fairy from Peter Pan is read out of the story and into captivity by Meggie Folchart. After the liberation of Capricorn's village, Tinkerbell chooses to remain in the now abandoned village along with a host of other mythical creatures.

The Shadow

A supernatural and immortal assassin in the service of Capricorn in the Inkheart book.



Objects/Places

Inkheart

Inkheart is a dark children's book written by Fenoglio. Mo Folchart purchases a used copy when his daughter Meggie is an infant and accidentally reads his wife, Theresa into the book, and three characters, Capricorn, Dustfinger, and Basta, out of it.

Meggie's Book Box

Meggie keeps her most treasured books in a book box. The box also contains several items read out of books by Meggie's father.

Basta's Talisman

The deeply superstitious Basta wears a talisman around his neck to ward off evil curses. When the fetish is stolen by Dustfinger, Basta replaces it with a rabbit's foot.

Basta's Knife

Basta uses this sinister blade to threaten his victims. The knife is also lifted by Dustfinger.

Black Jackets

Capricorn's henchmen are so named for their standard uniform of black leather jackets.

Dustfinger's Backpack

Dustfinger's backpack features prominently in the story. It serves as the martin Gwin's carrying case. In it, Dustfinger also keeps a photo of the maid Resa, for whom he has feelings. The photo is later discovered by Mo, who recognizes that Resa is actually his lost wife Theresa.

Elinor's Collection

The extensive collection of rare and valuable books owned by Elinor Loredan, which she houses in her large manor house.



Mortola's Collection

A collection of pictures and objects kept by Mortola to chronicle the cruelty inflicted on others by her evil son Capricorn.

Mortola's Chest

Mortola's chest houses two snakes, which protect the contents from theft. It is in her chest that the last copy of Inkheart is kept by Capricorn.

Capricorn's Throne

Capricorn has had the old village chapel turned turned into a throne room. On the dais, where the altar should be, there is a large, ornately carved throne, from which Capricorn presides over the room.

Themes

Manifesting Characters and Objects from Literature

One of the central themes in the book *Inkheart* is the astonishing ability shared by Mo and his daughter Meggie to read characters and objects out of books and into real life. For Mo, this begins as a simple exchange of inanimate objects, though he is not at first aware that there is a quid pro quo necessary in the phenomenon, and that for every item that he reads out of a book, an item near by in real life disappears into the story. Mo quickly learns that this miraculous feat can only take place when he is reading aloud.

Eventually, Mo learns that the phenomenon extends to characters in the book, who can be read out, swapping places at random with nearby animate objects. This has disastrous consequences for Mo who accidentally loses his wife Theresa into the book *Inkheart*. During the course of events, Meggie learns that she too shares this ability and she successfully reads Tinkerbell out of *Peter Pan* and the Tin Soldier out of the stories of Hans Christian Andersen.

The act is morally dubious and Funke attempts to describe the confusion, fear and homesickness of displaced characters like Dustfinger and Tinkerbell. At the same time, both Mo and Meggie are shown to bear guilt for the accidents. Meggie feels sorry for both Tinkerbell and the Tin Soldier, even though, in the soldier's case, pulling him out of the story has saved him from a bad end. Mo bears the guilt of the accident that lost him his wife and robbed his daughter of a mother. In addition, there is the question of whether a literary character has the same rights as a real person and, if so, characters like Dustfinger, Farid and Tinkerbell have been manipulated and abused.

Dustfinger's Plight

The fire-eating performer Dustfinger is a character pulled in many directions. He is homesick for his own world and feels isolated and confused by the modern world in which he has found himself. Yet, through his interactions with Mo, he has sensed that there is something ominous about his fate in *Inkheart*. When he gets his hands on the book, he finds that he is too afraid to read to the end and learn of his fate. Thus he is caught between two competing impulses, the obsession to find his way back into the book to his home and the fear of what fate awaits him there.

His obsession with the book leads him to betray his friends several times. He even seemingly abandons his new love Resa to her fate in Capricorn's crypt, because he cannot pluck up the courage to stay and fight the guards. His relationship with Resa, who though read out of *Inkheart* like himself, is actually Meggie's mother and is now in the world in which she belongs, further complicates his feelings about returning home. In one of the last scenes in the book, he watches from afar as Resa smiles and laughs,



reunited with her family, and he takes it as a sign that she has chosen them over him. His next act is to steal the last copy of Inkheart from Mo, presumably so that he can finally find a way to step back into the book.

All of the conflict created inside him is exacerbated by his cowardice. He lacks the courage to pick a course and stick to it, no matter the consequences, and thus he is blown about by the many forces, unable to commit to anything.

Betrayal

The plotline in Inkheart is rife with betrayal. It is a one of the key devices that Funke uses to drive events.

The action begins with a betrayal. Dustfinger lures Mo and Meggie to the south, by telling them that Capricorn is currently using his northern hideout. He then contrives to get Elinor to turn off her security system on the pretext of allowing Meggie to come out onto the grounds to view one of his performances. After Mo is kidnapped, Dustfinger takes this betrayal a step further. Capricorn, upon discovering that Mo's copy of Inkheart was not on him when he was captured, sends Dustfinger back to Elinor's estate to trick Meggie into attempting to rescue her father and into taking the book with her.

