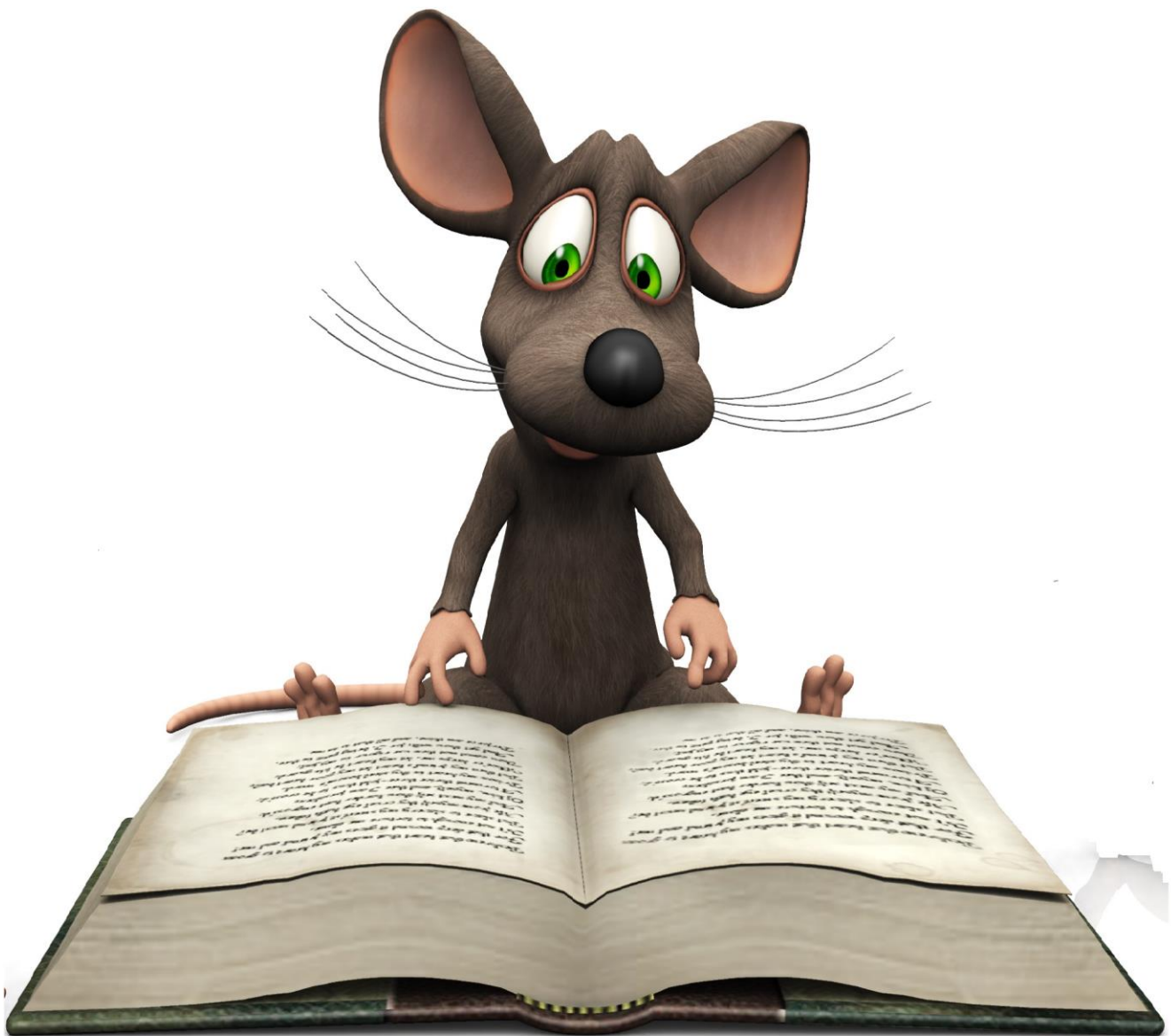


# The Tale of Despereaux

by Kate DiCamillo  
*2004 Newbery Medal Winner*

**A Teaching Guide**  
by Margaret Whisnant



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***The Tale of Despereaux***  
By Kate DiCamillo  
***A Novel Teaching Pack***  
By Margaret Whisnant

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*Once upon a time. . .*  
a tiny mouse,  
**Despereaux,**  
is born inside the walls of a castle.

Several years before, a rat,  
**Roscuro,**  
is born into the darkness of the castle's dungeon.



Years earlier  
**Miggery Sow,**  
born far away in the Kingdom of Dor,  
encounters a soldier of the king and  
begins her journey to join the mouse and the rat in the castle.

Add  
a fateful bowl of soup,  
the beautiful Princess Pea,  
music, love, light, revenge ,  
a quest,  
and a dungeon rendezvous.

*Once upon a time. . .*  
there was  
***The Tale of Despereaux***

## Goals

To . . .

- Offer a teaching guide with a full spectrum of learning experiences that flow from **basic knowledge** to **higher-level thinking skills**.
- Provide **classroom-ready** materials that **motivate** and **instruct**.
- Create **novel-specific activities** that require careful reading, help develop comprehension skills, and challenge the thinking process.
- Accommodate a wide variety of student **ability** and **interest**.
- **Support teachers** by providing a practical teaching resource that saves preparation time.
- Include **cross-curricula activities** as an integral part of the novel study.
- Correlate to various state **education standards and requirements** for language arts.

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## The Seven Components. . .

