

Reading Guide: The Spirit Flyer Series, Book 1

The Magic Bicycle

By John Bibee

About the Author

At the end of the book there is a page that tells about the author's life. Read this page and answer the following questions.

Vocabulary

1. Inspire
2. Instill
3. Kindle
4. Pursue
5. Rural areas
6. Setting

Reading Questions

1. Which two series of books did John Bibee write?
2. Where did the author spend his childhood?
3. When did he become interested in becoming a writer?
4. How did the places he lived as a child influence his writing?
5. Look at the cover of the book. Based on the picture, where do you think this story will take place?

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Chapter 1. “The Bicycle that Found a Boy”

Vocabulary

1. Ancient
2. Beyond Repair
3. Careless
4. Cobra
5. Mimic
6. Ordinary
7. Undertaker

Reading Questions

1. In two or three sentences, describe John’s family.
2. Have you ever been careless? What happened?
3. How did Roger Darrow show that he was a true friend to John?
4. How was the Spirit Flyer bicycle different from Roger’s ten-speed?
5. In what way was the black snake at the dump different from a normal snake?

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Chapter 2. “Fixing the Spirit Flyer”

Vocabulary

1. Classify
2. Fender
3. Generator
4. Majestic
5. Spoke
6. Sprocket
7. Taunt

Reading Questions

1. What different things did John, Roger and Susan do to repair the Spirit Flyer?
2. Which special instruments did John remove from the Spirit Flyer?
3. When Roger and John went out for a ride on their bikes, whom did they encounter, and what happened then?
4. What was Uncle Bill’s attitude when he heard the bicycle was a Spirit Flyer?
5. How did John feel about the old red bike at the end of the chapter?

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Chapter 3. “The Magic in the Bicycle”

Vocabulary

1. Bound (to)
2. Descend
3. Level (verb)
4. Panic
5. Swerve
6. Whiz

Reading Questions

1. What happened to make John decide to keep the old bike?
2. Why did John say, “I’m sorry,” to the bike?
3. When John hit a deep rut on the road to the dump, what happened?
4. What emotions did John feel as he discovered the amazing properties of the Spirit Flyer?
5. Where and when does the snake appear in this chapter?
6. How did John’s uncle react when he arrived late for supper?

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Chapter 4. "The Rain and Mr. Grinsby"

Vocabulary

1. Corpse
2. Derby
3. Mangled
4. Radio dispatcher
5. Steady
6. Uneasy
7. Utterly

Reading Questions

1. What was strange about the rain and other unusual weather patterns?
2. Describe the man who came to the sheriff's office on a rainy day.
3. What did the man request when he talked to Sheriff Kramar?
4. What do you think about the secret red phone?
5. What do you think Grinsby is planning to do?

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Chapter 5. “Fire at the McCradle’s”

Vocabulary

1. Checkmate
2. Churn
3. Confined
4. Funnel
5. Puzzled
6. Smoldering

Reading Questions

1. Who was George? Describe his friendship with John.
2. What happened when the lightning struck close to John?
3. How was John able to help Mrs. McCradle?
4. Describe John’s encounter with the snake.
5. Why do you think John kept his experience at Mrs. McCradle’s a secret?

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Chapter 6. “Grounded Again”

Vocabulary

1. Blimp
2. Chuckled
3. Hypnotic
4. Infuriate
5. Revenge
6. Sponsor

Reading Questions

1. Why was John happy to see Barry Smedlowe walk into the Sheriff’s office?
2. Why was John not eligible for the Bicycle Safety Contest?
3. What was his reaction when his uncle told him he couldn’t participate?
4. Can you explain why the Spirit Flyer did not work as John wanted it to?
5. What did it mean when the Spirit Flyer bicycle moved between John and the huge snake?

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Chapter 7. "The Offer of a Trade"

Vocabulary

1. Betray
2. Bitterly
3. Chrome
4. Mutter
5. Regret
6. Substance

Reading Questions

1. Did John feel betrayed by the Spirit Flyer? If so, why?
2. What did Horace Grinsby offer in exchange for John's bicycle? What was tempting about his offer?
3. What was Susan's response to the offer? Did Susan realize that the Spirit Flyer was special in some way?
4. If you were in John's position, what would you do?
5. Who was coming for a visit at the end of the chapter and why?

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Chapter 8. "Mrs. McCradle's Thank You"

Vocabulary

1. Appreciate
2. Contrary
3. Disprove
4. Exhausted
5. Frustrated
6. Inherit

Reading Questions

1. What did Mrs. McCradle's visit prove?
2. What was Uncle Bill's viewpoint regarding science, the laws of nature, and bicycles that fly?
3. Why was the thought of a flying bicycle so upsetting to him?
4. What person might understand about the Spirit Flyer more than anyone else?
5. Describe John's dream at the end of the chapter.

