

Joyful Noise Study Guide

Joyful Noise by Paul Fleischman

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Overview

This unique little volume is a collection of poems that are written to be read aloud by two people. Each poem has two parts, one for each reader. The way in which the parts are printed on the page indicates whether they are to be recited separately or simultaneously. The novelty of this approach should peak the interest of both young people and adults. The poems themselves are witty and delightful. The first-person profiles of fourteen different insects can be read for pleasure or for study in language arts or science classes.

An appealing feature of the book are the stunning black and white illustrations by Eric Beddows. The meticulous detail and humorous highlights of these pencil and charcoal drawings add dimension to the text and focus the reader's attention on particular characteristics of each of the insects represented.



Grasshoppers and Water Striders

Grasshoppers and Water Striders Summary

Joyful Noise is a book of poems made to be read by two people simultaneously, with one person reading the lines on the left side of the page and the other person reading the lines on the right. Each poem is about a species of insects and uses human emotion and perspective to help people to better understand the insect world around them.

"Grasshoppers" describes the hatching of grasshoppers and their bounding movements and energy. In this poem the viewer is observing the actions of the grasshoppers as they hop through their environment. "Water Striders" describes the simple action of this insect as it walks on water and its confusion when other creatures are not capable of walking on the water as well. Unlike "Grasshoppers," this poem is from the perspective of one of the water striders.

Grasshoppers and Water Striders Analysis

"Grasshoppers" is written so that the two readers say the same thing, one right after the other. This imitates the movement of the grasshoppers as they jump, hop, and vault around their environment. The vocabulary used by the poet to describe the grasshoppers, such as bounders, leapers, springers, soarers, creates a vivid image in the reader's mind of the actions of a grasshopper. "Water Striders" asks whether this insect's ability to walk on water is a miracle, which hints at Jesus' Christ's ability to walk on water, which was a shock to his disciples. This poem is also filled with humor as these insects time and time again are surprised when other creatures they call their students quickly sink to the bottom.

Mayflies and Fireflies

Mayflies and Fireflies Summary

"Mayflies" describes the short life of the mayfly, with its birth and death taking place in one day. They spend their only twenty-four hours of life frantically flying about and mating. It is interesting to see from their perspective regarding the length of their lives; they see twenty-four hours as a relatively long time, as they see their youth, only a few hours before, as "so very long ago" (p. 10). "Fireflies" tells of the light that makes a firefly truly distinct among insects. The poet compares the light to ink, calligraphy, and penmanship, as well as painting and brush strokes. To emphasize the powerful and image-provoking verbs used by the poet, he has placed verbs beginning with the same letter adjacent to each other, such as glimmering, gleaming, and glowing.

Mayflies and Fireflies Analysis

"Mayflies" matter-of-factly tells of the brief life of the mayfly. Only at the end of the poem does the mayfly seem to feel nostalgic for its youth, with a need for a longer life. Although a human life is usually longer than twenty-four hours, one can relate to the mayfly's short time on earth. Like the mayfly, people often have feelings of nostalgia towards their youths and wonder where the time has gone. Like the frenzied mayfly, most people rush through life, frantically trying to fit in as much as possible in only a handful or more of decades. "Fireflies" uses many words beginning with the letter F to describe the flight and light of the firefly through the night sky. Other letters, such as G, P, and S, also have emphasis placed on them by using them repeatedly. The poet's descriptive words and vivid imagery effectively describe the distinct light of the firefly.



Book Lice and The Moth's Serenade

Book Lice and The Moth's Serenade Summary

"Book Lice" describes the life and love of two book lice. These two book lice, though opposites due to their contrasting reading interests, are attracted to each other and manage to compromise despite their differences. This poem also introduces the names of famous authors by making their famous works the homes of the book lice. "The Moth's Serenade" tells of the moth's obsessive love for the porch light. The moth serenades the porch light with this love poem and accurately describes the behavior of a moth by giving it human emotions and feelings.