The tables are then turned, when Dustfinger, who committed his many treacheries regretfully and only because he was obsessed with finding a way back into the Inkheart book, watches Capricorn burn what he thinks is every copy of Inkheart. Later, Dustfinger is betrayed again, this time by Mo, who promised to keep Dustfinger's true identity secret from Fenoglio, the author of Inkheart. Dustfinger is concerned that if he associates directly with Fenoglio, that he will learn of his fate in the book. Mo breaks his promise and divulges to the author the identity of the man with the scars. Fenoglio then confronts Dustfinger.

Most of these betrayals engender a great deal of guilt in those that commit them. They are not committed out of malice. However, there are acts of betrayal performed either maliciously or with no sign of contrition. One such act is the betrayal of Elinor by the local police in the town near Capricorn's village. Though we are told that the police officer probably obeys Capricorn's wishes because the henchman has threatened to harm his family, we are also not given any indication that the policeman feels sorry for Elinor and for what he has done. He simply acts as though he is happy to be a corrupt cop on the take.

Style

Point of View

The story is written in third person, but the point of view shifts about frequently. Since the chapters are so small, the point of view tends to stay with one character within each chapter. Meggie receives by far the most attention and the preponderance of the narrative follows her point of view. However, the author does not shy away from revealing the actions of other characters when Meggie is not around. Dustfinger, Farid, Mo, Elinor and Basta all receive some focus. The narrator is not omniscient and the reader shares for the most part in Meggie's ignorance of previous events and of the specifics of her father's relationship to Capricorn and to Dustfinger. There is no first person internal dialogue and even emotional states are described in third person.

Setting

There is a paucity of detail about the physical settings in the book. The action begins in Mo and Meggie's farmhouse. All that the reader is really told about the farmhouse is that it is stuffed with books and that it has a dilapidated barn as a companion.

Elinor lives in a large manor house on an estate near a lake in northern Italy. The estate is extensive and is fronted by a wrought iron gate, upon which is inscribed a rather misanthropic sign warning off solicitors. The interior of the house is given over to entirely to Elinor's book collection. Even the walls of the entry hall have been fitted with shelves. When Elinor reluctantly agrees to allow Dustfinger to sleep in a small attic room, she warns him not to touch any of the books that are housed in his room. Elinor has a private library within the house where she keeps her most prized books.

Capricorn's southern village is nestled in the foothills that rear up from the shoreline. Very little detail is given about the construction of the buildings or of the overall size of the place. There is a small cathedral that Capricorn has converted into a throne room. The pews have been removed and replaced with long banquet tables and the walls have been painted blood red. On the dais, where there would normally be an altar, Capricorn has placed an ornate chair that serves as his throne. The climax of the story takes place on the village's football field. This is probably a small scale soccer pitch with collapsible wooden bleacher and should not be imagined as any kind of stadium. The only road that goes to the village winds through the foothills up from the coastal highway. There is a barrier set up which must be physically moved to drive into the village. Oddly, the village is described as having a parking lot, which seems strange feature in a small hilltop village. Lone houses and farmsteads in the surrounding hills have been pillaged and burned and their occupants brought into the village to work as servants.



The small Italian village where Fenoglio the author lives is not given a specific name. It contains a village square where Dustfinger briefly performs with his new apprentice Farid. Fenoglio owns both a villa and an apartment, which he lends to Mo and Meggie, in the village.

Language and Meaning

This is a work in translation, the original having been written in German, so it is not possible within the context of the English translation alone to discuss the specifics of the author's original style and choice of words. The vocabulary level in the translation skirts the line between children's and young adult literature, in that it is a step down from high school level, but certainly challenging for children of elementary school age.

There are several works of literature mentioned either directly or indirectly in the text but, aside from the quotations that head each chapter, little in the way of direct quotes in the text. At one point Meggie and her father exchange secret message in the elvish script of *The Lord of the Rings*, but the elvish is not written into the text of the story.

There is no technical language in the book, despite the fact that Mo is an artisan and that his trade has some prevalence in the story. We are not, for instance, treated to even a cursory description of bookbinding or book repair. Even Meggie and Mo's mystical act of reading characters and objects out of literature is only vaguely and very briefly described.

Structure

The narrative is fragmented into 59 small chapters, some of them no more than a paragraph in length. There are no other divisions or separations in the book. Each chapter has a name pertaining to the action within and is headed by a literary quote. The quotes are taken from numerous works of literature, but several works are reference repeatedly. These include *Peter Pan* by J.M. Barrie, *The Princess Bride* by William Goldman, *The Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame and *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien.

The frequent chapter breaks suit the storyline, which contains numerous turning points and shifts in action. Tension is resolved and created continuously throughout the narrative and there is no plateau structure to allow it to mount up. Even the final climax, which hinges around the impending execution of Resa, Elinor and Basta, has many of its key elements moved into place just a few chapters before.