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Chapter 9. "The Cobra Club Strikes"

Vocabulary

1. Abandoned
2. Accelerate
3. Ambush
4. Revenge
5. Sawhorse
6. Surge

Reading Questions

1. Was his uncle's approval important to John?
2. Why did Barry and the Cobra Club attack Susan?
3. When John heard about it, what did he do?
4. Describe what happened when John rode toward Barry.
5. How did the chapter end?

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Chapter 10. "Barry's Wild Ride"

Vocabulary

1. Advertising
2. Deserted
3. Eerily
4. Greedy
5. Oblong
6. Sewage
7. Unusual

Reading Questions

1. What effect did the "Sweet Temptations" candies have on Barry? How did they change his thoughts and feelings?
2. When Barry returned to Horace Grinsby after having stolen the Spirit Flyer from the Kramar's garage, what did Grinsby want him to do to the bike?
3. Describe Barry's wild ride. What did you think when Barry ended up in the hole of murky water?
4. What creature seemed to have a supernatural quality? Describe it.

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Chapter 11. "The Day of the Bicycle Contests"

Vocabulary

1. Dull-witted
2. Heist
3. Informed
4. Primitive
5. Screech
6. Warrant

Reading Questions

1. How did John feel on the morning of the bicycle contests? How had his attitude about the contests and his bike changed?
2. Where had John's bicycle ended up?
3. Describe the reaction that the children had when they learned their bikes had been stolen.
4. How much time did the two thieves have to steal the bicycles?
5. What did the note say to John about the Spirit Flyer?

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Chapter 12. "Remember Joe"

Vocabulary

1. Demand
2. Haunted
3. Lynch mob
4. Remark
5. Throb
6. Token

Reading Questions

1. Explain how each of the following people responded to the demand for John to destroy the Spirit Flyer:
 - a. John--
 - b. the townspeople--
 - c. Sheriff Kramar--
2. How did Grinsby use the Sweet Temptations to manipulate Barry and change his mind about his story?
3. What message was delivered to the Kramar family on their own red telephone?
4. What does the phrase "Evil just brings out more evil in people" mean to you? Do you agree?

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Chapter 13. “Work to Do”

Vocabulary

1. Defiant
2. Descend
3. Disgustedly
4. Eavesdropping
5. Peered
6. Skimmed
7. Suffocate

Reading Questions

1. What person was most likely to understand what was happening with the Spirit Flyer? Did John dream about that person?

1. Where did the Spirit Flyer take John? Did John trust what the bicycle was doing?

2. What was John wearing when the bicycle took him to the old barn?

3. Where did the bicycle land?

4. Why was John frustrated when the bicycle didn't respond to him?

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Chapter 14. “The Parade at Six in the Morning”

Vocabulary

1. Burrow
2. Holler
3. Pitchfork
4. Plunge
5. Prong
6. Sensation
7. Sputter

Reading Questions

1. Why was John not injured when he fell through the roof?
2. Whom did John encounter in the barn?
3. What did the Spirit Flyer do to the men who had stolen the bikes?
4. What happened after John apologized to the bike?
5. What woke up the town of Centerville that morning?

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Chapter 15. “The X-Removal Plan”

Vocabulary

1. Applaud
2. Eerie
3. Fury
4. Rabid
5. Shriveled
6. Wince

Reading Questions

1. What do you think Grinsby meant when he said, “But I still say, let’s kill the...”?
2. What did the Spirit Flyer do when the photographer was taking photos of John for the newspaper? What lesson do you think it was trying to teach John?
3. Was Horace Grinsby a human being? How do you know?
4. How did Grinsby get into the house and overpower the Kramar family?
5. What was making the clanking sound as Grinsby used his hook?

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Chapter 16. "A Visit with Grandfather Kramar"

Vocabulary

1. Blotted out
2. Crisp
3. Frantically
4. Shrill
5. Solemn
6. Whittle

Reading Questions

1. How long did a trip to Grandfather Kramar's farm usually take? How long had it taken for John to get there?
2. Describe the shadow that followed John. Was it a tornado?
3. How was John able to get away from the huge snake?
4. Describe Grandfather Kramar's workshop. How did it make John feel to be there?
5. What did the three crowns on the bicycle prove?
6. What happened to John when he put on the Spirit Flyer Vision goggles?

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Chapter 17. "The Deeper World"

Vocabulary

1. Alfalfa
2. Aviator
3. Eternity
4. Glimpse
5. Lesser
6. Treason

Reading Questions

1. How does Grandfather Kramar describe the Deeper World?
2. Which beings in the Deeper World are on the side of good, and which are on the side of evil?
3. What do you think Grandfather Kramar meant when he said, "Just because something or someone exists doesn't mean they have the Magic of life"?
4. Briefly summarize the history of the Deeper World that Grandfather Kramar shares with John.
5. According to Grandfather Kramar, how would John be able to remain safe?
6. What does John learn about his parents at the end of the chapter?