Book Lice and The Moth's Serenade Analysis

"Book Lice" tells the story of two book lice who meet accidentally and fall in love. This is a humorous and entertaining tale that gives factual information regarding the birth and life of book lice in the bindings of books, as well as various famous writers. These two lice are given human emotions as they describe their lives on various book shelves and their life as a couple. "Moth's Serenade" is a love poem from a moth to his love, the porch light. It accurately describes the behavior of moths and being drawn to someone or something like a moth drawn to a flame. The descriptive words and the use of exclamation points reflects the moths' intense feelings for the porch light.



Water Boatmen and The Digger Wasp

Water Boatmen and The Digger Wasp Summary

"Water Boatmen" describes the effort and determination of this insect as it goes toward the bottom of the pond where they are finally allowed to rest. These hard-working insects are compared to rowers through the use of the names boatmen, cockswain, and oarsmen. "The Digger Wasp" tells of the life of a digger wasp as it prepares for the arrival of its offspring and its coming death. The digger wasp creates a shelter and prepares food for its children that it will never see, hoping the children will realize the sacrifices the parent made for its children.

Water Boatmen and The Digger Wasp Analysis

"Water Boatmen" frequently repeats the word "stroke" for many reasons. First, this repetition creates the rhythm of the insects' oars as they slice through the water. It also reflects the determination of these focused insects as they swim to the bottom of the millpond. "The Digger Wasp" is a very melancholy story that is told from the perspective of the adult digger wasp as it works to make life easier for the offspring it will never see. This story is also one of hope, since the wasp is confident that its children will understand all that it had done for them prior to their birth and know that they were loved.



Cicadas and Honeybees

Cicadas and Honeybees Summary

"Cicadas" tells of the joy that cicadas feel as they climb out of the ground after three years of darkness. The sound of cicadas singing begins with a single creature; but quickly the numbers grow as the choir of happy insects celebrate life above ground in the sun's heat. "Honeybees" is told from the perspective of both the worker bee and his queen. The contrast in their lives and their perspectives on the bee life is shown in their descriptions of their particular daily lives. The queen spends her days lounging around or laying eggs, while the worker bees slave away to protect her young and keep the hive prospering.

Cicadas and Honeybees Analysis

"Cicadas" is a joyful poem that gives purpose and reason to the raucous noise made by cicadas in the summer. The poet creates an echo between the two readers to create a very musical poem that reflects the chorus of cicadas in the hot summer sun.

"Honeybees" is quite different from the previous poems because the lives of all bees is not equal. This bee life resembles many cultures around the world and throughout history whose citizens live very contrasting lives. For much of history the largest group within a culture was the poor, who slaved away for the small wealthy population who controlled the country.

Whirligig Beetles and Requiem

Whirligig Beetles and Requiem Summary

"Whirligig Beetles" describes the life and daily actions of these spinning, dizzy beetles. The two parts of the poem frequently overlap to create a sense of frenzy and chaos, which reflects the movement of the whirligig beetle. A great deal of imagery and expressive vocabulary is also used to describe the circular movements of these beetles, including merry-go-rounds, swerving, wheeling, arcs, and loops. It is also important to know that, according to these beetles, this round about and indirect way of moving is the best way to move. "Requiem" is a prayer to those insects who were killed by the first frost of the fall. The poet names many different insect species, paying respect to them at the time of their deaths.

Whirligig Beetles and Requiem Analysis

The first thing that one notices when turning the page to this poem is the art work. The pages are covered in drawings of these swerving, spinning beetles. This reflects not only the ways in which these beetles move but also the chaos this movement must create among this throng of beetles. The next tool used by the poet to express the beetles' qualities is the overlapping of the two speaking parts. When read aloud this creates a sense of chaos and nervous energy, which reflects the movements of the whirligig beetle in the water. The vocabulary simply adds to these feelings. "Requiem" is, unlike many of the other poems in this book, very solemn and serious. Much of this book describes the lives and characteristics of various insect species; this is the first poem to focus on the mortality of these insects. The poem ends by giving the cause of death, the first frost. As humans, we often do not think about nature's affect on us and the rest of our planet; so, a cold night is not, at first, an expected cause of death. Upon contemplating this poem and the deaths of these insects, one becomes more aware of the power of nature.

