

Michael Morpurgo

Sir Michael Morpurgo is one of Britain's most popular children's authors. He has written over 100 books and been awarded with a knighthood for his achievements. As well as being a successful author, Morpurgo is a dedicated charity worker, family man and inspiration to both adults and children alike.



Early Life

Michael Morpurgo was born on 5th October 1943 in St Albans, Hertfordshire. When the Second World War broke out, Michael and his brother, Pieter, were evacuated to Northumberland to keep them safe during the bombing of London. Once the war ended, Michael and his brother returned home to find that their mother had fallen in love with a man called Jack Morpurgo. She eventually divorced Michael's father and married Jack who became Michael's stepfather.

Morpurgo attended two boarding schools before starting a very brief career in the Army. He enjoyed parts of army life but disliked being shouted at and so decided to leave and go to university instead. In 1963, Morpurgo married the love of his life, Clare Lane. Clare is the daughter of Allen Lane, the founder of the famous **publishing house**, Penguin Books. Clare and Michael went on to have three children together: Sebastian, Horatio and Rosalind. After university, Michael became a school teacher in Kent and particularly enjoyed reading stories to his class. However, when he ran out of stories to read to them, he decided to start writing his own! In 1974, Morpurgo wrote his first book entitled 'It Never Rains: Five Stories'. Morpurgo has reported that his teaching days were some of the happiest of his life.

Charity



Ten years later, Michael Morpurgo wanted a change and so, he and his family moved to Devon. They bought a large house next to a farm and set up the charity, Farms for City Children. Farms for City Children is a charity for children who live in cities and big towns. It gives them the opportunity to stay at one of the charity's three farms for a week. Children learn about where their food comes from, how to care for animals and about

working as part of a team. The charity is still running today and over 90 000 children have stayed at the farms since it began in 1976.

Books

Since writing 'It Never Rains', Morpurgo has written many more children's books and stories. The list of titles includes:

- Friend or Foe;
- War Horse;
- The Butterfly Lion;
- Kensuke's Kingdom;
- Private Peaceful and;
- An Elephant in the Garden.



'War Horse' is one of Morpurgo's most famous books. It was made into a stage show in 2007 and then into a film in 2012.

Achievements

In 2003, Morpurgo was given the title of **Children's Laureate**. Four years later, Morpurgo was awarded with an **OBE** and then in 2018, he was given a knighthood for his services to literature and charity work. However, Michael Morpurgo himself says that starting the Farms for City Children charity with his wife is still his greatest achievement.



Did You Know...?

Michael Morpurgo does not write his books sitting at a desk or on a computer. Instead, he prefers to write in an exercise book, lying on his bed propped up by pillows! He also prefers to work in silence.



Glossary

Publishing house: a company that prints and publishes books.

Children's Laureate: an award given to a significant writer or illustrator of children's books.

OBE: an award presented by the Queen that stands for Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire.



Questions

1. When was Michael Morpurgo born? Tick one.

- 1963
 1943
 1936
 1974

2. What was the name of Michael's brother?

3. What are the names of Michael's three children?

4. Number the events below to show the order in which they happened in Morpurgo's life.

- Michael and Clare started Farms for City Children.
 Michael and Clare got married.
 1 Michael was born.
 Michael wrote 'It Never Rains: Five Stories'
 Michael went to university.

5. Fill in the missing words.

Four years later, Morpurgo was _____ with an OBE and then in 2018, he was given a knighthood for his services to _____ and charity work.

6. Why do you think so many of Morpurgo's books are based in war time? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

7. Why do you think Morpurgo was given the title of Children's Laureate? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Questions

8. Look at the first paragraph. What adjectives are used to describe Michael Morpurgo and what do they tell us about him?