### 1. Summaries

Written in present tense, the chapter-by-chapter summaries are more detailed than those found in most teachers' guides or other sources. Important points of the plot, character motivation and development, and story clues are all included. For quick reference, the summaries are presented in bulleted format. These synopses are a valuable resource for

*quickly becoming familiar with a title when time is limited*  
*managing a reading program that involves multiple titles/reading groups*  
*facilitating independent study*  
*refreshing memory when using a novel from year to year.*

### 2. Before You Read

In this component, the focus is on sparking student interest. Each teaching pack includes both an **independent activity** and a series of **whole-group/small-group discussion** or **research topics**, written as open-ended questions.

At least one **bulletin board idea** is included. In some cases, activities in the **Think, Write, Create** component also involve the creation of a bulletin board or classroom display.

### 3. Vocabulary

One of the many advantages of literature-based reading instruction is the opportunity to observe vocabulary in action! It is this circumstance that drives the vocabulary portion of the novel teaching packs.

#### **Word Choices. . .**

The words lifted from the novel for focused study are chosen based on one or more of the following criteria:

<i>their level of difficulty</i>	<i>their frequency of use in children's literature</i>
<i>their importance in comprehending the story</i>	<i>their value as useful composition vocabulary</i>
<i>the probability that they will be encountered across the curriculum</i>	<i>unique meanings, spellings, pronunciation, etc.</i>

#### **Word Lists and Definitions. . .**

For teacher convenience and reference, word lists with definitions are included. The selected words are arranged in story order, complete with page numbers so they can be spotted easily and studied in their "natural habitats." For clarity, the definitions are paraphrased to match the word's tense, number, part of speech, etc. rather than cross referenced as in a standard dictionary. The major resource of this information is [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com).

#### **Dictionary Activities. . .**

Long word lists are divided into chapter sets of workable numbers and presented as **Dictionary Digs**—sometimes given a slightly different name to correspond with the theme of the novel. In this introductory stage, students use a dictionary to answer a series of multiple choice questions about word meanings, usage, unique characteristics, etc.

### ***Using the Words. . .***

Other activities, which pull terms from the lists in random order, lead students through a variety of word studies which include

*sentence usage*

*word forms*

*synonyms and antonyms*

*anagrams*

*categories*

*word-groups/connections*

*word types (acronyms, onomatopoeia , etc.)*

*scrambled sentences*

*analogies*

*whole-class/group games*

*etymologies*

Note: Some of these variations, but not all, are found in each Teaching Pack.

## **4. Assessment**

The two sections in this portion of the teaching pack offer a wealth of materials designed to build a strong **foundation** for student progression to higher level thinking skills. The operative phrase is **basic comprehension**.

### **Short Answer Questions**

Short answer questions for each chapter (or groups of chapters) are the first available assessment tools. The items encourage (and check) careful reading. Some require the reader to recognize a major event or idea while others involve finding a minor detail. The questions are in *sequence* with the pages they cover, but they are **not** designed to call attention to plot construction or other story elements.

The short answer questions can be used as

*student reading guides*

*pop quizzes*

*discussion group guides*

*conferencing with individual students*

### **Objective Tests**

The objective tests have multiple functions. In addition to their obvious application, they also serve as tools that can *improve **comprehension skills** by providing practice in understanding plot structure and recognizing important story elements.*

### ***Rationale:***

#### ***Focus on the Plot. . .***

Whether they are aware of their ability or not, all good readers sense the **rhythm** of the **connected** events that compose the plot of a novel, and consequently **comprehend** the story. They are in tune with cause and effect, behavior and consequence, sequence—the heartbeat of the narrative.

This “plot rhythm” forms the framework for the objective tests. The chain of events that tell the story have been pulled from the novel and reformatted into a series of sequential questions, none of which require **interpretation**. They are intended to **draw student attention to the fact that something happened**, not to what the incident means. That comes later.

In addition to their testing function, teachers may use the pages to strengthen their students’ ability to

**Summarize:** With only the questions as a guide, have students write a summary of the chapter. For a set of ten questions, limit the number of sentences they may write to seven or fewer. When they work with twenty or more questions, allow no more than twelve sentences.

**Report the News:** Ask your students to write a newspaper article based on the events identified in a set of questions and the *who, what, when, where, why* elements. Some information needed to complete this assignment may be located in previous chapters.

**Twist the Plot:** Choose one or two questions from each chapter and change its answer—true to false, no to yes, etc.—to demonstrate how changing a single (or several) events would (or would not) change the story. This process can be used to help students become proficient in distinguishing major plot movers from minor story details.

#### ***The Characters. . .***

Too often, when they are asked to describe a story character’s personality, the only answer many students can muster is “nice.” This portion of the Novel Teaching Pack, coupled with related activities from **Think, Write, Create**, is a well of opportunities for those teachers who wish to eradicate “nice” from their students’ vocabularies!

Questions that identify a character’s personality and/or motivation are purposely and carefully included with the plot movers. Again, the questions do not require **interpretation**. They simply establish that someone did or said something—knowledge that is invaluable when character analysis is required.

### ***Implied Meaning and Story Clues. . .***

The objective tests include items that establish the existence of story components carrying ***implied meaning***. ***Story clues*** that tantalize the reader with hints of future events also appear as question. At this point in the novel study, as before, **interpretation** is not the goal. **Awareness** of the **facts** is the target.

### ***Developing/Improving Listening Skills. . .***

Listening skills are rightfully included on every list of state competency requirements. Rather than always requiring students to answer test questions on a printed page, why not surprise them occasionally by doing the test orally and meeting competency goals at the same time?

### ***Discussion Guide Capability. . .***

The objective tests are helpful discussion guides. Use individual items on these pages to draw student attention to sequence, cause and effect, story clues (foreshadowing), character traits, recognizing and interpreting implied meanings, etc. These “thinking out loud” sessions are an **important building block** for the next learning phase.

