

CANDLEWICK PRESS

Teacher's Guide

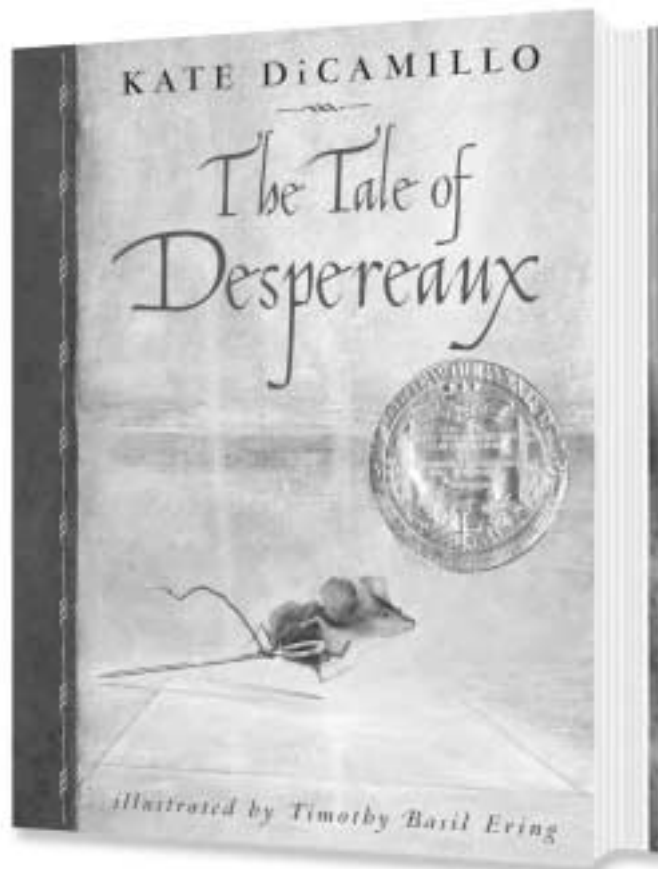
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INTRODUCTION TO THE GUIDE

The Tale of Despereaux by Kate DiCamillo—with its appealing characters, engaging plot, and rich themes—offers an ideal opportunity to teach children how to comprehend deeply. This reading comprehension guide is based on two teaching ideas. First, children understand better when they connect the story to their personal experiences and feelings, to their general background knowledge, and to other stories they have read. Second, effective readers ask questions *before* they read a story, *while* they are reading, and *after* they have read. This guide uses the strategy of making connections for the first and second books of *The Tale of Despereaux* and the strategy of questioning for the third and fourth books. Prereading activities are provided for all four books, and throughout the reading of the story, children are encouraged to express themselves and create meaning through discussion and writing. The guide also contains cross-curricular activities and a special section on character education.

The reading strategies in this guide are based on two books: *The Mosaic of Thought: Teaching Comprehension in a Reader's Workshop* by Ellin Keen and Susan Zimmerman (Heinemann, 1997) and *Strategies That Work: Teaching Comprehension to Enhance Understanding* by Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis (Stenhouse Publishers, 2000).



The Tale of Despereaux

By Kate DiCamillo

Illustrated by Timothy Basil Ering

Illustrated middle-grade fiction • 272 pages • Ages 7–12 • Grades 2–7
ISBN: 0-7636-1722-9 • \$17.99 (\$25.00 CAN)

WINNER OF THE 2004
Newbery Medal



*The world is dark,
and light is precious.
Come closer, dear reader.
You must trust me.
I am telling you a story.*

CLASSROOM TESTING

OF *THE TALE OF DESPEREAUX* AND THE GUIDE

The Tale of Despereaux was read in two English-as-a-second-language classrooms at the Arcadia Neighborhood Learning Center, a public school in Scottsdale, Arizona, and all the activities in a preliminary version of this guide were used. Together, the two classrooms included 48 third- and fourth-graders across a wide range of reading abilities. Among the students were 8 gifted students, 8 special education students (some nonreaders), and 10 students with limited proficiency in English.