Quotes

"'You met him once,' said Dustfinger. 'It's a long time ago, you won't remember you were so little.' He held his hand at knee height in the air. 'How can I explain what he's like? If you were to see a cat eating a young bird I expect you'd cry, wouldn't you? Or try to help the bird. Capricorn would feed the bird to the cat on purpose, just to watch it being torn apart, and the little creature's screeching and struggling would be as sweet as honey to him.'"

Ch. 3, p. 25.

"He told wonderful stories about her. 'Did I like her?' Meggie always asked. 'Yes, very much.' — 'Where is she?' — 'She had to go away when you were just three.' — 'Why?' — 'She just had to go away.' — 'A long way away?' — 'Yes, a very long way.' — 'Is she dead?' — 'No, I'm sure she isn't.'"

Ch. 9, p. 80.

"When Meggie turned around again she saw Dustfinger still leaning against the big table. He was watching her, but this time he wasn't smiling. Forgive me, his eyes seemed to say. I had to do it."

Ch. 14, p. 130.

"'They came out,' he said. 'There they were, all of a sudden, standing in the doorway to the corridor outside the room, as if they'd just come in from outdoors. There was a crackling noise when they turned to us—like someone slowly unfolding a piece of paper. I still had their names on my lips: Basta, Dustfinger, Capricorn.'"

Ch. 16, p. 138.

"Dustfinger looked longingly at the books as a man dying of thirst might look at the last glass of water in existence. 'But you can't burn them!' he stammered. 'You promised to send me back if I found you Silvertongue's book. That's why I told you where he was. That's why I brought you his daughter.'"

Ch. 17, p. 164.

"'Well, do you still wish you could do it?' asked Mo when Meggie had watched the bird fly away until it merged with the blue of the sky.

'It was beautiful!' she said.

'Yes, but will it like this world?' asked Mo. 'And what's gone to replace it in the world it came from?'"

Ch. 23, p. 246.

"Mo stared out of the window again. Then he looked at Fenoglio. 'Would you like to meet them?' he asked.

'Meet who?' Fenoglio looked at him in surprise.

'Capricorn and Basta.'

'Good God, no!' Fenoglio laughed so loud that Paula, quite frightened, put her hand over his mouth.



'Well, we did,' said Mo wearily. 'Meggie and I—and Dustfinger.'
Ch. 24, pp. 258-259.

"'Parsley and spiders!' Fenoglio laughed quietly. 'What a fool you are, Basta! I'm not talking about children's magic. I mean the magic of the written word. Nothing is more powerful for good or evil, I do assure you.' Fenoglio lowered his voice to a whisper. 'I made you yourself out of words and letters, Basta! You and Capricorn.'
Ch. 45, pp. 414-415.

"'You'll read the Shadow out of the book for him. But his old friend will be slightly changed! I guarantee that! I, Fenoglio, master of words, enchanter in ink, sorcerer on paper. I made Capricorn and I shall destroy him as if he'd never existed—which I have to admit would have been better!'
Ch. 46, p. 421.

"'That's our plan, all the same, Elinor,' he said. 'Believe me, I've been racking my brains till I thought I'd go crazy. But there's no other way. And if none of that is any use I'll set fire to his damn church as well. I'll melt down his gold and reduce his whole damned village to dust and ashes, but I'll have my daughter back.'
Ch. 47, p. 430.

"Meggie stared at the real note. She concentrated on every word until she knew it by heart. Nine years is a long time. I celebrated all your birthdays. You're even lovelier than I imagined you."
Ch. 49, pp. 446-447.

"Fenoglio looked at her with great sympathy. 'You know, Meggie,' he said, 'I think I should write a story about you next, you and how you save us all with your voice. It would be a very exciting story.'
Ch. 53, p. 479.

"Capricorn left the bloodstained fabric lying over the arm of his chair. I know that rag, thought Elinor. I've seen it somewhere before. They're not dead. Who else would have started the fire? The matchstick-eater, something inside her whispered, but she refused to listen. No, the story must have a happy ending. It wouldn't be right otherwise! She had never liked sad stories."
Ch. 55, p. 499.

"'And Capricorn fell down on his face, and his black heart stopped beating, and all those who had gone burning and murdering with him disappeared—blown away like ashes in the wind.'
Ch. 56, p. 510.



Topics for Discussion

Describe the phenomenon of reading objects and people into and out of books. Is this concept unique, or has it appeared in other literature? If so, where?

Dustfinger is a character filled with a great deal of internal conflict. Describe the many forces acting upon the man.

Weigh Dustfinger's actions, both good and bad, in the book. Is it possible to decide from the evidence whether he is a virtuous character?

Cite examples of Meggie's impetuosity. When does this trait help her and when does it hurt her?

How does the act of betrayal drive the plotline of Inkheart? Give plenty of examples.

Describe how Basta's fear of the supernatural allows the other characters to continually thwart him. Give examples.

How is Capricorn's physical description similar to that of other villains. Cite some examples popular culture.

Discuss the ways in which Inkheart conveys the wonder and importance of books.

Inkheart references several other works of literature, both in the story itself and in the quotes preceding each chapter. Select a few of these works and tell how they relate to Inkheart.