House Crickets and Chrysalis Diary

House Crickets and Chrysalis Diary Summary

"House Crickets" describes the life of the crickets that live in homes, rather than in nature. Their lives and understanding of the world is entirely based on what takes place in the home and the food eaten by the homeowners. They do not seem to mind this life of a steady temperature and reliable food sources. "Chrysalis Diary" tells the metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly through the perspective of the caterpillar as it journals this process. It creates a cocoon out of sheer instinct and soon fears and wonders about its future. It chronicles all the changes that take place, because it does not think that anyone would believe this transformation taking place.

House Crickets and Chrysalis Diary Analysis

"House Crickets" is a unique poem because it describes a sort of domesticated insect, one that is perfectly content living away from nature. It bases its understanding of the seasons on the crumbs and spills left by the homeowners. The poet also separates the syllables of the word cricket to create the sound made by crickets. This is repeated throughout the poem to reflect the only evidence humans may have that crickets live in their homes. "Chrysalis Diary" is a creative way of explaining the metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly. This foreign transformation is made more understandable for the reader by giving the insect human qualities and emotions. It is both fearful and excited about the future and watches in awe the changes taking place in the world around it, as well as throughout its own body, while it hangs in its chrysalis.



Characters

Insect Species appears in All poems

Each poem features a different species or a few specific species of insects. Therefore, insects, as a whole are the largest, and only characters in this book. Insects commonly found around human society are given human characteristics and feelings to aid young readers in finding a connection between themselves and the insect world around them. These human personalities help to explain why certain species act the way they do. Most often, the insects lives seem to be very chaotic and hectic, which resembles the lives of most humans. They rush around all day, constantly at work, with some important purpose in mind.

Although most of the poems focus on the actions of the insects, the poet also shows the relationships that insects have with each other and the world around them. Like humans, insects seem to know how to love, doubt, and even detest one another and the events in their lives. These emotions seem to explain the actions of various species, such as the moth hovering around a light and a worker bee's feelings regarding his work for the queen and the hive.

Although these human characteristics are most likely inaccurate, they do encourage empathy for and interest in insects and the animal world as a whole. They help humans to understand that insects and other creatures may not be that different from us and deserve respect from the humans with whom they share their environments.

Water Striders appears in Water Striders

Water striders' ability to walk across water is frequently questioned throughout this poem, yet they consistently reply it is what they do most of the day. This skill is seen as a miracle by many, but these insects see nothing special about their abilities and are confused whenever they bring another species of insect down to the water to walk upon it, and the creature falls in the water every time.

Mayflies appears in Mayflies

Mayflies have a life expectancy of one day. They live a frenzied life, trying to fit in as much as possible into the twenty-four hours that are their life. As they lay weakened, their lives come to an end on the same water in which they were born only a few short hours before.



Fireflies appears in Fireflies

Fireflies stand out among insect species due to their ability to glow in the dark. Throughout this poem this light is compared to the ink of a writer and the paint of a painter.

Book Lice appears in Book Lice

Book lice spend their lives in and among books. These two lice come from very different backgrounds and literary interests, but, due to their love for each other, are able to find a compromise.

Moth appears in Moth's Serenade

Moths are madly in love with the porch light, not exactly knowing why. All they know is that they cannot detach themselves from the desire to be near this bright light.

Water Boatmen appears in Water Boatmen

Water boatmen are compared to a team of rowers. They are hard working insects who are constantly rowing through the water toward the bottom. Once reaching the bottom, they are finally able to relax.