## **5. Think, Write, Create**

In this section, students pack up what they already know about the novel and go exploring into its every nook and cranny. Some activities require the simplest interpretation or application, while others will challenge the most proficient thinkers. There is a high probability that young scholars, even reluctant ones, will label some of the selections as **fun**.

### ***Rationale:***

#### ***Guidelines. . .***

Most of the items in this section are based on the skills presented in the ***Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Bloom's Taxonomy)***. There are two reasons for this choice. First, it mirrors the Novel Teaching Pack's primary purpose of building a variety of sophisticated thinking skills on a foundation of basic knowledge. Second, in following the taxonomy guidelines, activities that correlate with many state educational standards emerge automatically.

#### ***Organization. . .***

**Chapter-specific** activities are grouped and presented according to their corresponding sets of **Short Answer Questions** and **Objective Test** page(s). Having led students through the basics for each chapter (or selected section), teachers may shop in this section for in-depth activities to optimize student understanding and interest. Armed with a firm grasp of each successive chapter, students are more likely to anticipate, embrace, and enjoy the next section. By repeating the process, students are also mastering concepts and intricacies connected to the **whole** novel

The **Whole Book Activities**, as their name indicates, require a grasp of the theme(s), characters, implications, etc. as they apply to the full novel. These pages are a teacher's smorgasbord of culminating possibilities. In some cases, the choices are outgrowths of concepts that students have dealt with in a previous activity. In others, students are encouraged to look at the novel from a new angle.

#### ***Levels of Difficulty. . .***

A broad spectrum of **difficulty levels** to accommodate the needs of individual students, including the gifted, is an integral part of ***Think, Write, Create***. However, **all** items from this section are intended to **challenge** and **sharpen** thinking abilities.

#### ***Activities. . .***

**Every** novel teaching pack includes activities that require students to choose and use precise, appropriate, and meaningful **vocabulary**. These exercises involve choosing a group of words to describe a character's personality or behavior. The following example is from ***Charlotte's Web***.

Eight-year-old Fern cried and begged her father not to destroy the runt pig. She sealed the little animal's fate by asking her father if he would have killed her if she had been born very small.

- Which **two** of the following words do you think **best** describe the way Fern's father behaved during this episode? Explain your choice. Include the definitions of the words you selected in your answer.

<i>practical</i>	<i>sensitive</i>	<i>loving</i>	<i>cruel</i>	<i>considerate</i>
<i>realistic</i>	<i>flexible</i>	<i>callous</i>	<i>compassionate</i>	<i>logical</i>

- Choose **two** words from the list below that you believe **best** describe Fern's behavior. Explain why they are the appropriate words. Use the definitions of your choices as part of your explanation.

<i>impulsive</i>	<i>compassionate</i>	<i>assertive</i>	<i>tender-hearted</i>	<i>hysterical</i>
<i>undisciplined</i>	<i>naive</i>	<i>juvenile</i>	<i>humane</i>	<i>empathetic</i>

In each case students work with a given collection of terms, all of which can be correctly applied to the character(s) in question. However, the individual words have strengths of meaning. It is the student's task to analyze both the character's behavior and the words, make choices, and then cite events from the story to support his/her selection.

Teachers may opt to narrow the choices to fewer words, choose words for individual students, divide the class into groups and offer a specific set of words to each group, or use the assignment as it is written. Whatever the technique, it is here that the word **nice** can be knocked off the shelf, shattered on the floor, and swept out the door. No longer necessary. Useless. Gone!

**Other items** in this section challenge students to . . .  
*write for self-expression, for communication, and  
for entertainment  
form opinions and theories  
cite "evidence" from the story to support their  
explanations and opinions  
connect personal experience to story situations  
become familiar with and identify literary elements  
analyze story characters and events  
make predictions based on given facts*

*think about social issues  
create drawings, diagrams, photos, maps,  
models, recordings, films, etc.  
imagine  
categorize  
engage in research and data gathering  
recognize and perceive story theme(s)  
understand point of view*

### **Cross Curricula. . .**

**Think, Write, Create** takes full advantage of opportunities to connect both major themes and the smallest story detail to other realms of the curriculum. In **Charlotte's Web**, for example, students may apply their calculation skills to a page of "Spider Math." In the **Holes** teaching pack is a challenge to create a game that utilizes a "saved" group of Camp Green Lake's holes.

### **Options, options, and more options. . .**

**Think, Write, Create** is purposely bulging at the seams to give teachers **pick-and-choose options** for  
*individualizing assignments  
group work  
whole class activities  
capitalizing on student interest*  
*homework  
short-term and long-term projects  
differentiating assignments*

## **6. Graphic Organizers**

Ideas for the graphic organizers are pulled from the chapter or whole book activities and expanded into a writing assignment. Priority is given to those topics that allow a student to relate personal experiences, make choices, empathize with a story character, and/or imagine.

### **Structure. . .**

The organizers do not repeat a set pattern of circles, squares, lines, etc., prescribed for a particular type of writing. Each one is tailored to a **specific idea** pulled from the novel. **Structured directions** for organizing the topic support the student at this stage of the process so that **writing** is the major focus.

### **Non-writing Organizers. . .**

Sometimes, students are enticed to stretch their imaginations by filling out "forms" or writing "diary entries." One graphic organizer from **Hatchet**, for example, allows students to assume the persona of the pilot who rescued Brian by writing three entries into his log—the day before the rescue, the day of the rescue, and the day after the rescue. In the **Holes** Novel Teaching Pack, students become detectives and conduct a "background check" on Mr. Sir, recording their findings on the provided "official form." In these cases, composition skills take a back seat to **imagination, empathy, and pure enjoyment**. Teachers may wish to capitalize on student enthusiasm by asking for a written "report" based on the information entered on the forms.

