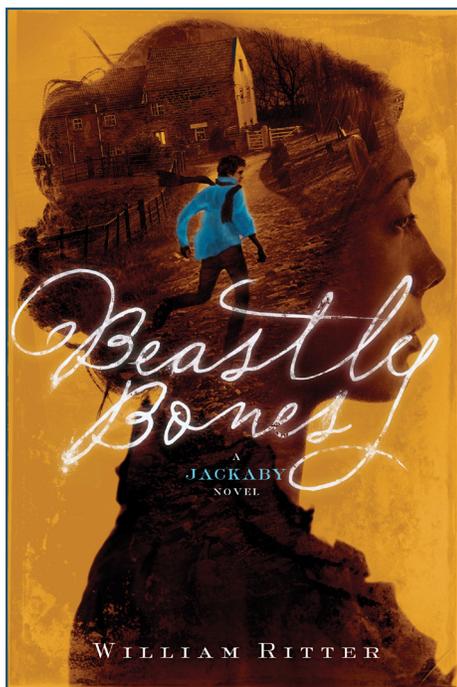


BEASTLY BONES

by William Ritter



SEPTEMBER 2015

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

Ages 12 and up, Grades 7 and up
304 pages, 5½" x 8¼"

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BOOK TALK

In 1892, New Fiddleham, New England, things are never quite what they seem, especially when Abigail Rook and her eccentric employer, R. F. Jackaby, are called upon to investigate the supernatural.

First, members of a particularly vicious species of shape-shifters disguise themselves as a litter of kittens, and a day later, their owner is found murdered, with a single mysterious puncture wound on her neck. Then in nearby Gad's Valley, dinosaur bones from a recent dig go missing, and an unidentifiable beast attacks animals and people, leaving their mangled bodies behind. Policeman Charlie Cane, exiled from New Fiddleham to the valley, calls on Abigail for help, and soon Abigail and Jackaby are on the hunt for a thief, a monster, and a murderer.

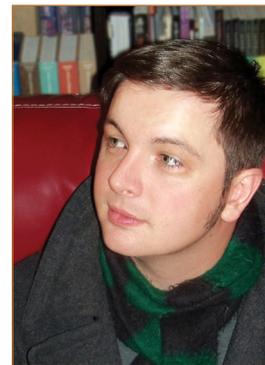
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

WILLIAM RITTER began writing the Jackaby series in the middle of the night when his son was still an infant. After getting up to care for him, Will would lie awake, his mind creating rich worlds and fantasies—such as the ones in New Fiddleham.

Will lives and teaches in Springfield, Oregon.

Beastly Bones is his second novel. Visit Will at rwillritter.wordpress.com, and find him on

Twitter: @WillotheWords.



Katrina Santoro

Praise for *BEASTLY BONES*

★ “Fast-paced . . . As bones go missing—and then small livestock—methodical investigation and scientific experimentation yield to madcap chases, slapstick humor, and romance . . . The well-matched, well-written duo will undoubtedly return.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ “On a scale of ‘one to pomegranate,’ this volume is undoubtedly a pomegranate; it offers humor, adventure, mystery, gore, and romance all rolled into one well-written package. The best news? There is more to come.”

—*School Library Journal*, starred review

★ “The action proceeds at the usual breakneck speed, with misdirection and red herrings galore, and humor, both obvious and sly . . . Recommend this to readers who enjoy *Doctor Who*, *Supernatural*, *Grimm*, *Dresden Files*, *Harry Potter*, and, of course, Sherlock Holmes stories, and who are ready to stay up into the wee hours reading.”

—*VOYA*, starred review (5Q)

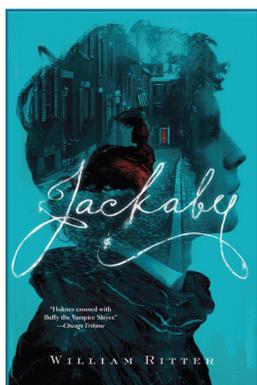
“This adventure brims with scrappy, intelligent females; a werewolf-like police officer; and even a connection to Charles Darwin.”

—*Booklist*

BEASTLY BONES

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Abigail takes great care to describe the living spaces of those around her—from Jackaby’s eclectic assortment of objects to Charlie’s minimal personalization of his home. When you go to a person’s house, what sorts of things are the most telling about their personality? How do William Ritter’s descriptions of the characters’ spaces contribute to your understanding of those characters?
2. On page 75, Jackaby says, “Deep down, our dear Jenny does not believe the truth is hers to find. Until she does, I do not know if providing it to her would be a kindness. Perhaps she fears the answers might be more painful than the questions, and I cannot say that they will not be.” Is it sometimes a kindness to withhold or not pursue the truth? If so, is this one of those times?
3. Miss Fuller is, in many respects, the type of woman Abigail hoped to become when immigrating to the United States. How does Miss Fuller’s influence affect Abigail—especially her performance as a detective? Is Jackaby or Miss Fuller a better role model for Abigail? Why?
4. Miss Fuller tells Abigail, “Behind every great man is a woman who gave up on greatness and tied herself into an apron” (page 181). Was this universally true in the 1890s? Do you think it is true today?
5. Do you think Abigail will ever return to England? If she were to return, how would her parents receive her? How do you think her time in America would affect her own expectations and choices for her life back in England?
6. On page 193, Jackaby says that Mr. Hudson once had a goldfish capable of granting him any wish he desired if he set it free, but Mr. Hudson made no wishes. What might be behind Mr. Hudson’s decision to keep the goldfish—and behind his collection of magical creatures in general?
7. Abigail sees the pale man multiple times throughout the course of *Beastly Bones*. Given that the pale man is creating paranormal mayhem, why might he be staying within sight of Abigail and Jackaby in particular? What larger things might he be up to?
8. On page 217, Abigail says, “I bade Charlie good night and sank into my bed. In my mind I could see Jenny Cavanaugh shaking her head in disappointment at my shoddy display, and then Nellie Fuller rolling her eyes at my having tried at all.” What might Jenny and Nellie have thought of Charlie’s behavior in this scene? Did he have an opportunity to make his feelings for Abigail more overt—or were they obvious enough? Were you happy with the progression of Abigail and Charlie’s relationship?
9. How might the ending of *Beastly Bones* have been different had Miss Fuller had a different fate?
10. Hatun’s prophecy about Abigail’s death still hangs over her. Do you expect it to come true?



JACKABY

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Reader's Guide by Emily Parlman

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