

## Novel Resource for Young Hoosier Book Authors 2007-2008

### Bernie Magruder and the Bats in the Belfry

**By:** Phyllis Reynolds Naylor

**Publisher:** Atheneum Books, An imprint of Simon and Schuster Children's Publishing

**Copyright:** 2003

**Genre:** Mystery

**Author Biography:** [www.simonsays.com/content/feature.cfm?sid=510&feature\\_id=450](http://www.simonsays.com/content/feature.cfm?sid=510&feature_id=450)

Contact Information: Phyllis Reynolds Naylor  
1230 Avenue of Americas  
New York, NY 10020  
also  
9910 Holmhurst Road  
Bethesda, Maryland 20817

Phyllis Reynolds Naylor has written over 80 books for children. She was born in Anderson, IN but now resides in Maryland with her husband. She writes everyday for about 6 hours and spends another 4 hours doing things related to her writing. She first published an article when she was 16. 15 years later she published her first book. Naylor's biggest challenge when writing is keeping new ideas at bay while she works on a book. In 1992 her book Shiloh was awarded the Newberry Medal.



[self4royals@aol.com](mailto:self4royals@aol.com)

Connection to Bernie Magruder and the Bats in the Belfry:

Naylor is an observer of children and says that she really focuses on feelings. She finds that even though the time is different that feelings and emotions now aren't much different than when she was a child. This is book eight in which Bernie Magruder is the main character.

Other books by this author:

*Bernie Magruder and the Parachute Peril, Bernie Magruder and the Haunted Hotel, Bernie Magruder and the Pirate's Treasure Shiloh, Shiloh Season, Saving Shiloh*, 24 books in the Alice McKinley series

**Annotation:**

Bernie Magruder lives in a hotel in Middleburg, Indiana with his family. They all pitch in to help run the hotel but in this particular book everyone is going crazy. First, there are the bells in the belfry of the church. They ring every quarter hour because Eleanor Scuttlefoot donated them and in her will requested that they ring her favorite song "Abide with Me". The bells are getting on most people's nerves. Second, a mysterious warning appears about a rare breed of bat that could be heading for Middleburg. The bite of this bat could be fatal if their habitat is disturbed. Both these situations are the talk of the town. From the candidates running for mayor to Bernie and his friends everyone has an opinion about the bells and no one wants to come in contact with the bats. Both these problems become issues in the running of the Bessledorf Hotel and for Bernie's family. From the humorous characters to the mystery to be solved the reader will enjoy following this story to the conclusion to see how Bernie and the town's problems are solved.

**Booktalk:** The people in the town of Middleburg are going crazy. Bernie Magruder has plenty to deal with in helping his family run the Bessledorf Hotel. However, now people and things are really in an uproar. First, the bells in the church belfry ring the hymn, Abide with Me every hour all day and all night long. Some like it, some hate it. Everyone has an opinion! Second, someone has recently put up poster all over town warning of the Indiana Aztec bat and its fatal bite. Is it coming to Middleburg? Everyone is on the lookout and then a bat flies into the hotel. Along with his friends Weasel and Georgene, Bernie is determined to figure out how to solve these problems. This book is sure to keep you wondering if they will have to cope with the dreaded bells and if anyone has an encounter with the dangerous Indiana Aztec bat.

<b>Characters:</b> <u>Name and Age</u>		<u>Relationship to main and/or other characters</u>	<u>Personality traits</u>
Bernie Magruder	sixth grade	boy living in Middleburg with his family who runs the Bessledorf Hotel.	curious, determined
Officer Feeney		Middleburg policeman	always a step behind in the action
Eleanor Scuttlefoot		Town benefactor who donated the church bells. She is deceased.	
Georgene	sixth grade	one of Bernie's best friends	loyal, smart
Weasle	sixth grade	one of Bernie's best friends	loyal, funny
Theodore Magruder		Bernie's father	calm,
Mr. Fairchild		Hotel owner	bossy, unreasonable

**Conflict:** How will the town deal with the ringing of the bells in the church belfry and the possible invasion of the Indiana Aztec bat. The whole town is dealing with these external conflicts but Bernie is also motivated to find an answer because of his internal feeling of wanting the credit for being the person that finds the answers to everyone's problems.

**Conflict Resolution:** Bernie recruits two of his best friends to help figure out the mystery of the bats. Why doesn't anyone know about these particular bats? They make plans to find out more. In the mean time, the controversy over the bells comes to a head and they are right in the middle to find out that both problems are related to each other.

### **You will also love these books:**

Same genre/ interest level:

By Siobhan Parkinson, *Four Kids, Three Cats, Two Cows and One Witch (maybe)*

By Tony DiTerlizzi and Holly Black, *The Spiderwick Chronicles*

By the same author:

***Carlotta's Kittens and the Club of Mysteries***

***Bernie Magruder and the Case of the Big Stink***

***Shadows on the Wall***

***Witch Weed***

sources: [www.perma-bound.com](http://www.perma-bound.com) Bound to Stay Bound [www.lexile.com](http://www.lexile.com)  
**Interest Level:** MG 3-5  
**Reading Level:** 5.8

<b>Read-Aloud pages/passages:</b>	<u>Chapter and page #:</u>	<u>Description of action:</u>
	chapter 1, page 2	This passage describes why the bells in the belfry ring and also introduces the warning about the bats.
	chapter 6, page 40 and 41	Description of the political controversy caused by the church bells playing "Abide with Me" every quarter hour 24 hours a day.