## **7. Answer Keys**

Keys for **all items that require a specific answer** are included in this section.

---

### **A final note from the author. . .**

It is my personal wish that when the last page has been read, the last activity completed, and the last idea discussed, at least one of your students will ask, "What are we going to read next?"

  
Margaret Whisnant

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## Book the First

### *A Mouse is Born*

#### Chapter One *the last one*

- Despereaux is born in April within the walls of a castle, the only one of his litter to be born alive.
- Despereaux's French mother Antoinette, having come to the castle years before concealed in the luggage of a visiting French diplomat, names her baby for the sadness and despairs in the place.
- Despereaux's sister and brother—Merlot and Furlough—notice that his ears are too big and his eyes are open when they shouldn't be. His father thinks there is something wrong with his very small son, and he expects him to be dead soon.
- Antoinette declares that she will have no more mice babies as they are such the disappointment and they are hard on her beauty.
- Despereaux lives. This is his story.

#### Chapter Two *such a disappointment*

- Despereaux Tilling's aunt Florence thinks he is ridiculously small and couldn't possibly have been born with his eyes open. His uncle Alfred decides his tiny nephew has donkey ears.
- Everything said of Despereaux is true. He has big ears, and he has been born with his eyes open. He is sickly. He sneezes often. He faints at loud noises.
- Unlike other mice. Despereaux does not think constantly of food. Instead he hears sounds. His father and mother insist that he hunt for crumbs, but when he sniffs the castle floor, he is not smelling. He is listening to the sweet sound that no other mouse seems to hear.

#### Chapter Three *once upon a time*

- Despereaux's brother Furlough takes him on a tour of the castle to teach him the art of scurrying. Instead, Despereaux stops and stares at the light pouring in through the stained-glass windows and asks if they are in heaven.
- Merlot, Despereaux's sister, leads him to the castle library to teach him how to nibble paper. Despereaux follows her onto a table to a huge open book. As she is instructing him how to bite glue and then some paper, Despereaux is looking at the marks on the page.
- "Once upon a time," he whispers. He refuses to nibble on the book because it would ruin the story.
- Merlot agrees with Pa. Something is not right with her brother. She scurries away to tell her parents about this latest disappointment.
- Alone with the book, Despereaux shivers, sneezes, and blows his nose. He reads the story of a beautiful princess and a brave knight who serves and honors her.
- Despereaux does not know that very soon he will need to be brave himself. Despereaux is destined to meet the large, mean rats in the castle dungeon..
- Interesting fates await almost everyone who does not conform.

#### Chapter Four *enter the Pea*

- Despereaux is free to wander through the castle when his brothers and sisters stop trying to educate him. He enjoys the light streaming from the stained-glass windows, and he reads the story of the maiden and the knight over and over.
- Finally he identifies the honey-sweet sound that only he can hear as King Phillip playing his guitar and singing to his daughter, the Princess Pea, as he does each night before she falls asleep. Despereaux hides in a hole in the wall and listens.
- Wanting to be closer to the music that fills his soul, Despereaux is soon through the hole and in the room.
- Though Despereaux tries to follow the most basic mice rule—*Do not ever . . . reveal yourself to humans*—the music overtakes him. Princess Pea sees him.
- The nearsighted king thinks his daughter is seeing a bug, but the Pea thinks the trembling mouse might have been listening to the music. She asks her father to play.

# Vocabulary Lists with Definitions

Story Order

(Some words may appear on more than one page.)

## Book the First

### *A Mouse is Born*

Chapter One—Chapter Fifteen

- ordeal** A difficult or painful experience, especially one that severely tests character or endurance; trial; tribulation. (p. 11)
- speculation** Guessing the reasons or forces creating or driving a matter; the contemplation or consideration of a subject; guesswork; theory. (p. 16)
- obscenely** Disgustingly; offensively; repulsively. (p. 17)
- scurrying** Going or moving quickly in haste; going with light running steps; scampering; flurrying or swirling about. (p. 20)
- indignant** Expressing, feeling, or characterized by strong displeasure at something offensive, insulting, or unjust; irritated; annoyed; angry. (p. 24)
- relishing** Liking or enjoying; showing pleasurable appreciation for something. (p. 24)
- conform** To behave or act according to prevailing standards, attitudes, or practices of a society or group; follow; adapt; apply; submit. (p. 25)
- adhere** To obey; to be devoted to or be in support of something; to stick fast to, as if by glue. (p. 27)
- intoned** Said; vocalized; chanted; spoke; Spoken or uttered in a monotone. (p. 43)
- indisputable** Without question; undeniable; absolutely true. (p. 43)
- consorts** Associates with; keeps company with. (p. 43)
- fervent** Having or showing great emotion or intensity; passionate; burning; eager. (p. 43)
- renounce** To give up or put aside voluntarily; to disown; to abandon or reject. (p. 44)
- perfidy** A deliberate breach of faith or trust; treachery; disloyalty. (p. 45)
- egregious** Outrageous; shocking; extraordinary in some bad way; flagrant; notorious; gross. (p. 52)
- surged** Rushed forward in a strong wavelike rush or sweep; rushed; swelled. (p. 56)
- defiance** Daring or bold resistance to authority or any opposing force; disobedience; rebellion (p. 56)
- ominous** Threatening or menacing; dismal; gloomy; fateful; containing the possibility of evil or harm; grim. (p. 57)
- burly** Large in body size; stout; sturdy; brawny; hefty; husky. (p. 63)
- swoon** Faint; lose consciousness. (p. 64)
- contemplated** Looked at or studied thoughtfully; studied; pondered; thought about as a future action; surveyed. (p. 69)
- abyss** A deep, immeasurable space, gulf, or cavity; a seemingly bottomless pit; crevasse. (p. 69)
- descended** Moved from a higher to a lower place; moved in a downward direction; sloped, extended, or inclined downward; plunged. (p. 72)
- beleaguered** Harassed; annoyed; aggravated; assaulted; besieged. (p. 77)
- eons** Indefinitely long periods of time; ages. (p. 77)
- ironies** Words conveying a meaning opposite of or different from their literal meanings; outcomes of events contrary to what was, or might have been expected. (p. 77)
- treacherous** Deceptive, untrustworthy, or unreliable; traitorous. (p. 77)
- illuminated** Supplied or brightened with light; lit up; decorated with light, as in a celebration; made clear; enlightened. (p. 79)
- teetering** Walking, moving, or balancing in an unsteady manner; seesawing; staggering; dangling; faltering. (p. 79)
- monstrosity** A person, animal, or thing that is markedly unusual or deformed; a freak. (p. 79)

