

“Morpurgo believes passionately in the power of stories to read, to comfort and inspire” contemporaryunited.com

Using this book in your classroom

Quick summary

This magical and cleverly constructed book tells the story of a boy who runs away from his horrible boarding school. He meets an old lady, Millie, who can sense his loneliness. She tells him the story of her husband Bertie, who rescued an orphaned white lion cub while he was an equally lonely boy in Africa many years ago. Through Millie's words we learn the amazing story of the friendship between Bertie and the lion cub, and Bertie's despair when his parents decided to sell the lion cub to a circus owner. Millie tells how years later, Bertie came across the circus while he was serving in the army in France, during the First World War. Both circus owner and lion were starving, and Bertie rescued the lion, bringing him back home to Britain. The encounter with Millie gives the boy the strength to go back to school.

Story themes

This story explores themes of **loneliness**, **loyalty** and **love**, and it celebrates the close bonds that can occur between **people and animals**.

The story session

1. Introducing the story

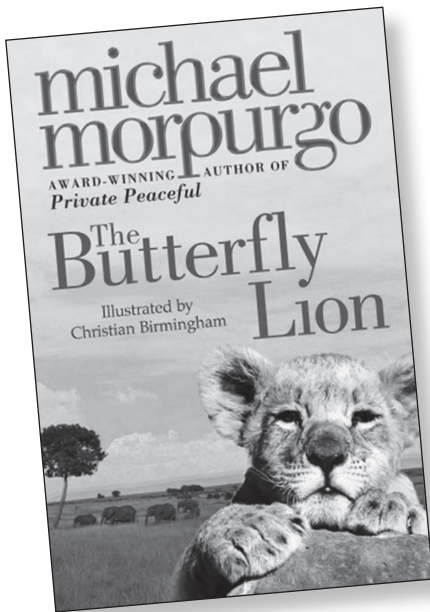
- Ask children whether they think it would be possible for a boy to have a lion as a pet. Explain that in this book we hear the story of a boy who really does have a pet lion.

2. Reading the story

- Read pages 20 to 28.
- Ask "What do you think will happen next in this story? We know that Bertie does get to keep the white lion cub as a pet – how do you think that might happen?" Share ideas about this.
- Then read pages 29 to 39. Discuss what happens. Were the children's predictions right?

3. Follow-up

- Ask children what would be the good things and the less good things about having a lion cub as a pet. Write their ideas as two lists on the board.
- Ask for a volunteer to take the part of Bertie, and one to take the part of Bertie's father. Put Bertie in the 'hot



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Case	Read Alone Age 6+
Author	Michael Morpurgo
Illustrator	Christian Birmingham
Publisher	HarperCollins

seat' and ask him questions about how he feels about his lion cub and what they do together. Then put Bertie's father in the 'hot seat' and ask him how he feels about Bertie having a lion cub as a pet.

Did You Know?

- One of the inspirations for *The Butterfly Lion* was a true story about a First World War soldier who rescued some circus animals in France from death.
- Michael Morpurgo won the Smarties Prize for *The Butterfly Lion*.
- For further information on Michael Morpurgo visit www.michaelmorpurgo.org

