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# The Fantastic Flying Books Of Mr. Morris Lessmore



## Synopsis

The book that inspired the Academy Award® “winning short film, from New York Times bestselling author and beloved visionary William Joyce. Morris Lessmore loved words. He loved stories. He loved books. But every story has its upsets. . . . Everything in Morris Lessmore’s life, including his own story, is scattered to the winds. . . . But the power of story will save the day. . . . Stunningly brought to life by William Joyce, one of the preeminent creators in children’s literature, *The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore* is a modern masterpiece, showing that in today’s world of traditional books, eBooks, and apps, it’s story that we truly celebrate—and this story, no matter how you tell it, begs to be read again and again.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: AD650L (What’s this?)

Hardcover: 56 pages

Publisher: Atheneum Books for Young Readers; First Edition/First Printing edition (June 19, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1442457023

ISBN-13: 978-1442457027

Product Dimensions: 11.5 x 0.5 x 8.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 401 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #7,799 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #16 in Books > Children’s Books > Education & Reference > Books & Libraries #73 in Books > Children’s Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > New Experiences #288 in Books > Children’s Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Fantasy & Magic

Age Range: 4 - 8 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

## Customer Reviews

\* "Ironically, this book in praise of books first appeared as a much-praised iPad app and Academy Award® “winning animated short film. The story, in a nutshell, concerns the titular book-loving Mr. Morris Lessmore, whose personal library is blown away in a terrible wind but who finds meaning caring for the books he finds in a marvelous library. Filled with both literary (Shakespeare, Humpty-Dumpty) and film references (The Wizard of Oz, The Red Balloon and Buster Keaton), the picture book version of Joyce’s story has a quiet contemplative charm that demonstrates the

continuing allure of the printed page. Paradoxically, the animated books of the film and app are captured as though in a series of frozen frames. The motif of the bound, printed book is everywhere. Even the furnishings and architectural details of the old-fashioned library in which the books

• like flying birds recall the codex. The unifying metaphor of life as story is a powerful one, as is the theme of the transformative power of books. The emphasis on connecting readers and books and the care of books pays homage to librarianship. Rich in allusions (•Less is More•) and brilliant in depicting the passage of time (images conflate times of day, seasons and years), Joyce's work will inspire contemplation of the power of the book in its many forms. As triumphant in book form as in animated and interactive ones." --Kirkus Reviews, starred review

Joyce's magnificently illustrated book-about-books inspired •yet arrives after •his 2011 animated short film of the same name, which won an Oscar. The unusual sequence of film-to-book (there's an app, too) suggests that while books are indeed glorious things, what really matters is story. This one follows a dreamy bibliophile named Morris Lessmore, who loses his cherished book collection to a cataclysmic storm that's half Katrina (Joyce is from Louisiana) and half Wizard of Oz. After meeting a •lovely lady... being pulled along by a festive squadron of flying books, • Morris finds an abandoned library whose books are alive and whose covers beat like the wings of birds. They flutter around him protectively, watch as he starts writing again, and care for him as he ages:

•They read themselves to him each night. • Underneath this book-about-books, there's a deeper story of love, loss, and healing, one that will be appreciated as much (if not more) by adults as by children." --Publishers Weekly

\* "If you loved the Oscar-winning film that goes by the same title, you will take to heart the book on which it is based. William Joyce exploits each medium to the fullest. Morris Lessmore's life 'was a book of his own writing, one orderly page after another.' This serene opening scene shatters when a twister carries Morris away and sets him down in a black-and-white terrain. A woman appears in vibrant color in the sky, pulled by 'a festive squadron of flying books.' She sends down a volume with Humpty Dumpty featured in its pages, and the fellow leads Morris to a large building where light shines through the windows and shelves of books flutter their pages, 'as if each book were asking to be opened.' In Joyce's artwork, the books come to life as a full cast of characters. After Morris repairs a damaged book, he reads it to revive it. He runs across the tops of capital letters and dangles from the hook of a J. 'All stories matter,'" he concludes. As Morris distributes books to his queued-up neighbors, they turn from black-and-white sketches to full-color portraits. In the most moving scene, the books surround the now white-haired man: 'Morris Lessmore became stooped and crinkly. But the books never changed. Their stories stayed the same,'" and they care for him as he has cared for them. Morris stands in for all book

lovers, and reminds us of the way stories live on only when we share them." -- Shelf Awareness, starred review

JOYCE, William. *The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore*. illus. by author. 56p. S & S/Atheneum. 2012. ebook \$12.99. ISBN 978-1-4424-6489-6; Tr \$17.99. ISBN 978-1-4424-5702-7. Pre-Gr 3

“Joyce’s Academy Award-winning animated short-film-turned-app that celebrates those who care about (and receive nourishment from) books is, ironically, now a picture book. The wonder and mystery inherent in the wordless film and the ability to manipulate the visuals and play the soundtrack on the app’s piano beg the question: Can the book compete? As it turns out, the book has its own rewards. Clarity comes from Joyce’s well-chosen words. In the opening on a New Orleans balcony, readers learn that Morris’s loved words |stories |books. • Every day he would write of his joys and sorrows, of all that he knew and everything that he hoped for. • When an Oz-like storm turns everything topsy-turvy, the melancholy man in the pork-pie hat spots a lady held aloft by a festive squadron of flying books. • Her gift leads Morris to a book-filled sanctuary set in a landscape staged and lit like a Maxfield Parrish painting. He tends to the volumes, distributing favorites to visitors, whose once-gray bodies blossom with color. Every life and story ends, and those struggling with their own goodbyes (and yearnings about printed books) may find comfort in seeing the fading elder revert to his younger self in order to be transported by the joyful squadron “just as a little girl arrives to choose Morris’s story. The author’s motivations (explained on the flap) will resonate with adults in the reading business. The best part? Linger quietly while savoring the atmospheric scenes of Joyce’s narrative vignette. -SLJ, August 2012”

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William Joyce has put his personal stamp on all types of children's media. His books include the New York Times bestseller *The Man in the Moon*, *Nicholas St. North* and *the Battle of the Nightmare King*, *E. Aster Bunnymund* and *the Warrior Eggs at the Earth's Core!*, and *Santa Calls*. He's won three Emmy awards for his *Rolie Polie Olie* animated series, developed character concepts for *Toy Story* and *A Bug's Life*, and made films including *Robots* and *Meet the Robinsons*. He's currently executive producer of the DreamWorks Animation release of *Rise of the Guardians* (Fall 2012) inspired by his new series. He is also producing *The Leaf Men*, based on his book *The Leaf Men*. And his star continues to rise - he won an Academy Award for his innovative short film *The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore*. He lives in Shreveport, LA, and is the founder of Moonbot Studios.

I've found 's list of 100 Children's Books to Read in a Lifetime to be such a terrific source in building the children's library we began for our oldest grandson nine years ago and have consistently added to over the years (as we've welcomed three more grandchildren) - it's been an invaluable tool in both reminding me of my own childhood favorites or those I'd read to my sons that had slipped out of my memory banks, as well as keeping up with newer releases. But this one... wow. Not only did I purchase this for our grandkids, but I can see myself purchasing it many times over as a source of comfort to those who've recently lost - or are about to lose - someone special in their lives. WELL worth its imprinted \$18.99 US price. Believe this is the first time I've purchased a book that was published AFTER the release of a film - in this case, the 2011 Academy Award winner for animated short film. You can certainly see the similarity in appearance between the film's/book's title character and silent film actor Buster Keaton, with the storm scenes in it having been inspired by the actor's "Steamboat Bill, Jr." movie, and there are several pages that DO remind you of scenes straight out of "The Wizard of Oz", especially a page with Morris standing at a fence with dark skies, ominous clouds and toppled over houses behind him, or the one where he sits in front of an upside down house. (I hear Hurricane Katrina served as additional inspiration.) Morris lives contentedly among his many books as he pens his own life's journal, containing "his joys and sorrows, of all that he knew and everything that he hoped for," until one day tornado-force winds blow everything to smithereens ("even the words of his book.") He feels quite lost, until he sees a lady being pulled

through the air by a bunch of flying books on strings; she gives him one of her books, which leads him to a library-type building where all of the flying books "nested" and where he could hear - I absolutely love William Joyce's way with words! - "the faint chatter of a thousand different stories, as if each book was whispering an invitation to adventure." Morris becomes the custodian of the books, in all of their wide varieties of content and stages of condition; as time passed and he grew old, he was rewarded for the care he'd taken of them by their being his faithful companions, until one day when he decided it was time for him to "move on". The books are sad for the loss of his companionship, but he assures them as he leaves that he'll carry them all within his heart. Morris flies away, leaving behind his own journal... which ends up in the hands of a young girl, and the journey begins anew. I am not one given easily to tears, but my cheeks bore the evidence as I finished this book. When you look at the "library" each of us is a custodian of - with each "book" representing the individual stories of our family members, friends, etc. - the care that we give to them will always be returned to us in some form. From what I've read, Joyce wrote this story while on a flight to visit his mentor, children's books publisher William Morris... Morris passed away a few days after he read it to him. While obviously a magical book for children who will take its story literally, this will be my "go-to" book for so many situations - what a beautiful and comforting message for someone with a terminal illness, for those grieving the loss of a loved one, etc. As Morris says, "Everyone's story matters."

My grandson has loved the iPad app since he was three. He's six now, just finished kindergarten, and has never tired of Mr. Morris Lessmore. It's his first choice of things to do with Grandma. I sent him the book so he'd still have the story when Grandma and her iPad aren't there which sadly, is most of the time. Last weekend, he read the book to me. Six years old. He stumbled over a few of the words, but sounded them out and kept going. We've started reading Alice In Wonderland, and have Treasure Island waiting when Alice is finished, because of curiosity generated by this book. The kid is in love with books and reading, and owes it all to Mr Morris Lessmore. Well, and maybe just a bit to a Grandma who never tires of reading, either.

I work in a public library and we recently received this book. I enjoy reading the children's books before we put them out for the public. This book is wonderful! It actually brought tears to my eyes. If you have a love of books then you should read this. It is my new favorite children's book.

They say this story is for ages 4 and up, but don't let that keep you from buying it for yourself. As an

English major and lover of anything book related, I jumped at the chance to own a copy of this. It's a beautiful story about loving books and how they love you back, as well as the tale of a man's journey to write his own story. I'm thinking about buying a copy for a friend of mine (a fellow English major and soon to be teacher) who just graduated college, as well as a copy for my best friend's young son because the story can be enjoyed by both of them! The video (and storybook app) appeared before the book, so the description "The book that inspired the Academy Award--winning short film" seems a bit inaccurate--unless it is referring to the storybook app, which is possible. Anyways after I saw the video (It is 15 minutes long and well worth the watching-- for free on Youtube, or if you want to support the creators and encourage them to create more lovely videos and books, you can purchase it on Itunes for only a few dollars\*), I knew it would win Best Animated Short Film at the Academy Awards. The video is accompanied by music, but there isn't any dialogue. The book differs from the film in that there is text for the reader to enjoy. Though it is possible to understand the story by just looking at the beautiful illustrations, the text gives that extra boost that the music from the film had been. The book is also faithful to the film's story, and there was only one part of the video that didn't seem to make it into the book (the scene where Morris Lessmore binds up an old book), but it doesn't take away from one's enjoyment of the story. It may be difficult to read without thinking of Hurricane Katrina or other areas devastated by natural disasters as Lessmore's world is turned upside down, or of the movie "The Wizard of Oz" as Lessmore goes from black and white to color. But overall I recommend this book for anyone. I don't think you'll be disappointed. (The hardcover book does come with the pictured gold circle saying "the story that inspired the Academy Award winning short film," but this is a sticker that is meant to be removed, and I easily took it off my book without any residue left behind or damage done to the book.)\*

Edited 6/2012 to add that the video is available for purchase on Itunes

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