Digger Wasp appears in The Digger Wasp

The digger wasp lives for the children it will never see. It creates a safe environment and food source for its young that are born after they mother dies, having faith that its offspring will understand the commitment and love of their mother and will someday know the sacrifice she made for them.

Cicadas appears in Cicadas

Cicadas joyfully sing in the heat of summer, praising the sun for its light and heat.

Honeybees appears in Honeybees

The life of a honeybee is either a joy or a struggle, depending on whether one is the queen or a worker bee. The queen spends her days being pampered and creating offspring, while the worker bee slaves away to protect and provide for the queen and the rest of the hive.



Whirligig Beetles appears in Whirligig Beetles

Whirligig beetles swerve, spin, and circle in the water. They much prefer their roundabout and backtracking movements to a direct, distinct path.

House Crickets appears in House Crickets

House crickets know very little of the outside world, preferring the comforts of someone's home. They gauge the changes in nature on the spills and crumbs they come across in their home.

Caterpillar/Butterfly appears in Chrysalis Diary

The caterpillar is both fearful and excited about the changes taking place in the world around it and within its own body, as it morphs from a caterpillar into a butterfly.

Grasshoppers appears in Grasshoppers

Grasshoppers are the first characters found in this book and are the subject of the first poem. As soon as they hatch in the autumn, they are bounding and leaping, striding and splitting. Grasshoppers jump from branch to branch and from leaf to leaf. According to this poem, they spend their lives springing in the air and vaulting from one place to another.



Objects/Places

Plants appears in Grasshoppers

Plants are an important part of many insects' environments. They are often a food source or form of shelter.

Water appears in Water Striders, Water Boatmen, Mayflies, Whirligig Beetles

The water striders walk along the water, while the water boatmen row through the water. Mayflies are born and die in the same water source.

The Sky appears in Fireflies

Fireflies fly through the sky, lighting it up in neon green.

Books on a Book Shelf appears in Book Lice

The books on a book shelf are the home and food source of book lice.

Porch Light appears in The Moth's Serenade

The porch light is the love interest of the moth in "The Moth's Serenade."

Underground appears in The Digger Wasp

The digger wasp creates a home for its offspring underground.

The Seasons appears in Grasshoppers, Fireflies, The Digger Wasp, Cicadas, Requiem

The various seasons are mentioned throughout this book as a reference to the time in which the insects' actions take place.

Bee Hive appears in Honeybees

This is the home and workplace of the honey bee.



Time of Day appears in Mayflies, Fireflies, The Moth's Serenade, Water Boatmen, Cic

The time of day is important to several creatures' actions and behaviors.

Houses appears in House Crickets

The House Cricket shares a home with humans. This home has effected its understanding of nature and the natural world that surrounds the home.

Chrysalis appears in Chrysalis Diary

This is the home of the caterpillar as it morphs into a butterfly. The caterpillar studies the changing world around it, as well as the changes taking place in its own body as it sits in its cocoon.

Weather/Temperature appears in Grasshoppers, Cicadas, Requiem, House Crickets, Chrysalis Di

The weather and temperatures the insects experience influences their behavior and actions. It also effects the world around the insect and the insect's understanding of its world.

Setting

Because of the traits of each of the insects in this collection, the physical and temporal settings are different for each of the poems. The poem about a book lice couple relates their experiences in literary classics and thriller mysteries found on dusty bookshelves.

Others tell about insect lives during spring and summer, by day and night, in kitchens, ponds, cocoons, and hives.

Social Sensitivity

Subject matter addressed in several of this book's poems—class distinctions, mating, birth, death—has the potential to be considered socially sensitive. However, because these subjects are portrayed through the natural life cycle of insects, their treatment is necessary and agreeable.

