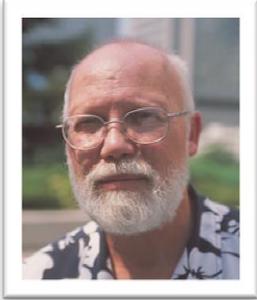


# AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT



## Robert Meganck on *Leaf Litter Critters*

HC: 978-1-56145-950-6

Have fun on a poetic tour through the leaf litter layer and dig into the fascinating facts about the tiny critters who live there. Nineteen poems in a variety of verse forms with accompanying science notes take readers on a decomposer safari through the “brown food web,” from bacteria through tardigrades and on to rove beetle predators.

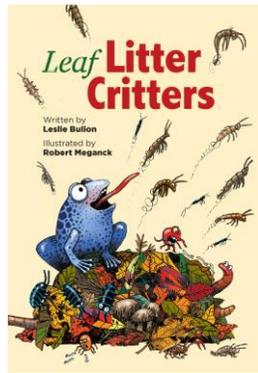
Illustrator Robert Meganck provides more insight into the inspiration behind and the creation of *Leaf Litter Critters*.

**Q:** Did you always know you wanted to be an artist? How did you get into the world of children’s illustration?

**A:** Basically yes. From the time I was very young. Drawing is something every child loves to do. I stuck with it not because I was good at it, but because I was bad at everything else. I suppose I got into children’s books the same way most children’s illustrators do—I read countless children’s books to my three children (now grown), now I read them to my grandson, and with each I imagine what I would do if given the chance.

**Q:** What part of *Leaf Litter Critters* did you most respond to when working on the illustrations?

**A:** As an editorial illustrator for many years, I’ve always loved the process of visually interpreting text material. Leslie’s poems are wonderful and really lend themselves to illustrations. Additionally I think the Peachtree team is great. They gave me a free hand to work through each piece the way I felt best. No one on the team ever made a



single comment or correction that did not result in an improvement.

**Q:** What critters were the most fun to create? Did you discover a favorite?

**A:** They are all fun. But if I was forced to pick my favorite it would probably be the pot worm. I had to add some visual reference so that the readers would get a sense of scale, so I added a Lego™ man with a fishing rod holding a goldfish cracker (both known scale references) and then added the

worm on the Lego™ fishing hook. The fun thing, that few people will know, is that the fisherman is a self-portrait.

**Q:** How did you work to make your illustrations fit with the poetry form of the book?

**A:** My complete portfolio varies a bit depending on the assignment and the audience. I chose to do these illustrations as black line drawing with a background color fill. This is a very traditional aesthetic for children’s books (Maurice Sendak, Beatrix Potter, etc.), I just do it digitally.

**Q:** What do you think readers can learn from the illustrations that they might not learn from the text?

**A:** Although I took some liberties with the scientific accuracy, I think the readers still get a sense of what the critters look like. They will also get a pretty good idea of scale when they look at the relative size spread.

**Q:** What do you want readers to take away from your

illustrations?

**A:** To simply enjoy them.

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### ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Designer and illustrator Robert Meganck is a professor of illustration, graphic design, digital imaging, and color theory at Virginia Commonwealth University. He received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the Center for Creative Studies in Detroit, MI and an MFA from Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, MI. He has received over 300 regional, national, and international awards for illustration and graphic design work. He lives in Virginia.

[www.meganck.com](http://www.meganck.com)

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### REVIEWS

★ “The poems are expertly crafted in a variety of forms (identified in the backmatter). The language is lively and the imagery appropriate. With alliteration, internal rhymes, and careful rhythm, these will be a delight to read aloud and learn.... Meganck’s engaging digital drawings give each creature pop-eyes and attitude....

A delightful, memorable introduction to an unsung ecosystem.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*, STARRED REVIEW

“In this ecological poetry collection, Bulion works her own magic, turning potentially dull life science into zany fun.... An amusing way to get the dirt on food chains.”

—*Booklist*

“Bulion stuffs her poems with scientific detail and puts even more into accompanying “science notes.” Meganck’s cartoons strike sillier notes...balancing all of the information Bulion provides with hefty doses of fun.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

“Educational and highly entertaining...rich with cross-curricular teaching opportunities. Meganck’s humorous, digitally rendered cartoon artwork will have readers giggling as they learn.... An excellent find for science fans and teachers alike.”

—*School Library Journal*

  
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