

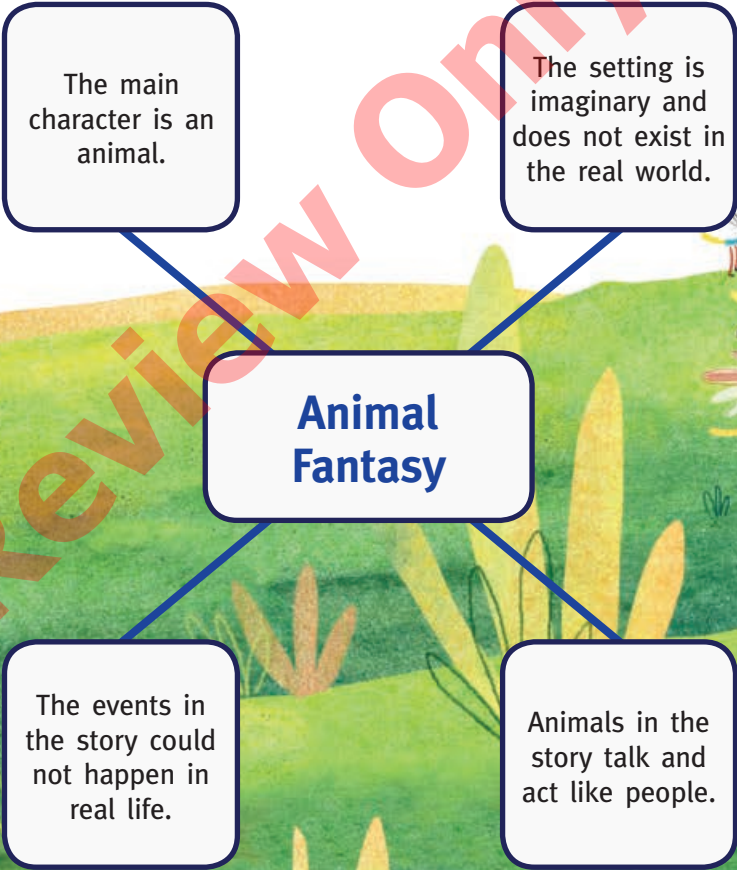
Cricket Concert

by Christine Taylor-Butler • illustrated by Marcela Calderón



Animal Fantasy

Look for the genre features noted below as you read this book. Use the features to help you understand the text.



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The Loudest Chirp

The basement was damp, dark, and warm. The perfect home for two house crickets. Jeremy chirped loudly by rubbing his wings together.

“Cut out that racket!” a man’s voice yelled.



To Jeremy, the banging on the basement window sounded like applause. He rubbed the scales of his wings faster, then paused. Outside, another house cricket chirped a message that had been passed from cricket to cricket from miles away.

“Did you hear that? Tryouts for the first cricket concert will be held in Farmer Brown’s field on Saturday. Everyone’s invited,” said Jeremy’s best friend, Daniel. “Think we should go?”

“Absolutely!” Jeremy said. “I like chirping in the basement, but I could really shine at a concert.”

His two sets of wings gave him an advantage. And he’d grown up in the city, so he had always had to compete with the sounds of machines and humans. With practice, he was loud enough to be heard across town.



“You would have a huge audience in the country,” Daniel said. He adjusted his glasses so he could see the sweater better, then took a bite.

“Careful,” Jeremy warned, as he watched Daniel eat too fast. “My cousin Andy was squashed by a human after eating a sweater.”

“Andy ate the WHOLE sweater,” Daniel said. “My holes are tiny. No one will notice.”

Jeremy was starving. He took a tiny bite of the silk sweater too. “I’m sure to be picked for a solo!”



“It’s guaranteed,” Daniel mumbled, his mouth full.

So they practiced chirping. Their joyful three-note songs didn’t match, but that was okay. They were friends.

“Martha!” a human voice yelled. “Get the bug spray! I think I found the crickets!”



Happy at Home

Amaya, a mole cricket, practiced chirping for her daily recital. With her small wings, she could create only two notes. She chirped fast when the weather was warm. And she chirped slow when the weather was cooler. It gave her songs variety.

Her three hundred brothers and sisters swarmed through the underground tunnels. Amaya always chirped for them before their bedtime, which was when the sun came up.



“You should try out for the cricket concert,” one of Amaya’s sisters said.

Amaya bowed her head. “I can’t chirp in front of strangers. I tried once and completely froze.”

“We could go with you!” said one of her many brothers. His antennae wiggled when he spoke.

“There are predators aboveground,” Amaya said. “It’s dangerous. They could eat us.”



“Then we can tunnel there,” said another brother. He held up his hands, which were brown from digging.

“Tunneling to the country would take too long, even with hundreds of us working,” Amaya’s mother said. “We will fly, swim, and walk at night when it is harder for predators to see us. We will dig underground and sleep during the day, as usual. Amaya is the only female cricket I’ve ever known that can chirp. She will be a star.”



Amaya shook her head sadly. “I would be the only girl chirping at the audition.”

“It’s time to face your fears, Amaya,” said her father. “The only failure in life is not trying at all.”

Amaya didn’t think she had a chance against male crickets, especially those with more wings and more notes to play.

“Okay, I’ll try,” she agreed, even as her small body trembled.