Literary Qualities

Fleischman has a powerful gift for the use of words. With them, he has been able to create the cadence of insect sounds. When read aloud as intended, the insects join voices in musical duets and the author's spoken poems produce a rhythm reminiscent of the humming, buzzing, droning noises made by crickets, honey bees, and cicadas. The author's words also have the ability to evoke visual images. Written in free verse, his Joyful Noise poems are full of imaginative language. Fireflies are "insect calligraphers practicing penmanship;" grasshoppers are "leapfrogging longjumping grass-soarers;" and cicadas are "a mighty choir . . . chanting from the treetops."

Humor is another effective element which is evident in both the text and the illustrations, which blend accuracy with fantasy. The quality of these harmonious, yet unique, illustrations has influenced the success of this collection.

They entice the reader to closer inspection of both the drawings themselves and the verse.

Themes

Personification

Each of the poems is about a species of insects, or a variety species of insects. The poet has given these insects human characteristics and emotions to aid the reader in understanding and empathizing with these very foreign creatures. This is an important theme found in each poem, because the main purpose of each poem is to make the behaviors and actions of the insect applicable to human life and understanding.

Some insects, such as the grasshoppers, mayflies, and whirligig beetles live very frenzied lives and seem to be constantly in a chaotic state, both physically and emotionally. In contrast, the caterpillar, house crickets, queen honeybee, water striders, and book lice are much more still, at peace, and/or light-hearted. The hard workers of this book are the worker honeybees, the digger wasp, and the water boatmen.

While all the poems are told from very human perspectives, several focus on very human emotions. "Water Striders" reveals the doubt that humans can feel toward the fantastic and miraculous. The other insects cannot believe that the water striders can walk on water and wonder if this ability is a miracle, much like Jesus Christ's ability to walk on water and the disbelief of those around him regarding his unique abilities. "Book Lice" is the first of several love poems in this book. These two lice have very different interests and come from very contrasting worlds, but find a compromise through their love for each other. This reflects the many successful unique human relationships that exist around the world. "Moth's Serenade" is a love poem from a moth to a porch light, which explains the attraction moths have to light. This human emotion of obsessive love is an emotion many humans feel at some point in life for another; who has not had a crush on someone who did not reciprocate the same feelings? Through this love poem, the reader is able to better relate to the moth's confusing lust for the porch light.

Unique Qualities

Another theme of this book is the focus on the insects' unique qualities. Each poem puts emphasis on a particular observable characteristic of insects. The insects described in these poems jump, leap, spin, hover, cling, morph, sing, and row, just to name a few.

The most frequent quality described in this book is the action of the insect. This is most likely due to the fact that the physical movements of insects is the easiest aspect of their personalities to study. The poet uses a wide range of vocabulary and imagery to encourage young readers to understand and be able to relate to these small, yet significant, creatures. The movements of the insects is then used by the poet to explain their various thinking processes and personalities. For example, the insects that are known to move often and over great distances are seen as energetic, nervous, excited,



and/or frenzied, while those whose movements are not very noticeable are more often viewed as contemplative observers of the world around them.

Another focus of this book is the insects' reactions to the world around them. Several poems discuss the relationships between insects, such as the love between two book lice and the moth's love for the porch light. Others, such as the firefly and the worker honeybees are viewed by the poet to impact their environment through their behavior. Still others are observers of their worlds, such as the caterpillar's account of the changes taking place around him and in him and the house cricket's understanding of his world through the crumbs and spills left by the homeowners.

The unique qualities of the insects aids the reader in relating to these tiny life forms whose lives often go unnoticed. It reminds the reader that these little creatures' lives are precious and desire much of the same things we do, such as food, shelter, and companionship.

Having Purpose

Having a purpose in life is an important theme in this book. A majority of the poems describe the actions and thoughts of various insect species. Many of the insects' movements and actions are because they are out to reach a goal, while others enjoy the way in which they reach a goal. For example, the water boatmen work hard and continue stroking to reach their goal, the bottom of the pond. The worker honeybee, although reluctantly, slaves away to provide for the queen and the rest of the hive. Other insects such as the whirligig beetles and water striders seem to enjoy the action of moving, without any real goal other than to enjoy the time they spend traveling from one point in space to another.

