

Background about the Book – Whales on Stilts

Child Magazine

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Child magazine's Best Children's Book Awards

Barnes and noble .com

About the Author



M.T. Anderson: Eats Broccoli, Paces and Hums

*NPR.org, November 24, 2006 · M.T. Anderson is the author of several books for children and young adults, including *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing*, the 2006 National Book Award Winner for Young People's Literature and *Feed*, which was a finalist for the National Book Award in 2002 and winner of the Los Angeles Times Book Prize. He lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.*

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7. Why doesn't Lily's father believe her when she tells him Larry's plan to take over the world?
8. If you only had three days left to live, what would you do?
9. What's your favorite superhero power?
10. "Both Katie and Jasper often told Lily that she was a hero just waiting to happen" (p.24). What do you think makes someone a hero?
11. Why do you think the author chose to tell this story?
12. If the story were real, what do you predict would happen next?

Onebooknewjersey.org

GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

YOUR KIRKWOOD PUBLIC LIBRARY

314-821-5770 kirkwoodpubliclibrary.org

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A better title for this book would be...because...

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If I were (name of character, -----) I would (wouldn't) have...

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I changed my mind about...because...

I would (wouldn't) like to read another book by this author because...

This book made me think...When I finished this book, I still wondered...

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When I started reading his book, I thought...

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This book made me realize...

If I could talk to (name of character), I would say...

One thing I have noticed about the author's style is...

If I could be any character in the book I would be...because...

I was surprised when...

I think the main thing the writer was trying to say was...

The most important thing about this book is...

I predicted that...

I think the writer must be ...because...

I would change the ending...

Background about the Book – Whales on Stilts

Child Magazine

On Career Day, Lily finally meets her father's boss, Larry, just an average guy who hides his face under a sack, has a rubbery tail peeking out from his suit, and periodically dumps buckets of brine over his head. Right. Although Lily's dad is clueless ("He has a skin condition, Ms. Nosy"), Larry is actually the leader of evil, laser-eyed whales who plan to take over the world wearing stilts-unless Lily can stop them. These dastardly sea creatures will leave kids laughing in their wake, thanks to deadpan prose, a ludicrous plot, and campy illustrations, all with the exquisite absurdity of a Monty Python skit. (ages 8 to 12)

Child magazine's Best Children's Book Awards

Barnes and noble .com

About the Author



M.T. Anderson: Eats Broccoli, Paces and Hums

NPR.org, November 24, 2006 · *M.T. Anderson is the author of several books for children and young adults, including The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, the 2006 National Book Award Winner for Young People's Literature and Feed, which was a finalist for the National Book Award in 2002 and winner of the Los Angeles Times Book Prize. He lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.*

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How He Writes: "I eat broccoli. I think about the plot. I pace in circles for hours, counter-clockwise, listening to music. I try to think of one detail in the scene I'm about to write that I'm really excited about writing. Until I can come up with that one detail, I pace. I put on another CD. I hum along. I get an idea. I prepare to begin. I shake out my fingers. I sit down. I type the first word. I erase it. I type in another first word, and consider the second word.

The phone rings. It's a friend calling to tell me a great story about running into her ex-stalker at Cinnabon. We talk for an hour and a half.

My time for writing is up. I go to bed. I feel guilty and miserable. Oh well. Better luck tomorrow."

Writer's Block Remedies: "Sometimes it's helpful to analyze what's wrong, to ask why it is that I don't feel enthusiastic about what has to happen next. I ask myself if I can skip over the part that I appear to dread. I ask myself if perhaps there's another angle I could take, or if there's some detail that might reinvest the situation with interest for me.

Sometimes a random infusion of fact helps, so I go read about a topic about which I know nothing (there are a lot of them) and see if anything floats to the surface. I don't know what I'm looking for, but I know when I find it.

Sometimes reading other writers helps. You learn some little technique that turns out to be useful, or simply are reinspired by the amazing things others do.

And sometimes there's nothing for it but forgetting about the project for a while and letting the brain mulch. I watch a movie, or go out for a walk. Or I take days off, or months, and write something else entirely. I switch between books -- one light and comic, the other dark and heavy, for example. As my editor often says, 'A change is as good as a rest.'

Though she also says, 'I seem to remember we have a contractual agreement that you'll deliver this book on time.'"

A Favorite Sentence: "I can't help but notice, now that you ask, that my favorite lines are usually examples of poor English.

I'm thinking of the first line of *Feed*: 'We went to the moon to have fun, but the moon turned out to completely suck.'

And the first line of *Whales on Stilts*: 'On Career Day Lily visited her dad's work with him and discovered he worked for a mad scientist who wanted to rule the earth through destruction and desolation.'

Reviews – Whales on Stilts

Susie Wilde - Children's Literature

Tacky title? The title speaks volumes about this madcap. Lily Gefelty's father works at a boring job, brings home boring office news, and life itself seems boring until Lily visits him at work. She discovers he works in a secret lab fully involved in a strange project. Led by a peculiar, huge, hooded man named Larry, everyone in the office is mass producing stilts. When Lily guesses this is the means to an invasion and take-over by whales, she quickly involves her two friends in saving the world. We meet Jasper Dash, Boy Technonaut, who invents gadgets, and Katie Mulligan, the star of a series of books where she protects the world from weregoats and earwigs. Will the plain and boring Lily be able to pull it off? Will the author? The book slips into insane annotations, takes graphic excursions off the plot path, and introduces more bizarre elements than you can believe. Anderson, long on creativity and short on typical conventions, has created a novel for younger readers who will laugh at the wildness of words and antics from beginning to end. 2005, Harcourt, Ages 8 to 11.

Barnes and noble.com

Is It Any Good?

The plot here is fairly thin, but the characters and humorous details will appeal to kids (and parents and sophisticated readers, too). Lily's two friends, for example, are famous: Katie lives in a haunted neighborhood and faces off against zombies and werewolves, while Jasper is a "Boy Technonaut." Both have inspired their own series of books and have fan clubs. Fictional ads for their series' appear among the book's wonderful illustrations.

Readers will laugh out loud at the outlandish plot, Lily's clueless father (who doesn't guess his hooded boss's nature, even after watching him pour brine over his head), and the author's clever asides. It's the silliness that will sell this book. But the book really does have a heart, too: Lily, who "people didn't know was interesting," learns that she really is something special, and the friends

Common sense media.co

Read Alikes –Whales on Stilts

Stinker from Space by Pamela F. Service

Chicken Boy by Frances O’Roark Dowell

The Mount Rushmore Calamity by Jeff Brown and Sara Pennypecker

The Clue of the Linoleum Lederhosen by M. T. Anderson

The Mysterious Benedict Society and the Perilous Journey by Trenton Lee Stewart

Discussion Questions: Whales on Stilts

1. Lily, Katie, and Jasper dressed up as copy machine repairmen to find out what was going on in the warehouse. How would you have gotten yourself into Deltamax Industries?
2. Which of the characters would you most like to spend a day with? What would you do that day?
3. If you could be any animal - or animal hybrid - what would you be?
4. Why does Larry decide to explain to the guards what he is?
5. What are you most afraid of?
6. The "Horror Hollow" writers think that Lily could be Katie's sidekick. Describe your ideal comic sidekick.
7. Why doesn't Lily's father believe her when she tells him Larry's plan to take over the world?
8. If you only had three days left to live, what would you do?
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