

Catherine Called Birdy

by Karen

Cushman

Things to Notice

1. Birdy's relationship with her parents changes in this year of her life. What changes do you see? Why do you think this happens?
 2. Perkin, the goat boy, also rebels against his role in medieval society. What do you think his chances are for success?
 3. Luck plays a part in what happens to Birdy. Find some places where, if certain things hadn't happened or had happened, Birdy's life would have turned out differently. Has luck played a part in your life?
 4. Birdy and Morwenna watch a play in Lincoln in which the roles of the Devil and God are acted out somewhat hilariously and Birdy thinks about what God should look like for her paintings. What do you think either or both should look like?
 5. What do you think of Birdy's poetry?
 6. Why do you think there's so much in the book about the saints and their martyrdom?
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Activities & Research

1. Make a list of words you would use to describe Birdy and then find evidence in her journal to support each choice of word.
2. There are many scenes Birdy describes which must have been very funny to witness. Find one you liked, you will share it with the class.
3. Birds play an important part of this book and are used as a symbol throughout. Find as many allusions (references) to them as possible and see if you can decide why and how Karen Cushman used them.
4. Several characters in this book have conditions which today's medicine or knowledge could help: Birdy's poor eyesight, lepers, and Perkins' leg. What is the modern cure for these and other ailments?
5. Ladies of the manor were expected to heal the sick and wounded. Mostly, they used herbs as medicine. Find out about the use of herbal medicine today. Which herbs are still used?
6. Birdy spends a lot of time painting on her bedroom walls. Draw or paint one scene from her description.
7. Jews are being expelled from England in this story. Did that really happen in 1290? Find out why. What other countries expelled Jews? How recently?
8. Birdy's brother has been on a Crusade. Find out more about the Crusades? Which one would George have been part of and what did they accomplish? Was George right in his opinion of them after his return?