## Dictionary Digs

Book the First

*A Mouse is Born*

Chapter One—Chapter Fifteen

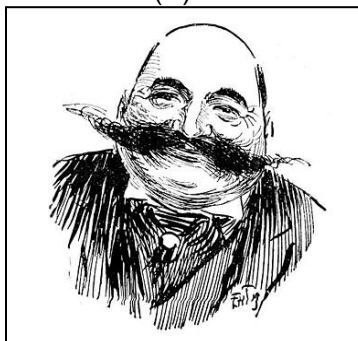
Dig into your favorite dictionary to answer the following questions about some important words from the first fifteen chapters from *The Tale of Despereaux*. Write the **letters** of the correct answers in the blanks to the left.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Which of the following is the *best* example of an **egregious** act? (A) wearing a red sock on one's head at a formal affair, (B) laughing at someone who slips and falls in the school cafeteria, (C) pushing in line at a crowded restaurant.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. An *antonym* of **beleaguered** is (A) assaulted, (B) assumed, (C) assisted.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Which of the following is **not** likely to engage in the act of **scurrying**? (A) a monkey, (B) a chipmunk, (C) a tortoise.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The word **eons** refers to indefinitely long periods of (A) drought and depravation, (B) time, (C) inactivity, such as hibernation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Identify the word that can be substituted for **contemplated** in the following sentence without changing its meaning.  
Marshall **contemplated** his options for earning the money he needed.  
(A) studied, (B) eliminated, (C) disregarded
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. A **fervent** plea is an appeal (A) filled with great emotion, (B) made in a threatening or demanding manner, (C) presented half-heartedly and showing little desire.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. **Consorts** are (A) enemies who purposely avoid each other, (B) acquaintances who know each other only in passing, (C) people who associate with or keep company with each other.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The *best* example of a **monstrosity** is (A) a very small puppy with a short tail, (B) a white tiger with gray stripes, (C) a rat with two tails and no ears.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. A *synonym* for **obscenely** is (A) dismally, (B) disgustingly, (C) disputably.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Which of the following illustrations portrays an **indignant** attitude?

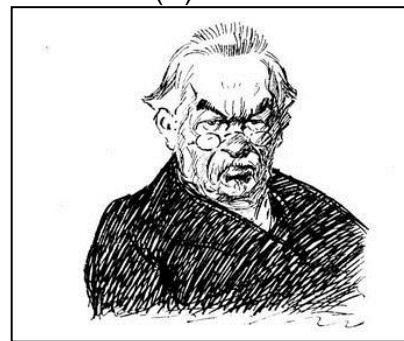
(A)



(B)



(C)



- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. The *best* example of an **ordeal** is (A) being faced with a pop quiz, (B) passing a test without studying for it, (C) turning in a friend who has cheated on an important test.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. A person who is **relishing** a trip to a museum (A) would rather be somewhere else, (B) is enjoying the experience, (C) is being rude and disturbing other patrons.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. One characteristic of an **abyss** is (A) deep space that seems endless, (B) mountains with lofty peaks, (C) the absence of movement and sound.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. An *antonym* of **defiance** is (A) impudence, (B) insolence, (C) obedience.

## Short Answer Questions

### Book the First *A Mouse is Born*

**Chapter One** ~ *the last one*

**Chapter Two** ~ *such a disappointment*

1. Where was Despereaux born?
2. Why did Despereaux's mother say she would have no more mice babies?
3. Why did Despereaux's father think he would die like the rest of his litter?
4. Other than his big ears and his sickly nature, what was the most alarming thing about Despereaux?
5. What was Despereaux doing when he lowered his head and sniffed the floor?

**Chapter Three** ~ *once upon a time*

**Chapter Four** ~ *enter the Pea*

1. What happened when Furlough tried to teach his brother the art of scurrying?
2. Why did Despereaux refused to eat the pages of the big book as his sister Merlot instructed?
3. What was the story in the big book about?
4. What was the source of the honey-sweet sound that Despereaux heard in the castle?
5. What mistake did King Phillip make when he first saw Despereaux?

**Chapter Five** ~ *what Furlough saw*      **Chapter Six** ~ *this drum*

**Chapter Seven** ~ *a mouse in love*

1. What happened to Despereaux when he and the princess smiled at each other?
2. Who reported Despereaux's terrible, unbelievable activities to Lester Tilling?
3. Why was Lester Tilling so upset with Despereaux?
4. Why did the king command the Pea to put Despereaux down and then chase him away?
5. In addition to telling her not to cry, what other words did Despereaux speak to the Pea?

