

Suppose the Wolf Were an Octopus

Grades 3 to 4

**A Guide to Creative Questioning
for Elementary-Grade Literature**

Completely Revised 2014 Edition

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Royal Fireworks Press
Unionville, New York

The Cricket in Times Square

by George Selden, 1960

The cricket—his name is Chester, and he hails from Connecticut—spends only one summer in New York City, but he will never forget the adventures he has there with his three friends: a little boy named Mario, a fast-talking Broadway mouse named Tucker, and his pal Harry the cat.

Level 1 (Remembering)

- How did Chester arrive in a Times Square subway station in New York City?
- What are Tucker and Harry?
- What problem does Mario’s family have?
- What is Chester’s special talent?

Level 2 (Understanding)

- What makes Mama change her mind about Chester?
- How do Tucker, Harry, and Chester save Mario’s parents’ business?
- Why did Chester want to return to Connecticut?
- Why does Mario say, “And I’m glad” at the end of the story?

Level 3 (Applying)

- How does listening to a song that you like make you feel?
- Would you like Mario for a friend? Explain your answer.
- What unusual pet would you like to have?
- What three questions would you like to ask Chester about his experiences in Times Square?

Level 4 (Analyzing)

- Why does Mama Bellini let Mario keep Chester, even though she would prefer he didn't?
- How do you think Tucker felt about giving up part of his coin collection to replace the money that Chester accidentally ate?
- Contrast Chester's life in Connecticut with his life in New York City.
- Do you think it was hard for Chester to decide to leave New York City? Why or why not?

Level 5 (Evaluating)

- Is Mama Bellini right to accuse Chester of purposely starting the fire that burned the newsstand?
- Do you think Chester was happier in the country or in the city? Explain.
- Mama Bellini thought Chester's music was so beautiful that she forgave him for the fire and allowed him to stay. What does this say about her?
- Should Mr. Smedley have asked permission from the Bellinis before revealing Chester's talent to the people of New York? Explain your answer.

Level 6 (Creating)

- What do you think Chester will do differently when he returns to Connecticut?
- How would the story be different if Chester had been an inchworm?
- Create a story in which Chester returns to New York City for a visit to his friends.
- If this story took place today, how would Mr. Smedley spread the word about Chester's musical ability?

Charlotte's Web

by E. B. White, 1952

A young girl develops a special relationship with a pet pig. The pig, named Wilbur, meets a small spider named Charlotte. When Wilbur's owner considers getting rid of him, Charlotte creates a special message, "Some Pig," in her web. Wilbur is saved and becomes famous.

Level 1 (Remembering)

- Who are the main characters?
- What words appeared in Charlotte's web?
- Who rescued Charlotte's egg sac?
- What did Wilbur receive at the County Fair?

Level 2 (Understanding)

- Why did Mr. Zuckerman want to get rid of Wilbur?
- Explain how the miracle happened.
- Describe the relationship between Wilbur and Charlotte.
- What happened to Charlotte's children?

Level 3 (Applying)

- If you were Wilbur, how would you have thanked Charlotte for saving your life?
- If you were Charlotte, what message would you have written in your web to try to save Wilbur?
- Did this book make you feel differently about pigs or spiders? If so, explain how.
- Who was your favorite character in the story, and why?

Level 4 (Analyzing)

- Why do you think Fern took care of Wilbur when he was a baby?
- What made Charlotte want to save Wilbur's life?
- How do you think Charlotte knows what to do to save Wilbur?
- Why do all of Charlotte's babies leave after they hatch except for the smallest ones?

Level 5 (Evaluating)

- If Charlotte was weaving the webs, shouldn't Mr. Zuckerman have protected her rather than Wilbur? Explain.
- Do you think taking the egg sac was a good way for Wilbur to thank Charlotte? Why or why not?
- Was Templeton a good friend to Wilbur and Charlotte or not? Explain your answer.
- Is Charlotte a better friend to Wilbur than Harry and Tucker were to Chester, the cricket in Times Square? Explain your reasoning.

Level 6 (Creating)

- Imagine another way Charlotte could have made Wilbur famous.
- Suppose Charlotte didn't die. What might have happened instead?
- If the other barn animals at Mr. Zuckerman's farm had been friendly with Wilbur, how would that change the story?
- Suppose Charlotte couldn't spell well. How would the story be different?