

The Stories Behind the Stories: The Remarkable True Tales behind Your Favorite Kid's Books

Danielle Higley

David Miles, Illustrator

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With the knowledge that great stories last for generations, Danielle Higley's entertaining *The Stories Behind the Stories* shares the histories behind twenty-nine iconic children's books, beginning with the unclear origins of the Mother Goose stories and covering texts into the early twenty-first century.

The books covered range from picture books, including *Green Eggs and Ham* and *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, to young adult and new adult novels, including *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *A Wrinkle in Time*. For each title, Higley explains how the book's author came to write the work. She also includes interesting information, as about how Peter Pan's nemesis Captain Hook gradually replaced another villain; about how a real spider inspired E. B. White's Charlotte; and about how some of the featured authors set out to write books for young audiences, while others found their work categorized that way after the fact.

Higley's range of books have this in common: their origins are all worth learning about. Dr. Seuss won a bet by using only a preselected number of words for one title; Wilson Rawls burned his first draft of *Where the Red Fern Grows* out of embarrassment, but his wife talked him into rewriting it; and Margaret and H. A. Rey brought the story that later became *Curious George* with them as they fled the Nazi occupation of France.

Beautiful illustrations accompany this work, and each chapter includes a full-page collage highlighting characters, locations, and themes from the featured title. These combinations are memorable in their own rights as they pay visual homage to the books in question.

The Stories Behind the Stories is a lovely keepsake celebrating books that remain key parts of childhood for people all around the world.

JEFF FLEISCHER (November / December 2021)

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