**Chapter Eight** ~ *to the rats*      **Chapter Nine** ~ *the right question*

**Chapter Ten** ~ *good reasons*

1. Why was the Mouse Council so upset with Despereaux's behavior?
2. What did Lester Tilling do when the Head Mouse asked if any mouse was opposed to sending Despereaux to the dungeon?
3. Who went to collect Despereaux and bring him before the Mouse Council?
4. What reason did Despereaux offer the Mouse Council for breaking the rules of mouse behavior?
5. What did the Most Very Honored Head Mouse do after he sentenced Despereaux to die with a black heart in the dungeon?

**Chapter Eleven** ~ *the threadmaster cometh*      **Chapter Twelve** ~ *adieu*

**Chapter Thirteen** ~ *perfidy unlimited*

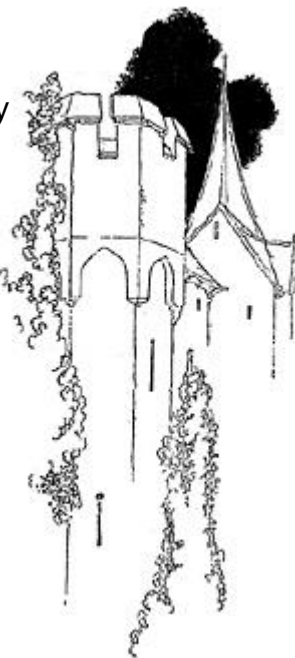
1. What information did the threadmaster have about Despereaux's relationship with the Pea?
2. What information caused Despereaux's mother to swoon at her son's feet?
3. Where did Despereaux wear the threadmaster's red thread as he was led by the two hooded mice down into the dungeon?
4. Why did Despereaux want to speak to the princess before he was cast into the dungeon?
5. Who was one of the hooded mice who threw Despereaux down the stairs into the dungeon?

## Book the First *A Mouse Is Born*

### Chapter One *the last one* (Pages 11-15) Chapter Two *such a disappointment* (Pages 16-19)

Write the **letter** of the correct answer in the blank before each question.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Despereaux was (A) the last of a litter of six little mice, (B) the only one of his litter to be born alive, (C) exceptionally pink.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Despereaux's mother Antoinette (A) had arrived at the castle long ago in the luggage of a French diplomat, (B) had been born in the castle to an aristocratic mouse, (C) was a happy, young mouse who had immigrated from England the year before.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Antoinette named her son Despereaux for (A) her favorite uncle, (B) a famous French king, (C) all the sadness and many despairs of the castle.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Which of the following was **not** true of the new-born mouse? (A) His ears were too big. (B) His eyes were a bright blue, rather than standard mouse brown. (C) His eyes were open.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Despereaux's mother declared that she would have no more babies because (A) there was only so much food to be found in the castle, (B) they were such the disappointment and they were hard on her beauty, (C) she was getting to be an middle-aged mouse and just too tired.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Despereaux's father believed that (A) only one of the litter had survived because there was something wrong with his wife, (B) there was something wrong with his son, and he would die soon, (C) his son's condition was a sign of something mysterious and important.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Despereaux's aunt Florence said that her nephew's ears (A) were obscenely large, (B) as cute as two buttons, (C) looked like butterfly wings.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Despereaux (A) was not as small as his family claimed, and his eyes had actually opened *after* he was born, (B) enjoyed hunting for food with his brothers and sisters, though he was week and sickly, (C) coughed and sneezed often, ran temperatures, and fainted at loud noises.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Why did Despereaux's brother Toulèse say his big ears weren't attached right to his brain? Because Despereaux said he could hear (A) the sweet, sweet sound of honey, (B) a cake crumb falling on the castle's first floor, (C) the sun shining on the castle wall.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. What was Despereaux doing when he lowered his head and sniffed the castle floor as his father ordered? He was listening to (A) the sweet sound that no other mouse could hear, (B) the mice talking in another room, (C) the chirping bird language that floated in through the castle windows.



**Chapter Three** ~~~~~ *once upon a time* (Pages 21-25)  
**Chapter Four** ~~~~~ *enter the Pea* (Pages 26-29)



Write either **True** or **False** in the blank before each statement.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Under the direction of his brother Furlough, Despereaux quickly mastered the art of scurrying.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Despereaux's sister Merlot took him to the castle library to teach him the fine points of nibbling paper.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Despereaux refused to eat the book that lay open on the table because the taste of paper made him sneeze.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Tracing each of the book's words with his paw, Despereaux read the story of a beautiful princess and a brave knight who served and honored her.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Despereaux, a mouse who did not conform, was destined to meet the rats that lived in the castle's dungeon.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. To be free, Despereaux had to find ways of escaping his brothers and sisters who continued to try to educate him in the ways of being a mouse.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Despereaux spent his days wandering through the rooms to stare at the light streaming through the stained-glass windows and to read and re-read the story in the book.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The honey-sweet sound that Despereaux heard was King Phillip playing his guitar and singing to his daughter, the Princess Pea.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. When the Pea told her father there was a mouse in the room listening to the music, he insisted that Despereaux was a bug.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. As the king sang, a fearful Despereaux listened to the music from his hiding place in the wall.