Humans can relate to these various types of insects. Some people are very goal-oriented and work hard to achieve goals, while the actions taken to accomplish a goal are not nearly the focus in their lives. Other people put emphasis on the daily events and actions in their lives with less focus on the future and the goals they plan to achieve; they seem to enjoy every minute of life. With so many differing insects described in this book, any reader can find one or more species to which he can relate.



Themes/Characters

The theme of *Joyful Noise* is the life cycle of insects. Through verbal recreation of the sounds made by insects, the poems relate the birth of bounding grasshoppers and dreaming butterflies, the courtship of lovesick moths and contrary book lice, the death of frenzied mayflies and digger wasps.

In his Newbery acceptance speech, the author told how he selected the insects he would include, "Some were chosen purely for their musical possibilities, most struck me as metaphors for myself." Through their verbal duets, one comes to know the book's fourteen insect characters. The queen honeybee describes her "best" life of luxury, while the worker describes his "worst" life of toil. Water striders walk on water and water boatmen row, row, row. Each of the insect voices is charming and believable.



Style

Point of View

The point of view of these poems is often from the point of view of the insect that is the main character of the poem, so it can be considered first person perspective. In "Book Lice," one of the lice tells of its life and its relationship with a book lice from another shelf and the love they feel for each other. The moth in "Moth's Serenade" talks to the porch light in the first person.

Other poems are told from the perspective of one insect describing the entire species using the term "we." Therefore, these poems also use first person perspective but are somewhat different because they make assumptions about an entire species. "Water Striders," for example, is told from the perspective of a water strider as it describes how others react to all water striders' ability to walk on water and their nonchalant attitude toward this skill. Like the water striders, a mayfly describes the actions that take place in all mayflies' short lives, and a firefly describes how they light up the sky. The water boatman describes their continued stroking.

Other times the point of view is that of an outsider observing the insect in action. In some cases, such as "Cicadas," the speaker knows the reasons why the cicadas sing; therefore the poet uses third person omniscient. In another poem, for example "Grasshoppers," the grasshoppers are observed to be jumping, leaping, and bounding from one plant to another from the moment they hatch; this does not reveal a thorough knowledge of the insect but is simply from an observer's point of view; therefore, this poem is from a third person limited perspective.

Each point of view used by the poet is chosen specifically for the poem in question. This aids the author's purpose for the poem and the connection he wants the reader to have with the poem and the characters in the poem. The poems that are from a first person perspective tend to create a more intimate feeling, while those from a third person perspective, as expected, make the reader feel more like an outsider looking in on the life of a group of insects.

Setting

The setting of this book is each of the habitats of the insects described by the poet. The water striders and water boatmen inhabit ponds and other sources of water, walking across it or rowing through it. Much like these two species, the mayflies spend much of their lives in and near water, being born in the water and often dying in the same stream only twenty-four hours later. Whirligig beetles are also described as water-loving insects, constantly swimming and swirling along the surface of the water.

While many of the insects love the water, many spend their lives on dry land. The grasshoppers are described as leaping and hopping from leaf to leaf, stem to stem, and



plant to plant. The fireflies seem to live in the night sky, spending their time lighting up the sky with their glowing bodies. The digger wasp focuses on the ground creating an underground home for its offspring it will never see. The cicadas spend their time in the trees enjoying the summer heat. The honeybees' focus is on the hive and the life of the queen bee. The caterpillar in "Chrysalis Diary" hangs in its cocoon and observes the land around it as it changes from one season to the next.

Although most of the insects live in natural habitats, there are a few whose lives have evolved and now include man-made environments. The book lice are born, live, and die among the books on a bookshelf. They have become creatures who survive off of the glue used to bind the books. Like the book lice, the house crickets depend on mankind to survive. Their understanding of the seasons is based on the food brought in and made by the homeowners. They spend their lives in someone's home with no desire to learn about the outside world; they are perfectly content in their man-made world.

