

The Pinballs

Grades 4-6

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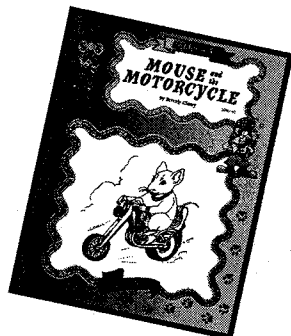
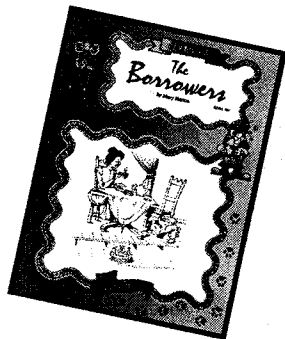
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Abrams, M. H. A Glossary of Literary Terms. (sixth ed.) Fort Worth; Harcourt Brace Publishing Co., 1993.

Byars, Betsy. Journal of Youth Services in Libraries. "Ladders and Authority; Creating the Gift." 7 (Winter 1994): 141-146.

Stone, Helen. The World Book Encyclopedia. "Foster parent." Chicago; World Book Inc., 1988.

Plot Summary

The Pinballs

Carlie, Harvey and Thomas J. are three foster kids who come to live with the Masons one summer. Carlie is a suspicious, smart-talking fifteen year old who was safer on the streets than at home with her violent stepfather. Harvey is an introspective thirteen year old, wheelchair-bound after his father drunkenly runs over his legs with the family car. Thomas J. is an awkward eight year old, raised by eighty-eight year old twins after having been abandoned by his mother as a baby. The children feel pretty helpless and isolated, "like pinballs" until, thanks to Colin and Ramona Mason, they learn to care and discover that they do have control over their lives.





Author Biography

Betsy Byars

Betsy Byars was born in 1928 in Charlotte, North Carolina. As a child, she read extensively and she enjoyed “mentally coloring the scenes to suit [her] personal taste”. She graduated from Queens College in North Carolina and soon afterwards she moved to South Carolina where her husband is associated with Clemson University. Mrs. Byars began writing books when her own four children were growing up. Her first piece of advice she received about writing was from her third grade teacher who told her to write about what you know. This is how she describes her process of writing:

“I wrote on the typewriter as fast as possible, because until I had something down on paper, I didn’t have anything to work with. I took the typewritten pages and sat down somewhere else to edit what I had written. Then I went back and retyped it. I went through this process again and again, and although I use the word processor now, I still go through the same procedure. I write until it looks as if I haven’t worked on it at all, until it’s absolutely simple. If it looks as if I’ve worked on it, then I go back and work on it some more.”

She and her husband have traveled widely throughout the United States pursuing their interest in gliding and antique airplanes. She and her husband once took a plane trip across the country as research for her book, *Coast to Coast*.

She won the 1971 Newbery Medal for “*The Summer of the Swans*”, a book about a girl who forgets her troubles in a frantic search for her developmentally delayed younger brother, who has disappeared.

Other Books Written By Betsy Byars

The Dancing Camel (1965)
Rama the Gypsy Cat (1966)
Groober (1967)
The Midnight Fox (1968)



Trouble River (1969)
The Summer of the Swans (1970)
Go and Hush the Baby (1971)
Goodbye Chicken Little (1979)
The Cybil War (1981)

Teacher Information

Foster Homes

Foster homes are provided by people for children who are not legally members of the family. Most foster parents care for children under the supervision of a public or private social agency that has the basic responsibility for the youngsters. Such agencies find foster parents for children whose natural parents cannot provide adequate care. In some cases, the natural parents abused, deserted, or neglected the children. In others, the parents suffer from long-term mental or physical illness. The separation from the natural family and the adjustment to a foster family can be unpleasant experiences for a child. Foster parents try to provide a family environment that will encourage the child to grow up normally. For many foster children, the arrangement is temporary. Some are returned to their natural homes after their natural parents become capable of caring for them. Social agencies find adoptive homes for other foster children.

Expectations

The students will:

- enjoy and develop an appreciation of good literature.
- compare information and ideas from several sources, including personal experiences.
- use a variety of strategies to read, respond to and understand texts.
- write clearly, using more sophisticated vocabulary and in a variety of forms, to communicate information and describe feelings.