

# **ESCAPE FROM MR. LEMONCELLO'S LIBRARY**

**CHRIS GRABENSTEIN**

**RANDOM HOUSE CHILDREN'S BOOKS, 2013**

## **Synopsis**

Kyle Keeley is the class clown, popular with most kids, (if not the teachers), and an ardent fan of all games: board games, word games, and particularly video games. His hero, Luigi Lemoncello, the most notorious and creative gamemaker in the world, just so happens to be the genius behind the building of the new town library.

Lucky Kyle wins a coveted spot to be one of the first 12 kids in the library for an overnight of fun, food, and lots and lots of games. But when morning comes, the doors remain locked. Kyle and the other winners must solve every clue and every secret puzzle to find the hidden escape route. And the stakes are very high.

## **Hooks**

- Which do you think is more important, winning a game or being a good team player? Why?
- In the beginning of the story, Kyle's teacher and his mother compare him to his brothers. Have you ever been compared to your siblings or other students? How did it make you feel?
- Mr. Lemoncello's library has many amazing rooms and games. If you designed a library, what type of rooms or games would you create?

## **About the Author**

Chris Grabenstein started writing a long time ago. When he was ten, Chris moved to Signal Mountain Tennessee and had some great teachers in Junior High School and at Chattanooga's Notre Dame High School who told him he would "make a living as a writer one day." He studied communications and theater at The University of Tennessee at Knoxville then moved to New York City with six suitcases, a typewriter, and very little

money. For five years, he performed with some of the city's top Improvisational Comedy troupes, making up scenes and songs on the spot in front of live audiences, just like they did on "Whose Line Is It Anyway?" A young actor named Bruce Willis was also in Chris' comedy group, but nobody knows what happened to him. From time to time, the late Robin Williams would drop by to perform with Chris and his comedy gang. When not writing scripts for his friends to perform in the small Greenwich Village theatre (which was actually another basement) Chris also wrote for Jim Henson's Muppets. Chris also spent close to twenty years writing radio and television commercials for Burger King, Seven Up, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Dr Pepper, and many, many others. His first boss was a very talented advertising writer named James Patterson. Now they're writing books together. Currently, Chris and his beautiful, beloved wife J.J. live in New York City with three cats (Parker, Tiger Lilly, & Phoebe Squeak) and a dog named Fred who starred in *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* on Broadway.

### **Related Links**

[Chris Grabenstein's Website](#)

[Book Trailer for Mr. Lemoncello's Library](#)

[Educator's Guide](#)

## **Connections**

### **Other Popular Books by Chris Grabenstein**

Mr. Lemoncello's Library Olympics. 2016.

The Island of Dr. Libris. 2015.

House of Robots: Robots Go Wild! 2015.

I Funny TV: A Middle School Story. 2015.

Daniel X: Armageddon. 2012.

The Crossroads: A Haunted Mystery. 2008.

Riley Mack Stirs Up More Trouble. 2013.

Riley Mack and the Other Known Troublemakers. 2012.

### **Other Books Like *Escape from Mr. Lemoncello's Library***

The Name of This Book Is Secret. Bosch, Pseudonymous. Little Brown Books for Young Readers, 2007.

Miss Daisy Is Crazy! Dan Gutman. Harper Trophy, 2004.  
From the Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler. Konigsburg, E. L. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 1966.  
Daniel X: Armageddon. James Patterson and Chris Grabenstein. Little Brown Books for Young Readers, 2012.  
I Funny. James Patterson and Chris Grabenstein. Little Brown Books for Young Readers, 2012.  
The Westing Game. Ellen Raskin. Dutton, 1978.  
The Mysterious Benedict Society. Trenton Lee Stewart. Little Brown Books for Young Readers, 2007.  
Charlie and the Chocolate Factory Roald Dahl. Penguin Group, 2007.  
The Gollywhopper Games. Jody Feldman. Greenwillow Books, 2009.  
Horten's Miraculous Mechanisms: Magic, Mystery and a Very Strange Adventure. Lissa Evans. Sterling Children's Books, 2012.  
Horten's Incredible Illusions. Lissa Evans. Sterling Children's Books, 2012.  
The Puzzling World of Winston Breen. Eric Berlin. Penguin Group, 2009.  
The Potato Chip Puzzles. Eric Berlin. Penguin Group, 2009.  
The Puzzler's Mansion. Eric Berlin. Penguin Group, 2012.  
The Sixty-eight Rooms. Marianne Malone. Random House Books for Young Readers. 2010  
The Candymakers. Wendy Mass. Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2010.

## Activities

### Listen to the Author

Teaching Books.net has created [Escape from Mr. Lemoncello's Library Meet-the-Author Book Reading](#).

### Research an Author

Research one of the many famous authors mentioned in the book such as Lewis Carroll, Dr. Seuss, Shel Silverstein, Maya Angelou, Agatha Christie, and Edgar Allan Poe.

### Board Game

Create a board game for the book using the characters and settings from the story. Write down the sequence of events that occurred in the book, as well as the major characters. Think about the setting as well, and write down the primary location of most of the action in the book. On a piece of paper or tag board use a pencil to lightly draw the outlines of your game board. Draw a path of spaces that meander around the board, and fill in the background with drawings having to do with the setting. Make some of the spaces terrible to land on and some good. Use markers

or crayons to color your board. Purchase or create a spinner or dice and game pieces. Write out simple instructions for your game.

### **Scavenger Hunt**

Create your own library scavenger hunt using hints about people, places, or things you can find in your own school library.

### **Picture Puzzle**

Create your own picture puzzle and have another student try to solve it.

### **Host a Scavenger Hunt**

Host a Lemoncello-style Scavenger Hunt in YOUR library! Everything you need is available in one [downloadable PDF](#).

### **Math Rebus Puzzle**

Have students work on the rebus puzzles in the book before reading the chapter. Have students solve [Rebus Puzzles Brain Teasers](#) or you can print out pages of rebus puzzles from the [Puzzles to Print Site](#) or from the [Scholastic Site](#).

### **Comprehension Questions and Study Guide**

Jen Kleinknecht, Media Specialist, H.B. Whitehorne Middle School, Verona, NJ has created a series of [comprehension and discussion questions based on the book](#), including activities and vocabulary.

# **THE REAL BOY**

**BY ANNE URSU**

**WALDEN POND PRESS, 2013**

## **Synopsis**

On the island of Aletheia that is protected by the lingering magic of ancient wizards, an orphaned boy named Oscar performs the menial tasks—collecting plants for spells and cleaning the shop—for the island’s one remaining magician, Caleb. Caleb does not have the powers of the magicians of old, but he has just enough magic to satisfy the demanding clients from the island’s beautiful walled city of Asteri. Oscar enjoys the routine of his life, working for Master Caleb in the magic-tinged town of Barrow and sharing small living quarters in the cellar with Caleb’s cats, but he lives in terror of Caleb’s apprentice. When Caleb mysteriously disappears and his apprentice is killed, Oscar is left in charge of the magic shop. Although Oscar’s understanding of plants is encyclopedic and he is a tireless worker, he realizes he does not understand how to interact with others, and the thought of keeping the magic shop open in Caleb’s absence is overwhelming. Oscar’s anxiety is further increased when he realizes that an unknown force is destroying anything magical on the island and that the perfect children of Asteri are mysteriously falling ill. In spite of his reservations, Oscar teams up with Callie, the healer’s apprentice, to discover the nature of the dark forces that are threatening to destroy Aletheia. Along the way, Oscar learns how to be a friend and discovers his considerable strengths. In more ways than one, he has become a “real boy” by the story’s conclusion.

## **Hooks**

- Why is it easier to be friends with animals than people?
- Have you ever been left on your own with important responsibilities?
- Do you have any special skills or any frustrating issues that you perceive to be weaknesses?
- Are you like other children at your school or do you believe that you are different?
- Have you ever solved a mystery that baffled everyone else?
- Are there forces of good and evil still at work in the world today?

## **About the Author**

Ms. Ursu was raised in Minneapolis and as a child she was an avid reader, enjoying books by L.M. Montgomery, Laura Ingalls Wilder, Maud Hart Lovelace, Judy Blume,

Lois Duncan, Betsy Byers, and Madeline L'Engle. She recalls loving books desperately, and as an adult she realized that books taught her gently about how to live in a complicated world. Ms. Ursu graduated from Brown University, and before she began writing stories for children, she worked as theater critic and arts writer. Ms. Ursu has received many accolades for her writing, and in 2013, she received the McKnight Fellowship in Children's Literature and had *The Real Boy* long-listed for the National Book Award. Ms. Ursu currently lives in Minneapolis with her son and three cats, and she teaches at Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota. Just like when she was a child, she still loves getting lost in the pages of a book.

### Related Links

Anne Ursu's website, <http://www.anneursu.com>

Reflections on *The Real Boy*, posted to Kirby Larson's Blogspot.

[http://kirbyslane.blogspot.com/2013/08/friend-friday\\_30.html](http://kirbyslane.blogspot.com/2013/08/friend-friday_30.html)

Nerdy Book Club Essay, "Reading in the Wild," about her son learning to read,

<https://nerdybookclub.wordpress.com/2013/09/24/reading-in-the-wild-by-anne-ursu/>

Essay posted on Read, Write, Reflect, comparing the similarities between her son and Oscar,

<http://readwriteandreflect.blogspot.com/2013/10/the-real-boy-blog-tour-oscar.html>

International Literacy Association Interview,

<http://www.literacyworldwide.org/blog/literacy-daily/2014/03/03/5-questions-with-anne-ursu-%28'the-real-boy'%29>

Video Interview at Book Fest 14,

[http://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/feature\\_wdesc.php?rec=6501](http://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/feature_wdesc.php?rec=6501)

## Connections

### Magic

Beasley, Cassie. *Circus Mirandus*. Dial Books for Young Readers, 2015.

Black, Holly and Clare, Cassandra. *The Iron Trial*. Scholastic, 2014. (Book one of the series).

Colfer, Chris. *The Land of Stories: The Wishing Spell*. Little, Brown, 2012. (Book one of the series).

Colfer, Eoin. *Artemis Fowl*. Random House, (Book one of the series).

Collins, Suzanne. *Gregor the Overlander*. Scholastic, 2003. (Book one of the series).

Crowder, Melanie. *A Nearer Moon*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2015.

Eager, Edward. *Half Magic*. Harcourt, 1954.

Foxlee, Karen. *Ophelia and the Marvelous Boy*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2014.

Funke, Cornelia. *Inkheart*. Scholastic, 2003. (Book one of the series).

Law, Ingrid. *Savvy*. Dial Books for Young Readers, 2008.

Lloyd, Natalie. *A Snicker of Magic*. Scholastic, 2014.

McMann, Lisa. *The Unwanteds*. Aladdin, 2011. (Book one of the series).

Meloy, Maile. *The Apothecary*. G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2011. (Book one of the series).

Mull, Brandon. *Beyonders: A World Without Heroes*. Aladdin, 2011. (Book one of the series).

Mull, Brandon. *Fablehaven*. Shadow Mountain, 2006. (Book one of the series).

Neff, Henry H. *The Hound of Rowan*. Random House, 2011. (Book one of the series).

Nesbet, Anne. *The Cabinet of Earths*. HarperCollins, 2012.

Pullman, Philip. *The Golden Compass*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1995. (Book one of the series).

Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. Scholastic, 1997. (Book one of the series).

Rutkoski, Marie. *The Cabinet of Wonders*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008. (Book one of the series).

Sage, Angie. *Magyk*. Katherine Tegen Books, 2005. (Book one of the series).

Sanders, Ted. *The Box and the Dragonfly*. HarperCollins, 2015.

Scott, Michael. *The Alchemyst*. Delacorte Press, 2007. (Book one of the series).

Stephens, John. *The Emerald Atlas*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2011. (Book one of the series).

Stroud, Jonathan. *The Amulet of Samarkand*. Hyperion Books for Children, 2003. (Book one of the series).

### **Other Children's Books by Anne Ursu**

*Breadcrumbs*. Walden Pond Press, 2011.

*The Shadow Thieves*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2006. (Book one of the series).

## **Activities**

### **Cats**

Oscar carves a cat from wood he finds in the forest, and he often communicates with the cats with which he lives. Discuss with your students why real cats are so important to Oscar, and why it is easier to talk to an animal rather than to a person. Conclude with an art project. Allow students to draw a picture of a cat, mold a cat from bread dough or Play Dough, or have students carve a cat from soft balsa wood.

### **Libraries**

Oscar visits Caleb's library and gains important knowledge. What does he learn? Have students brainstorm as a class why libraries are important today. Conclude by having students create posters celebrating libraries to hang in your library.

### **Wizard Trees**

Ask students to find passages in the book describing how the trees in the story look and what makes them unique. Then ask students to draw trees with human or wizard faces.

### **Drawings Related to the Book**

Anne Ursu creates a vivid imaginary world in *The Real Boy*. Ask students to draw either a map of island, an elevation of the beautiful city of Asteri, or an elevation of the magical town of Barrow. Make sure students find descriptions in the book prior to beginning their drawings.

### **Real Boys**

Why does Oscar assume he is made of wood? What evidence does he find persuasive? What evidence does Callie show him to alter his conclusion? Ask students to find the specific pages with the supporting evidence relied upon by these two characters. Then ask students to write an essay on what it means to be a “real boy” and why Anne Ursu would have chosen the title of the book.

### **Pinocchio**

There are many echoes of the classic story of Pinocchio in *The Real Boy*. Have students brainstorm the similarities to the classic story as well as the differences. Make sure they include page references for their evidence. Conclude by having students write an essay on the similarities and differences between the stories and then ask students to decide which story most strongly appeals to them.

### **Monsters**

Some of the powerful images of *The Real Boy* involve monsters attacking the characters. One particularly memorable line of the book is the following: “It was a beautiful lie that they had all been telling themselves—that you could have magic without monsters.” Discuss with your students the meaning of this quote and the importance of monsters to the story. (Make sure they identify all the monsters in the story at the beginning of this discussion). Conclude by having students write an essay on either of the following topics: the importance of monsters in fantasy novels or the meaning of a monster.

### **Apprentices and Apothecaries**

For centuries, young people learned a trade by being an apprentice to a master. Ask students if this tradition endures in any professions today. Then have students learn about apprenticeships in earlier times. Conclude by learning as a class about apothecaries in colonial times and the medicines they created.

### **Great Forests**



The forest of Aletheia is unique, with wizards having given their lives to become a tree in order to protect the island. Have students discuss whether they find real forests magical or frightening. Ask them to share other forests that have appeared in fantasy chapter books or picture books they have read. Extend these perceptions by having students research the real great forests of world. Where are these forests located and what types of trees are contained therein? Conclude by having students create a “forest” in your classroom—be creative!

### **Herbal Notebook**

Have students research herbal plants and their healing properties. Then, ask students to create a herbal notebook, complete with botanical drawings as well as write a paragraph description about each plant and its unique properties. Students may include information about the use of herbal remedies in a variety of world cultures in the past as well as today. If there is space at your school, have students plant an herb garden and then harvest and enjoy the herbs throughout the year.

### **Herbal Sachets**

Bring a variety of dried herbs to school (rose petals, lavender, spearmint, ground coriander, cloves, etc.) along with several mortar and pestles. Have students research the herbs used in colonial times to get a desired result (i.e., the herbs that would have to be combined to give someone a good night’s sleep) and then see if they can re-create these herbal combinations for themselves!

### **Autism and Asperger’s Syndrome**

Author Anne Ursu has said that the character of Oscar is inspired by her real life son who has been diagnosed with Asperger’s Syndrome. Have your class learn more about autism and Asperger’s Syndrome and then have a class discussion of how Oscar exhibits behaviors that are typical of children with Asperger’s Syndrome.

# **RUMP: THE TRUE STORY OF RUMPELSTILTSKIN**

**BY LIESL SHURTLIFF**

**RANDOM HOUSE CHILDREN'S BOOKS, 2013**

## **Synopsis**

In a magical kingdom where your name is your destiny, twelve-year-old Rump is the butt of everyone's joke because his mother died before she could tell him his real name. She only managed to utter, "His name is Rump...." And so Rump grows up in poverty, being bullied and suffering taunts for his half name. Although he lives with his loving grandmother, he longs to find gold in the nearby mountain as well as to discover his full name. When he discovers his mother's old spinning wheel, his luck seems to change. Rump realizes he can spin straw into gold, but with each thread he spins, he weaves himself deeper into a curse. The magic he has conjured up forces him to accept anything offered in trade for the gold he spins—a sack of flour, a cheap ring, or the soon-to-be-queen's firstborn child. Rump decides there's only one way to break the spell: he must learn more about his mother and discover his true name. Rump promptly sets off on a quest, defending himself against trolls, pixies, and poison apples. Using his brains and the help of some unlikely friends, Rump does discover his family, his name, and his destiny, saving his best friend and outwitting the evil miller and the greedy king along the way. This inventive retelling of Rumpelstiltskin contains all the traditional elements of the original story, but author Liesl Shurtliff also creates an interesting backstory, as well as an exciting quest, and presents Rump as a heartwarming hero rather than a villain.

## **Hooks**

- Do you know what your name means? In what ways does your name and/or the meaning of your name determine who you are?
- Do you believe you can change your destiny or is your fate determined at birth?
- Do you share any special skills that your parents have? How much do your parents influence your talents and abilities?
- Have you ever felt cursed?

## About the Author

Liesl Shurtliff grew up in Salt Lake City, Utah the fifth of eight children. As a child, she loved dancing, singing, playing the piano and reading. In addition to reading Grimm's' Fairy Tales as a child so frequently that she wore through the bindings, she also enjoyed stories by Judy Blume, Beverly Cleary, and Roald Dahl. Ms. Shurtliff also fondly remembers the summer vacations she took with her big family (the license plate of the 12-passenger van was GREAT), visiting mountains, lakes, and beaches. She delighted in immersing herself in nature, collecting seashells, sand dollars and giant starfish.

In college she pursued her childhood passion of singing and performing, studying Music Dance Theatre at Brigham Young University. After the birth of her first child, she realized that writing during naptime was a more productive activity than belting out showtunes. Surprisingly, she discovered that she thoroughly loved writing children's stories, and writing became her passion rather than just a creative substitute for musical theater.

Today Ms. Shurtliff lives with her husband and three children in the wonderful but decidedly flat city of Chicago, but she finds that she often wanders back to her childhood memories, gathering the magic that still remains in those memories for her writing endeavors. Like Hans Christian Anderson, she firmly believes that "Life itself is the most wonderful fairy-tale."

### Related Links

Liesl Shurtliff's Website: <http://lieslshurtliff.com/>

[Book Trailer by Alfred A. Knopf, a division of Random Books.](#)

Reader's Guide,

<http://lieslshurtliff.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Rump-Readers-Guide.pdf>

## Connections

### Other Books by Liesl Shurtliff

*Jack: The True Story of Jack and the Beanstalk.* Alfred A. Knopf, 2015.

*Red: The True Story of Red Riding Hood.* Alfred A. Knopf, 2016.

### Other Fairytale Retellings

Buckley, Michael and Ferguson, Peter. *The Fairy-tale Detectives: the Sisters Grimm.* (Book one of a nine book series). Amulet Books, 2011.

Bunce, Elizabeth C. *A Curse as Dark as Gold.* Arthur A. Levine Books, 2008.

Colfer, Chris. *The Land of Stories: The Wishing Spell*. Little, Brown, 2012. (First book of the series).

Coville, Katherine. *The Cottage in the Woods*. Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2015.

George, Jessica Day. *Princess of Glass*. Bloomsbury, 2010.

Gidwitz, Adam. *A Tale Dark and Grimm*. Puffin Books, 2010. (First of three book series).

Grant, Holly. *The League of Beastly Dreadfuls*. Random House Books for Young Readers (2015). (Book one in the series).

Hale, Shannon. *Calamity Jack*. Bloomsbury, 2010.

Hale, Shannon. *The Goose Girl*. Bloomsbury, 2003.

Hale, Shannon. *Rapunzel's Revenge*. Bloomsbury, 2008.

Levine, Gail Carson. *Ella Enchanted*. HarperCollins Publishers, 1997.

Levine, Gail Carson. *Fairest*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2006.

McIntosh, Fiona. *The Whisperer*. Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2015.

Napoli, Donna Jo. *Zel*. Dutton Children's Books, 1996.

Ursu, Anne. *Breadcrumbs*. Walden Pond Press, 2011.

Ursu, Anne. *The Real Boy*. Walden Pond Press, 2013.

## Activities

### Friendship

Red is a good friend to Rump. What makes a good friend? What do Rump and Red have in common, and do the similarities in their backgrounds make their friendship stronger? Discuss why their friendship works and what are the elements that are critical to a good friendship.

### Pixies

Pixies play a role in Rump. Begin by having students recount when and how pixies affected the story. Based on these examples, ask students to decide if they believe the pixies are helpful or harmful. Then, have children draw their interpretation of the pixies, using details and descriptions from the book as well as their overall impression of pixies to guide the drawings.

### Magic

Red and her grandmother repeatedly warn Rump about the dangers of magic. Have students share magical events that happened in the story. End by teaching students a magic trick.

### Character Interactions

Ask students to find a dialogue they enjoy between two or more characters in *Rump*. Working in partners (or in a group if the dialogue chosen involves more than two characters), ask students to read the dialogue dramatically in front of the class.

### **Making Sludge**

Conclude your discussion of *Rump* by having students make sludge, using one of the recipes available online for “dirt.” See the Kraft website, <http://www.kraftrecipes.com/recipes/dirt-cups-57763.aspx>, or the Oh! Nuts website, <https://www.ohnuts.com/blog/dirt-pudding-cups-with-gummy-worms-recipe/>

### **Compare/Contrast**

Read students a classic version of Rumpelstiltskin. Then, have students compare the classic version of the story with the retelling in *Rump*. What traditional elements are contained in Liesl Shurtliff’s version? What are the new additions? Finally, ask students to reflect upon how the Liesl Shurtliff’s use of the first person perspective in her retelling changes their perspective of the story.

### **Secrets**

Throughout the story, some secrets are kept while others are revealed. Have students find at least four examples of a character keeping a secret (make sure they find the specific page reference), and then ask students to write an opinion paper as to whether keeping a secret is a good or bad idea.

### **Fairy Tale Rewrites**

Ask students to find all the other fairytales mentioned in *Rump*. Then have students pick one fairytale, either from the story or a childhood favorite, and re-write the story. The rewrite can be major (like *Rump* in which the villain becomes the hero) or minor (a few different events or a different ending). Alternatively, ask students to write a short story that creates the backstory of a main character from a favorite fairytale.

### **Rhymes**

*Rump* loves to make up rhymes about events that take place in his daily life. Ask students to write rhymes about their everyday life. They may write about something they enjoy (sports or a hobby) or something they dislike but occurs frequently (chores, homework).

### **The Power of Names**

How do you think names affect people? If you had a different name, do you think your life would be different? Learn about the meaning and history of your first name by visiting the Behind the Name website, <http://www.behindthename.com>.

### **Hero or Donkey?**

Random House has created an online quiz to help you determine what character in *Rump* you are most like. Visit this link to take the quiz:

[http://www.randomhousekids.com/media/activities/Rump\\_Personality\\_Quiz\\_Final.pdf.pdf](http://www.randomhousekids.com/media/activities/Rump_Personality_Quiz_Final.pdf.pdf).

### **Comprehension Questions**

Liesl Shurtliff has created a series of comprehension questions based on the book, <http://lieslshurtliff.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Rump-Game-Show-Questions.pdf>. Use these questions to create a quiz show in your classroom.