Language and Meaning

The tone of this book changes from one poem to another due to the language used by the poet. Some poems give off a sense of chaos and frenzy due to the actions described by the poet and the way in which the poet has written and often overlapped the two speaking parts. The grasshoppers are constantly hopping, leaping, and bounding from one place to another, while the whirligig beetles swirl, swim, backtrack, and spiral through the water with no obvious purpose for this action. The poet uses many descriptive verbs and adjectives to create this constantly moving and changing world of insects. When these descriptions bounce back and forth between the two readers, it enhances the energy and/or chaotic movement of the insects that are the main characters in the poem.

Other poems reflect the hard-working insects on our planet such as the digger wasp, worker honeybee, and water boatmen. The digger wasp is completely engrossed in the preparations for the arrival of its offspring. Knowing it will not be alive when the offspring are born, the wasp wants to make sure that all is ready for the arrival and successful future of its children. The worker bee, although discontent, spends its life in service to the queen. It works non-stop protecting and caring for the hive, the queen, and her offspring. The water boatmen row and only stop to rest once they reach the bottom of the pond. The poet uses repetition and strong descriptive verbs and adjectives to describe these insects that have only one thing on their minds, the task at hand.

Other poems are humorous and light-hearted such as the poem about the book lice who, although they are from different books and bookshelves, are able to compromise due their strong love for one another. Also, the moth who is desperately in love with the porch light hovers and professes its love for the unspeaking porch light. The water striders' poem is also quite humorous as they attempt to teach other non-water striders to walk on water; their teaching attempts always seem to fail to the surprise of the water striders. The poet's use of descriptive language creates this sense of humor and gives the poems an intimate and emotional quality.

Structure

The book begins with instructions on how to read each poem; they are to be read aloud simultaneously by two readers. Each poem that follows focuses on one or more species of insects and, through the poet's use of language, aids the reader in connecting with these common insects that frequently go unnoticed or are seen as pests. The poems are as follows: "Grasshoppers," "Water Striders," "Mayflies," "Fireflies," "Book Lice," "The Moth's Serenade," "Water Boatmen," "The Digger Wasp," "Cicadas," "Honeybees," "Whirligig Beetles," "Requiem," "House Crickets," and "Chrysalis Diary." Each poem is illustrated according to the insect that is the main character. These illustrations often assist the author in creating certain feelings in the poem such as humor, love, or frenzy.



Quotes

"Vaulting from leaf to leaf stem to stem plant to plant..."
Grasshoppers, p. 4

"Should we be told that it's surely a miracle we reply Balderdash! Rubbish! Nonsense!"
Water Striders, p. 6

"We're mayflies lying dying floating by the millions on the very stream from which we sprung so very long ago this morning back when we were young."
Mayflies, p. 10

"Insect calligraphers practicing penmanship..."
Fireflies, p. 13

"I missed Conan Doyle, he pined for his Keats We're book lice fine mates despite different tastes..."
Book Lice, p. 17

"Porch light! Let's kiss Let's clasp Let's marry for trice!"
The Moth's Serenade, p. 19

"Stroke! We're cockswain calling 'Stroke!'"
Water Boatmen, p. 21

"When they care for their children, never to be looked upon, they'll feel my love in replica and know that they, in turn, were cherished..."
The Digger Wasp, p. 25

"Jubilant cicadas pouring out their fervent praise for heat and light their hymn sung to the sun."
Cicadas, p. 27

"I'm a queen...I'm a worker...a bee's is the best of all lives...a bee's is the worst of all lives."
Honeybees, p. 31

"As the whirligig swims' meaning traveling by the most circular roundabout backtracking indirect serpentine tortuous twisty and turny, best possible route."
Whirligig Beetles, p. 33

"This past night we had the fall's first killing frost."
Requiem, p. 35

"While others are ruled by the sun in the heavens, whose varying height brings the seasons' procession, we live in a world of fixed Fahrenheit..."
House Crickets, p. 38



"I fear the future. Have others of my kind survived this cataclysm?"
Chrysalis Diary, p. 41



Topics for Discussion

Why might the poet have chosen insects as his subject matter? What might have led him to choose these types of insects? After reading these poems, how has your opinion of insects been altered? Why?