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Chapter 18. “Fighting Tragic with Magic”

Vocabulary

1. Glide
2. Realm
3. Reluctantly
4. Slingshot
5. Trance
6. Victory

Reading Questions

1. How did Grandfather Kramar respond to John when he tried to rush off to save his family? What did he tell John to do?
2. What weapon did Grandfather Kramar give to John?
3. What did Grandfather Kramar tell John about the instruments for the bicycle?
4. Grandfather Kramar told John that he wasn't going to fight but to rescue. He said, “escape is _____,” and “staying on the Spirit Flyer is _____.” Then, what does he say about fighting?

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Chapter 19. “Into the Mouth of Darkness”

Vocabulary

1. Blur
2. Hover
3. Mountainous
4. Soar
5. Splendor
6. Tinge

Reading Questions

1. Why did John decide not to put the old instruments on his bicycle? What did he get instead?
2. What did the note say about where his family was? What was meant by “into the mouth of darkness fly”?
3. John did obey his grandfather by preparing and taking one special instrument. What was that?
4. How did the bike respond to John when he tried to leave without the instruments?
5. What happened as John flew toward the giant snake?

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Chapter 20. “The Centerville Bureau of Children and Parent Relations”

Vocabulary

1. Bureau
2. Deed
3. Device
4. Holster
5. Scoff
6. Shuffle

Reading Questions

1. Where is John located when the chapter starts?
2. Whom did the two huge Daimones in the dark place resemble? What do you learn about Daimones and their relationship to people?
3. What happened when John tried to use his uncle’s gun?
4. Describe the condition of John’s family, as they shuffled into the area.
5. What was the demand that was written on the deed? How much blood was required?

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Chapter 21. "The Slingshot of the Kings"

Vocabulary

1. Contribute
2. Fate
3. Glisten
4. Installment
5. Interfere
6. Stalling
7. Useless

Reading Questions

1. Who was in control of the Order of the Chains? Should John believe what the Daimones said?
2. What did the Daimone say about John's parents?
3. What happened to the needle the Barry figure held? What weapon did John have? Did he have the strength to use it?
4. Describe what happened when John was given the clear marble of light. How did the family escape?

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Chapter 22. “Unlocking Their Chains”

Vocabulary

1. Barrel
2. Harvest
3. Intact
4. Lingering
5. Stand guard

Reading Questions

1. Where did the Spirit Flyer take John and his family? Were you surprised that his father had a workshop? Did you wonder what was in the boxes?
2. What finally woke the family up and set them free from their chains? How did the family remember their experience in the Deeper World?
3. How did Grandfather Kramar make his appearance, and what happened next?
4. Why do you think Uncle Bill did not remember flying on the Spirit Flyer Harvester when he was a boy?
5. Read the last few sentences of the chapter. Who are the ones “standing guard” that Grandfather Kramar could hear?

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Chapter 23. "Much to Learn About Magic"

Vocabulary

1. Discouraged
2. Greedy
3. Thrills
4. To see fit
5. Warily

Reading Questions

1. What did Grandfather Kramar want everyone to do before they went to bed that night?
2. How did Uncle Bill respond to Grandfather Kramar's request?
3. What happened to the chains that had been around John's family members? Why?
4. How did Grandfather Kramar explain the large figures that had the faces of people in Centerville (including the one that looked like John)?
5. How could ancient, broken instruments be valuable--much more valuable--than new ones?

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Chapter 24. “What Happened to Horace Grinsby and Barry Smedlowe?”

Vocabulary

1. Envelope
2. Gasp
3. Mounds
4. Promptly
5. Snarl
6. Suffocate
7. Tremendous

Reading Questions

1. Why was Barry sitting on his bike outside of the Kramar home?
2. Whom did Horace Grinsby blame for the failure of his X-removal plan?
3. What do you think Grinsby was planning to do to Barry?
4. Describe what happened to Grinsby and the van.
5. Where did Barry end up, and how had he gotten there? What was different about his bike at the end of the chapter?

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Chapter 25. "Maybe He Went Deeper"

Reading Questions

1. What did the tempting voice say to John, and what did the words of his grandfather say? Have you ever felt tempted to do something you knew you shouldn't do?
2. What character flaw or weakness led John to go ahead and put on the gear level before he had been told how to do it?
3. What lessons do you think John still needs to learn?
4. Grandfather Kramar said John could have done "one of four things" when he disappeared. What were they?
5. Where do you think John went, and what was happening to his family at the end of the book?
6. **About the Author:** Re-read the page about Bibee's life. Can you see any connections from his life to the story that he wrote? What did he want children to know?