Chapter Five — *what Furlough saw* (Pages 30-33)

Chapter Six — *this drum* (Pages 34-36)

Chapter Seven — *a mouse in love* (Pages 37-41)



fell in love  
his craziness

his father  
velvet  
rats

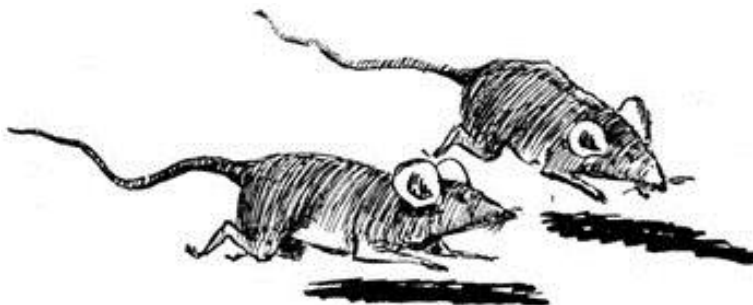
trouble  
a rodent  
his handkerchief

a thimble  
speaking to a human

From the list above choose the word or phrase that fits each of the clues below and write it in the blank. **Each answer will be used only once.**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The drum of the council of the mouse was made of one of these with a piece of leather stretched across its open end.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Princess Pea said Despereaux's ears were like small pieces of this.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Lester Tilling said this was always the result when mice did not act like mice.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Lester Tilling said Antoinette's French blood was the cause of this part of Despereaux's behavior.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. The king's family had a dark history with these.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Despereaux smiled at the princess and did this at the same time.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Furlough Tilling told this person the terrible, unbelievable news that he had seen Despereaux sitting at the foot of the king and being touched on the head by the princess.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Despereaux broke the last of the great ancient rules of mice by doing this.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. The king would not allow Princess Pea to keep Despereaux because he was one of these.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Despereaux left this object behind when he was forced to seek safety in the hole in the wall.

**Chapter Eight** ~~~~~ **to the rats** (Pages 42-45)  
**Chapter Nine** ~~~~~ **the right question** (Pages 46-49)  
**Chapter Ten** ~~~~~ **good reasons** (Pages 50-56)



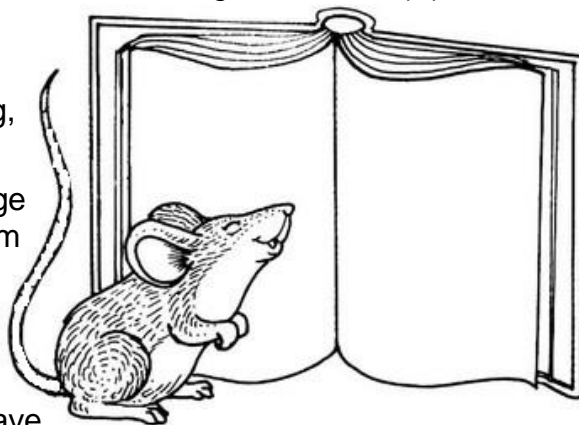
Write either **Yes** or **No** in the blank before each question.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Did Lester Tilling vote against the Mouse Council and beg them not to send his son to the dungeon?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. When Furlough found him, was Despereaux in the library reading the story of the knight and the fair maiden out loud to himself?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Did Despereaux want to read the words *Happily ever after* as an assurance that his love for the Princess Pea would come to a good end?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Upon hearing that he had been called to sit with the Mouse Council, did Despereaux stop reading immediately and follow his brother?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. When the Most Very Honored Head Mouse asked if he had sat at the foot of the human king and allowed the princess to touch him, did Despereaux try to deny the charges at first?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Did Despereaux's mother defend her son's behavior by saying that a human touch was not the end of the world?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Did some of the fourteen members of the Mouse Council seem to understand when Despereaux explained that he had broken the mouse rules because of music and because of love?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. As punishment for not acting like a mouse, was Despereaux to be sent to the dungeon and the rats?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Did Despereaux refuse to renounce his love for the princess?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. After he marveled at his own bravery and admired his own defiance, did Despereaux faint?

# Whole Book Test

Write the **letter** of the correct answer in the blank to the left.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Which of the following facts is **not** true of Despereaux when he was born within the walls of the castle? (A) He was one of three other siblings that lived. (B) His ears were too big. (C) His eyes were open.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Despereaux's brother Furlough was not able to teach him the art of (A) squeaking, (B) whispering, (C) scurrying.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Rather than nibbling the pages of the huge book as his sister Merlot tried to teach him to do, Despereaux (A) spent hours staring at the words written in gold, (B) preferred listening to the sound the pages made when turned, (C) read the story of a beautiful princess and a brave knight who served and honored her.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. In addition to the book, Despereaux enjoyed (A) scurrying through the castle rooms with Furlough, (B) the light beaming from the stained-glass windows, (C) the sounds that came from outside and through the castle windows late at night.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. The honey-sweet sound that only Despereaux could hear was (A) King Phillip playing his guitar and singing to his daughter, (B) a breeze blowing through the treetops in the castle garden, (C) Princess Pea humming a lullaby that her mother had once sung.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Despereaux (A) thought the king looked like a knight in shining armor, (B) fell in love with Princess Pea, (C) saw the princess and decided that being born a mouse was a terrible fate.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Furlough told on his brother when he saw Despereaux (A) sitting at the king's foot and allowing the princess to touch him on the head, (B) smiling at the princess and kissing her on the cheek, (C) spying on the king and the princess instead of gathering crumbs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The king did not like Despereaux because the mouse (A) was a rodent and a relative of rats, (B) refused to tell the princess his name and where he was from, (C) would surely lead other mice and rats into the princess's chamber.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. The Mouse Council was upset because Despereaux had (A) not learned all the required rules of being a mouse, (B) associated with humans and put them all in danger, (C) brought shame and disgrace to his father, his mother, and the whole mouse population by speaking to a human.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Who was a member of the Mouse Council that voted to send Despereaux to the dungeon? Despereaux's (A) brother, Furlough, (B) mother, Antoinette, (C) father, Lester Tilling.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Despereaux's intended fate in the dungeon was to (A) be eaten by rats, (B) starve in the darkness, (C) live the rest of his days as a servant to the rats.