**Setting:** Middleburg, Indiana and the Bessledorf Hotel, could be present day or in the past few decades

**Point of view:** Third Person

**Theme:** Bernie Magruder, bats and the church belfry all play a part in this humorous book. The question is can Bernie help solve the strange things that are going on in Middleburg. It is always the older people in his family who have the interesting things to say at the dinner table. Bernie is determined that with the help of his friends he finally will have something to talk about. He is determined to solve the mystery about the bats circling the church belfry.

### **Across the Curriculum Connections:**

#### **Science- Bats**

Research bats to learn about their behaviors and habitats.  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bat>  
[www.kidzone.ws/animals/bats/index.htm](http://www.kidzone.ws/animals/bats/index.htm)

#### **Language Arts- Idioms**

Pick a chapter or several chapters and have students go through them to find all the idioms they can find. Then have the students think of one on their own and explain what it means.  
<http://www.answers.com/library/Idioms>  
<http://www.idiomconnection.com/>

**Activities:** 1. Individual, small group or class activity- Sequencing

Use the following link to sequence quotes from the book.

[www.daily-tangents.com/BOB/games/quotes/M10.shtml](http://www.daily-tangents.com/BOB/games/quotes/M10.shtml)

(an additional activity) A word search found at the following site can be done individually.

[www.daily-tangents.com/BOB/games/wordsearch/ws\\_bernies.shtml](http://www.daily-tangents.com/BOB/games/wordsearch/ws_bernies.shtml)

**Indiana Academic Standards:** 5.2.2, 5.2.3, 4.2.1, 4.2.8, 4.3.2

2. Individual or small group-Write a town newspaper with all the activities of Middleburg in this book.

Use people's opinions from the book. Include the facts and write articles about the controversy of the bells as well as the mystery of the bats. Make sure the election is covered as well.

**Indiana Academic Standards:** 4.4.3, 4.5.1, 4.5.2, 4.5.4, 4.5.6, 4.6.3

5.4.2, 5.4.3, 5.4.11, 5.4.6, 5.4.8, 5.4.9, 5.4.10, 5.5.1, 5.5.2, 5.5.4, 5.5.5, 5.5.6, 5.5.7

6.4.2, 6.4.3, 6.4.4, 6.4.7, 6.4.8, 6.4.9, 6.4.10, 6.5.2, 6.5.4, 6.5.6, 6.6.7, 6.5.8, 6.6.4

**Discussion Questions:**

Pre Reading Questions- What do we know about bats and their behavior?

What are some behaviors of people who come into contact with bats? What would you do?

Give an example of an idiom.

How does an author create a mystery?

Chapters 1-4

Pre Reading Questions-

\*When faced with a problem what are some problem solving ideas with which we can deal with this problem to find a solution?

\*When people disagree what is a good thing to do?

During-

\*Are the people of Middleburg dealing with the problem of the bells in the church belfry? What are they doing?

\*If you were the mayor of Middleburg what would you do with the problem with the bells and the bats?

Chapters 5-8

Pre Reading Questions-

\*Who was the owner of the Bessledorf Hotel?

\*Mr. Magruder is so calm and finds the best in most situations. What do you think might upset him?

During-

\*Bernie is placed in an uncomfortable situation when his father asks him to march in the parade with a sign that states something he doesn't believe. What characteristics does Bernie demonstrate with his reaction? What would you have done?

\*Have you ever felt like Bernie when he was glad to have something important to tell his family? What feeling motivated him to be determined to solve the mystery of the bats?

Chapters 9-12

Pre Reading Questions-

\*How do you think Eleanor Scuttlefoot's husband is feeling about all the controversy over the bells?

\*Bernie and his friends find a clue into the mystery of the bats. What do you think that might be?

During-

\*Bernie debated on whether or not to tell Officer Feeney about the plastic wing he found. He wanted to solve the mystery himself so he decided to wait. What would you have done?

\*What makes Bernie suspicious of Flute Scoot?

Chapters 13-16

Pre Reading Questions-

\*Where do you think Mr. Scuttlefoot has been all this time? Is this part of the mystery?

\*Predict the outcome of Bernie's not telling Officer Feeney what he thinks is going on.

During-

\*How did Bernie feel about not being the one to solve the mystery?

\*When did Mr. Scuttlefoot decide he did not like hearing the bells?

## Language-

<u>PAGE #</u>	<u>WORD</u>
2	habitat
5	heroine
8	alacrity
12	corridor
18	dislodge
21	belfry
24	confounded serenade
25	admonish
26	charitable
27	authentic

<u>DEFINITION</u>
the environment in which something lives
the main female character in a story
cheerful eagerness
hallway
remove
church bell tower
puzzling
a musical performance to honor someone
to reprimand
giving
real and true

34 hysterical	crazy, inconsolable
37 compose	write
38 sauntered	walked off
39 quarantine	enforced isolation
43 impartial	to take no side
47 observation	to watch to see condition of someone or something
50 premonition	foreboding feeling
56 aurora borealis	northern lights
64 repose	to trust
serene	calm
68 coincidence	a series of accidents that seem to be planned
88 suspicious	distrustful
114 tintinnabulation	the ringing or sounding of bells
117 gaggle	a group
120 befuddled	confused

**Indiana Academic Standards-**

Grade 4           English- 4.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.1.7, 4.2.3, 4.3.6, 4.3.7

Grade 5           English- 5.1.1  
 Science- 5.4.4, 5.4.5, 5.4.6

Grade 6           English- 6.1.1, 6.1.4, 6.3.1  
 Science- 6.1.3, 5.4.5, 5.4.6