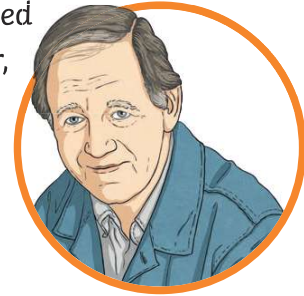


# Michael Morpurgo

Sir Michael Morpurgo is one of Britain's most acclaimed and popular children's authors. During his career so far, he has written over 100 books and been awarded with a knighthood in recognition of his achievements. As well as being a successful author, Morpurgo is a celebrated charity worker, family man and inspiration to adults and children alike.



## Early Life

Michael Morpurgo was born on 5<sup>th</sup> October 1943 in St Albans, Hertfordshire. Due to the outbreak of the Second World War, Michael and his brother, Pieter, were evacuated to Northumberland to keep them safe from the German bombardment in and around London during the Blitz. 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 (who had recently returned from war himself) and married Jack who subsequently became Michael's stepfather.



Morpurgo attended two boarding schools (in which he particularly enjoyed rugby and singing) before starting a very brief career in the Army. He enjoyed aspects 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 the years he spent teaching and as a father to his young children were some of the happiest of his life.

## Charity

After teaching for ten years, Michael Morpurgo wanted a change and so, he and his family moved to Devon. They purchased a spacious house next to a working farm and set-up the charity, Farms for City Children. Farms for City

Children is a charity for underprivileged children who live in cities and urban areas. The charity gives them the opportunity to stay at one of its three farms for a week. Children learn from hands-on experience 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 (although Michael and his wife no longer run it) and over 90 000 children have stayed at the farms since it began in 1976.



### **Books**

Since writing 'It Never Rains', Morpurgo has written numerous more children's books and stories. The list of titles includes: Friend or Foe, War Horse, The Butterfly Lion, Kensuke's Kingdom, Private Peaceful, An Elephant in the Garden and copious more. War Horse is one of Morpurgo's most eminent books and was made into a stage adaptation in 2007 and later into a film adaptation by director Steven Spielberg in 2012.

### **Achievements**

Morpurgo was heavily influenced and supported by his neighbour and friend, poet Ted Hughes, and together they established the position of Children's Laureate in 1999. Children's Laureate is an award given to a prominent writer or illustrator of children's books. Later, in 2003, Morpurgo himself was given the title, preceded only by Quentin Blake and Anne Fine. In 2007, Morpurgo was awarded with an OBE (Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire) and then in 2018, he was given a knighthood in recognition of his services to literature and charity work. Despite all of this, Michael Morpurgo himself says that starting the Farms for City Children charity with his wife is still his greatest achievement and the thing that he is most proud of.



### **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! Despite being a fan of Mozart, Morpurgo writes in a silent room as he finds the music distracting.

# Questions

1. Where was Michael evacuated to? Tick one.

- London  
 Hertfordshire  
 Northumberland  
 Devon

2. Who is Allen Lane in relation to Morpurgo?

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

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4. Michael Morpurgo and Clare Lane's father had a lot in common. Use evidence from the text to suggest what shared interests they may have had.

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5. Draw lines to match the events of Morpurgo's life with the year that they occurred.

2007

Michael and Clare set-up Farms for City Children.

1963

Michael and Ted Hughes set-up the Children's Laureate.

1976

Michael is awarded with an OBE.

1999

Michael and Clare got married.

1974

Michael wrote 'It Never Rains: Five Stories'

# Questions

6. Find and copy a word that means 'disadvantaged'.

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

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

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

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10. Michael Morpurgo himself says that starting the Farms for City Children charity with his wife is still his greatest achievement...

What do you think is Morpurgo's greatest achievement and why?

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