Why might the poet have chosen to have two speakers read his poems in unison? How does this affect the poems as a whole? How do these poems compare to poems that have only one speaker? Which type of poems do you prefer, those with one speaker or two? Why?

There are many insect species described in this book. After reading these poems, to which species do you feel most connected? Why? How has this book changed your attitude toward this species? Why?

The insects described in this book have varying personalities and characteristics. Which species seem to be the most like humans, based on these poems? How are they like humans? Why has the poet portrayed them in this way? How might this affect one's view of this species?

Which insect species is most like you? How is this species like you? How does this affect your opinion of this species? How might this change your view of them the next time you see them? Why?

What might be the poet's opinion of insects? How does this book reflect this? What might have been the poet's purpose for writing these poems? What other subjects might the poet be interested in? Why?

Why might the poet have written this book for children? How do you know that this is a book for children? Is this a good book of poems for children? Why or why not? Might adults also enjoy reading this book? Why or why not? How might an adult's view of this book compare to the view of a child? How might it be the same? How might an adult's view be different?



Essay Topics

1. Why do you think the author chose to write his poems for two voices? Does this approach enhance the presentation of the poems? How?
2. What role does music play in these poems?
3. What is personification? Alliteration? How are they used by the author?
4. Point out examples of the use of humor in the collection.
5. What real characteristics of each insect are captured by the poems?
6. Which is your favorite insect of the fourteen? Why?



Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. This book is a collection of "first-person" accounts of the lives of several insects. Using specific poems as examples, write about how these poems might relate to the lives of humans.
2. The illustrator of *Joyful Noise* is Eric Beddows, who has also illustrated under another name. Research his background and other works.
3. Written before *Joyful Noise*, *I Am Phoenix* is another Paul Fleischman book of poems for two voices. Read this volume and write a comparison of the two.
4. Fleischman's prose writing has been compared with that of Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne. Read some of Fleischman's mysteries and write about the similarities and differences between his stories and those by the other two authors.
5. The author and his father, also an author of books for young people, have written profiles about each other (see references below). Read these and write about your opinion of their early and current relationship.
6. Use one or more of the poems in *Joyful Noise* or *I Am Phoenix* as lyrics for music you write or select. With a classmate, share your song(s) with your class through recording or performing.
7. Write an original poem for two voices. Your subject could be a different insect or bird, or another of earth's creatures.
8. Illustrate one or more poems that you or your classmates have written. Be prepared to explain your choice of medium, style, and subject(s).

Further Study

Fleischman, Paul. "Newbery Medal Acceptance." Horn Book 65 (July/August 1989): 442-449. In this speech, Fleischman relates personal anecdotes about writing *Joyful Noise* and some of his other works.

———. "Sid Fleischman." Horn Book 63 (July/August 1987): 429-432. As the author writes about his father's work, he paints a pleasant picture of Fleischman family life during Paul's "growing up."

Fleischman, Sid. "Paul Fleischman."

Horn Book 65 (July/August 1989): 452-455. Written by the author's father, also an award-winning author of books for young people, this article provides insight into the author's early interest and apprenticeship in writing.

Hotze, S. H., ed. "Paul Fleischman." *Fifth Book of Junior Authors & Illustrators*.

New York: H. W. Wilson, 1983. This is an autobiographical sketch in which the author reveals his passion for music and its influence on his writing career.

Related Titles

I Am Phoenix has been called Fleischman's companion volume to *Joyful Noise*. Also a collection of poems for two voices, this book presents a sense of bird sound and flight.



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