# Think, Write, Create

(Chapter-by-Chapter)

## Book The First *A Mouse is born*

### Chapter One *the last one*

### Chapter Two *such a disappointment*

Research to find answers to the following questions:

1. How many mice are there in a typical litter?
2. About how many mice from a single litter live to be adults?
3. How many babies can a mother mouse have in her lifetime?
4. How big is a baby mouse? What familiar object can you compare it to? A marble? A walnut? A jelly bean? A paperclip?
5. Draw an oval or mold a piece of clay to represent what you believe to be Despereaux's size.

Despereaux's mother was a French mouse who had arrived at the castle in the luggage of a visiting diplomat.

- What kind of life do you suppose Despereaux's mother had experienced before she arrived at the castle?
- Do you think Despereaux's mother had come to the castle on purpose or was it accidental? Explain your thinking.
- What facts from the story can you find to prove that Antoinette Tilling was both *pessimistic* and *vain*? Include the definitions of the two words in your answer.

Despereaux's aunt Florence thought he was so small it was ridiculous. His uncle Alfred though his large ears looked more like donkey ears than mouse ears. Despereaux's brother Toulèse said his big ears were not attached right to his brain.

- Do you think Despereaux's family was unfair and wrong to be so concerned about his size and appearance? Why or why not?
- Was Despereaux's lack of interest in thinking about and finding food a legitimate concern for his parents? Add details to your answer.
- If you had a friend or relative who heard things that no one else seemed to hear, what would you think? Explain.

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### Chapter Three *once upon a time*

### Chapter Four *enter the Pea*

Despereaux refused to nibble on the big book that lay open on the library table because he miraculously recognized its value. His sister Merlot, however, took mindless delight in eating both the glue and the paper.

- Explain how some people, like Merlot, see no value in books. How do they show their lack of understanding?
- The author described Despereaux's ability to see that the squiggles on the page were words as *something remarkable*. How would you describe this incident? What do the words *Once upon a time* usually indicate?
- In the real world, how do people learn to appreciate the value of books?

Think about the day that Despereaux found himself sitting at the foot of the king.

- Write the schedule that you think one of Despereaux's siblings probably followed on that same day. Begin at 6:00 a.m. and end around 8:00 p.m.
- Write the schedule that you imagine Despereaux followed. As with his sibling, begin with an early-morning awakening and bring the mouse to his listening place at the foot of the king.
- If you were a mouse, which schedule would you prefer? Explain.

## Think, Write, Create

(Whole Book)

Now that you know the whole story of the king, the queen, the princess, and the rat, go back to the activities for Chapter Five—Chapter Six—Chapter Seven and study the lyrics of the songs Stardust and *Deep Purple* that the king sang to his daughter. Do the words take on a new meaning? Explain.

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Explain how each of the following story facts prove that the Mouse Council had **extreme power** over the lives of the castle's mouse population.

*Lester Tilling reported his son's behavior to the council.*

*Furlough Tilling delivered his brother to the council's judgment.*

*Lester and Antoinette Tilling did not defend their son when the council condemned him.*

*There was a threadmaster whose duty was to mark a mouse for death.*

*Furlough Tilling delivered his brother to the dungeon without pity.*

*Gregory knew the meaning of the red thread.*

*The Most Very Honored Head Mouse forbade Lester Tilling to ask his son's ghost for forgiveness.*

*The Mouse Council voted that they had not been visited by Despereaux's ghost.*

*On his way to save the Pea, Despereaux saw that the dungeon was littered with tufts of fur, knots of red thread, and the skeletons of mice.*

- Why was this group of value to the mouse community?
  - How do you suppose a mouse became a member of the Council?
  - Do you think the Mouse Council's power over the castle mice changed after the great soup banquet? Explain your reasoning.
  - In your opinion, should the Mouse Council's membership change? If so, how?
  - If you could choose a new Most Very Honored Head Mouse, who would it be?
  - What are some similar groups of decision-makers in the human world? How are their powers limited compared to those of the Mouse Council? Explain why no group should have absolute control such as that of the thirteen mice.
- 

How was Princess Pea like a modern-day celebrity? Who would you choose as her modern equivalent? Explain your choice.

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What facts from the story indicate that Botticelli Remorse was a rat leader, respected, feared, and followed by other rats? Speculate as to how he might have managed to gain his leadership position.

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After Despereaux's birth, his mother declared that she would have no more babies because they were such a disappointment.

- Explain how Despereaux was, for a while, a disappointment to his mother.
  - How was Antoinette a disappointment to her son?
  - Do you think Furlough and Merlot were disappointments as a brother and a sister? Explain your thinking.
  - After she left the soup banquet, imagine that Antoinette Tilling wrote a letter to one of her French relatives. What did she say?
-

## The Top Ten of Mice and Men

Lester Tilling was very much concerned with the fact that Despereaux was not following the rules of mice. He thought his son would be the end of them all. Without a doubt, human adults are also mightily concerned that their youngsters should follow certain rules for the betterment of all.

In the space to the left below, list what you believe to be the *top ten mice rules*. You will find some of them in the story—*Do not ever speak to humans*, for instance. Then in the rectangle to the right, enter what you believe to be the *ten most important human rules* that speak for the benefit of all.

Analyze what you have written by looking for similarities and differences. Do mice and humans, according to your data, share certain goals? How do their stations in the world necessitate some differences in survival strategies? Enter your conclusions in the third box and then use your notes to write a composition about **The Top Ten of Mice and Men**.

### Top Ten Mice Rules



### Top Ten Human Rules

### Analysis and Conclusions:

