



Ideas for Hosting an Author Study

SET UP AN AUTHOR STUDY CORNER

- Surround students with the work of Mary Pope Osborne and Natalie Pope Boyce by having as many of their books on display as you can. Set up comfortable seating and give the class free time each day to read these books on their own or with a friend.
- Set MagicTreeHouse.com as your computer homepage and challenge students to play the interactive Magic Tree House games and set up Magic Tree House reading lists based on their interests.
- Create a classroom bulletin board with book covers, author photos, biographical information, and fun facts. When the students see that they have something in common with the authors they will start to really connect with them.

LOOK AT THE AUTHOR'S CRAFT

- Have students find a few favorite scenes in a Magic Tree House book and discuss what makes them so effective. What can they learn as writers by studying these scenes? What can they infer about the authors based on what they've read?
- As a class, read some or all of the authors' favorite children's books and make comparisons between the books and the authors' own writing. How were the authors inspired by other writers? Which writers inspire your students?

ASSIGN STUDENT PROJECTS

- Ask the class to keep a list of questions that they would like to ask Mary Pope Osborne and Natalie Pope Boyce. At the end of the author study, encourage students to write letters to the authors.
- Have students dress up as their favorite person Jack and Annie meet on an adventure or featured in a Fact Tracker. They should introduce themselves to the class and converse with one another staying in character. As a class, brainstorm new stories starring these characters.
- Make a video of students giving Magic Tree House book reviews. In pairs or individually, ask students to write the review first so it can be reviewed by you or the school librarian prior to the recording. Remind them not to give away the book's ending and to show the cover of the book while speaking.

AUTHOR BIOS



Mary Pope Osborne

Mary Pope Osborne was born into adventure. Her dad was in the army, so every year or two her family would move to a different state, or even a different country! By the time she was fifteen, Mary had lived in thirteen different houses and gone to eight different schools!

Writing children's books was a perfect career for Mary because she could still travel all over the world—but be back home in time for dinner. She has written almost a hundred books, including biographies, mysteries, picture books, novels, and retellings of fairy tales and world mythology.

The books that have taken Mary to the most places are the Magic Tree House series. With Jack and Annie, she has traveled through time—from the prehistoric land of dinosaurs to the imaginary world of Camelot. But one of the greatest adventures of Mary's writing life is the creative journey she takes with her readers, meeting them in person in schools and bookstores and reading the wonderful stories and letters they send. This, Mary says, is true magic.



FUN FACTS

Birthday: May 20

Childhood: I lived in my imagination. I remember in first grade my two brothers (my twin brother and our brother one year younger) and I tried to fly by jumping off the top of the sliding board and flapping our arms. One summer we pretended our green picnic table was a ship and we sailed around the world. The next summer it was a stage where we put on shows. We pretended our bikes were horses. We built forts and made rafts and flags and maps. We pretended ghosts were after us. We pretended we were spies. My sister Natalie and I pretended we were in the circus or that we were a singing duo on a TV show or that we were in *Peter Pan*. Life was full of adventure, but it was all in our imaginations.

Favorite books as a child: The Little House on the Prairie books and Nancy Drew mysteries, and *The Little Princess* and the *Secret Garden* and Uncle Wiggily books and *Ferdinand the Bull*.

Favorite children's books today: I still read and reread the Little House on the Prairie books and *The Wind in the Willows* and *The Lord of the Rings* and all of Beatrix Potter's books. I also love *Charlotte's Web* and *Stuart Little* and William Steig's books, and Arnold Lobel's *Frog and Toad* and *Owl at Home* . . . the list goes on.

Favorite school subject: English

Family: I've been married to my husband Will Osborne for more than 30 years. We don't have kids, but we feel like second parents to our wonderful nephews. I'm also very close to my two brothers, Michael and Bill, and my sister, Natalie. We all take lots of trips together with our mom, who's still very active though she's in her 90s. Since we grew up in the military, moving all the time, we all just became each other's best friends and still are.

Pets: My favorite subject is our dogs: Joey, Mr. Bezo and Little Bear—and our past dogs, Bailey and Teddy. Dogs rule my life. The three we have now are very ill-behaved, but hilariously funny.

Hobbies: I love reading more than anything in the world. I especially love reading philosophy, theology and history. I love taking walks and playing with our dogs. I love doing things with Will, and our friends and family—simple things, like taking rides in the country or going to restaurants, movies, plays and concerts. My biggest problem in life is not having enough time to do all the things I love to do.

Favorite food: I love pizza, good bread, yogurt, cheese, brown rice, and almost all fruits and vegetables.

Places I've lived: I've lived many places because my family moved every year or so. But the place I've lived the longest is New York City—and now I'm living in New England by a lake.

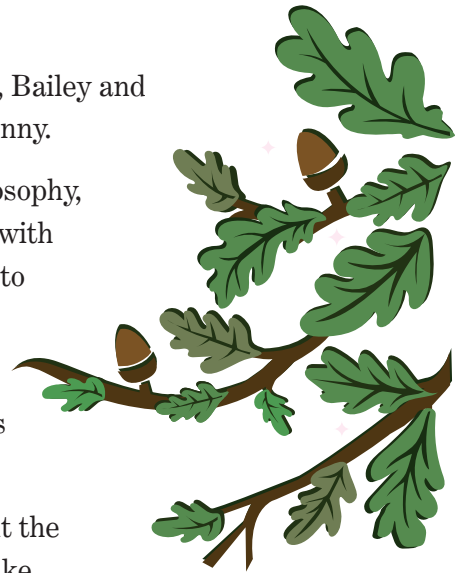
Favorite places I've visited: I've traveled to so many places, it's hard to say. But the most enchanting country I ever visited was Nepal, and the most beautiful city I've ever seen is Paris, and the countryside that I loved the most is the Lake District in New England.

Past jobs: That's a long list because I worked at many different jobs before I became a full-time writer. I worked in California as a waitress and a medical assistant and a window dresser; in Washington D.C. I was a Russian travel consultant; in New York City, I was a bartender, a hat-check girl, a children's magazine editor, and I taught acting in a nursing home.

Favorite Magic Tree House book: Favorite Magic Tree House book: I love *Stage Fright on a Summer Night*, in which Jack and Annie meet William Shakespeare. I love the theater—I acted in many plays when I was young and I later married a New York actor, and have spent my whole adult life in the world of the theater. I researched this book by going to the Globe Theater in London where Shakespeare's plays were performed. So today, I have this uncanny feeling that I actually know Shakespeare. That's the magic of using your imagination.

Writing Process: No two days are ever the same in my life. I might write at 6 a.m. or 10 p.m. I might write in my study, at a restaurant, on the porch, in bed, wherever. I jot down my ideas in little notebooks as I do my research. When writing Magic Tree House books, I might study 15 or 20 books on the subjects I'm thinking about. I look up lots of stuff on the Internet. I make an outline before I start working on a story. Then I rewrite, rewrite, and rewrite. I get good advice from my husband Will—and lots of help from my editor, Mallory Loehr. And eventually, about six months into the process, a Magic Tree House manuscript is complete. And a few months after that, the art by Sal Murdocca is done. (Sal's art is perfect! I always love seeing it for the first time!) Meanwhile, my sister, Natalie Pope Boyce, is working hard on the nonfiction companion books to the fiction books. Our big Magic Tree House team has been working well together for 25 years now.

Advice for young writers: Read, read, read. Write, write, write. Rewrite, rewrite, rewrite. And always love what you do. Also—if you get stuck, just take a break and then come back later and start fresh. And never, ever claim that you have “writer's block.” In my opinion, there's no such thing. You have good writing days and bad writing days. If you just keep at it, something worthwhile eventually happens.



AUTHOR BIOS



Natalie Pope Boyce

Natalie grew up in a military family, and they moved every few years. One of the most beautiful places they ever lived in was Salzburg, Austria. She and Mary could see a castle from their windows and often took walks on the lovely old street where Mozart grew up. Their time in Austria later inspired Mary to write *Moonlight on the Magic Flute*.

In fact, Natalie says the Fact Trackers have been fun to write because many bring back memories of places where they've lived. For example, when it was time to work on *Dolphins and Sharks*, she remembered seeing dolphins leaping out of the water when her family's house was on the ocean in Virginia. The sight of them never failed to excite her and her brothers and sister.

After Natalie grew up, she continued to travel. While living in Ireland for a year, she learned about Irish folklore. This made it so much fun to write *Leprechauns and Irish Folklore*. Natalie also once lived in Hawaii, which was good preparation for writing *Tsunamis*. She was used to hearing tsunami warning sirens on all the beaches and had always been fascinated by their power and wondered what caused them. Natalie thinks that living in different places is a great education. She also thinks that books give kids an amazing chance to have their own adventures . . . and they never have to leave home!



FUN FACTS

Birthday: August 11

Childhood: I read and daydreamed all the time. I was always losing things and worried that I was going to lose more things. I also spent a lot of time in trees looking down at the world passing below. Sometimes I was shy and sometimes I was very chatty.

Favorite books as a child: I loved all books. When I was very little I especially loved one about a little bug that was a firefly and guided all the other bugs home when they got lost. Then I went on to Nancy Drew, *The Wind in the Willows*, *Black Beauty*, lots of books about famous people and dogs—and then my very favorite, which my third grade teacher read us, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

Favorite children's books today: Because I have a West Highland terrier I am very impressed with the McDuff books, and because I think pigs are so smart and wonderful I love the Olivia books.

Favorite school subject: Anything involving reading and writing. I enjoyed history and sometimes science when I learned about space, and I always enjoyed books that we were assigned to read. I was not good at math and sometimes still count on my fingers. I was and am hopeless. But I did like spelling and learning about punctuation. (I'm still learning these things.)

Family: I have three younger siblings: two brothers and my sister, Mary. When we were children, we played

outdoors all the time and lived in our imaginations. We've always been close and still are. Today I am the proud mother of a grown son and two grandsons, who are 17 and 21 years old.

Pets: We had a great collie named Nan when I was growing up. She was gentle and sometimes let us dress her up. She even traveled to Austria with us. Since then I've owned a St. Bernard, a black Lab and now a Westie. Dogs rule our family. They tell us what to do every minute. Someone needs to come to my house and tell Lula she is not the big boss around here.

Hobbies: Gardening, books, cooking, walking with Lula, traveling.

Favorite food: Pizza, of course! And I love cheese, good bread and a big fat hamburger from time to time.

Places I've lived: Alabama, Texas, Kansas, Oklahoma, Austria, Virginia, North Carolina, Germany, St. Louis, Maine, Hawaii, Mexico, Ireland, Wisconsin, Arizona, and Massachusetts.

Favorite places I've visited: Paris, Scotland, Lake District of England, Argentina, Uruguay, Patagonia, Chile, Swiss Alps, and New York City.

Past jobs: Teacher, librarian, literacy coordinator at the U.S."Mexico border, ESL teacher.

Writing Process: Before I write, I search the refrigerator for a good snack. Then I make a cup of tea. Then I wander around my house with the tea until I make myself go to the computer. I write in the morning because that's when I am a little smarter. I don't listen to music, but Lula, my dog, snores, which is comforting because she sleeps at my feet. First I read my e-mail and then I read the news and then I think about someone to chat with on the phone. Finally I write my first paragraph and then I rewrite it about 30 times because it's never very good. At last I move ahead because everyone will be cross if I'm late in turning the book and I hate that!

Advice for young writers: In order to write well, you must read. You have to love the sound words make and how to use them to get your point across. It's always super important to write and rewrite and rewrite again. Finally, have someone read your work. If they understand it and want to know more, then you're on to a good thing!