Before reading *The Tale of Despereaux* aloud, the teachers taught the prereading lessons and asked the prereading questions. They

made charts and taught vocabulary from the novel. The teachers read all four books of *The Tale of Despereaux* aloud and then opened the class to discussion. Responses were deep and varied. Students loved the book and were able to make oral comments and to write about about events, characters, and the more philosophical themes of the novel.

The children then reread the chapters in pairs, making connections on their own, asking and answering questions on their own, and then sharing their thoughts with other pairs of readers. For nonreaders and readers with limited English proficiency, teachers used alternate stories.

TEACHERS' COMMENTS

From Carol Hebert and Judy Rex, who used *The Tale of Despereaux* and this guide in their classroom . . .

"Our experience in the classroom with The Tale of Despereaux has been nothing short of amazing! The students responded positively to the story from the preview of the cover to the last page. Despereaux has so deeply engaged our students that we hear ongoing discussions at the end of each day's read-aloud time. Many students purchased the book the first day it became available in the bookstore. The story has become a daily discussion focus among students and their families.

"We were able to use this book to teach a wide variety of reading strategies, especially questioning, making connections, and elements of literature. The nature of the story itself leads students to think critically and to probe for deeper understanding of moral and ethical issues. The book has been an excellent vehicle for vocabulary studies and using graphic organizers.

"Because of the high level of engagement, it has been easy to differentiate our instruction to both challenge those who need it and to support and scaffold instruction for struggling readers. Among the many learning strategies we used, we have been able to provide individual and small group instruction and flexible grouping based on the student's ability and learner profile.

"It was a wonderful book to start our reading program. It also served as an introduction to character traits and positive behavior."



Annie Weissman reads *The Tale of Despereaux* to Ms. Hebert's and Ms. Rex's classes.

INTRODUCING THE STRATEGY OF MAKING CONNECTIONS



Objective: Learn the strategy of making connections.

Preparation: Make copies of the activity sheet on page 17 of this guide.

Before reading *The Tale of Despereaux*, use a picture book to help students learn how to think about making connections between themselves and the text.

DIRECT INSTRUCTION

Explain that proficient readers make connections between the story, their own lives, the world, and other stories. Tell children that the questions they might ask themselves are: *Is there something in this story that's like me?* (text-self) *Are there people in this story who remind me of people I know?* *Are things happening in the story that are like things going on all around me—in my family, among my school friends and neighbors, in what I learn from the news?* (text-world) *Is there something in this story that's like another story I've read?* (text-text)

MAKE A CHART

On a chalkboard or bulletin board, make a chart like the one below. Explain to children that this is one way to keep track of their thoughts about a story so they can share their ideas with others.

Text to self	Text to world	Text to text

READ ALOUD

Read aloud *Weslandia* by Paul Fleischman, illustrated by Kevin Hawkes. (Or use another picture book featuring a character who, like Despereaux, is different from the people around him.)

MODEL THE CONNECTIONS

Choose a few pages of *Weslandia* to read aloud again—parts of the story that connect to yourself, your world, and other books you have read. Discuss your connections with the class. Then write notes about your connections on the chart. Read three parts in all—one for each kind of connection.

Examples:

In Weslandia, Wesley isn't interested in being like others—you can tell from the picture of things in his room. I was the same way because my ambitions were different—I wanted to be a clown or a lawyer. (text-self)

In Weslandia, other kids make fun of Wesley. They chase him and torment him. Even his mother says, "He sticks out." He's an outcast.

Sometimes in school, other people are unkind and won't be friendly when you're not like everybody else. (text-world)

*Wesley reminds me of the tortoise in *Hi, Harry!* by Martin Waddell, illustrated by Barbara Firth. No one wants to play with Harry because he's slow, so he's an outcast too until he finally finds a snail who likes slow games.* (text-text)

GUIDED PRACTICE

Give each child in your class a copy of the activity sheet *My Connections*. Then read *Weslandia* again. In pairs, small groups, or as a class, let children make their own connections to *Weslandia* and write their thoughts on the activity sheet. As a class, through oral discussion, ask children to share their connections. Write notes about their ideas on your chart on the chalkboard.

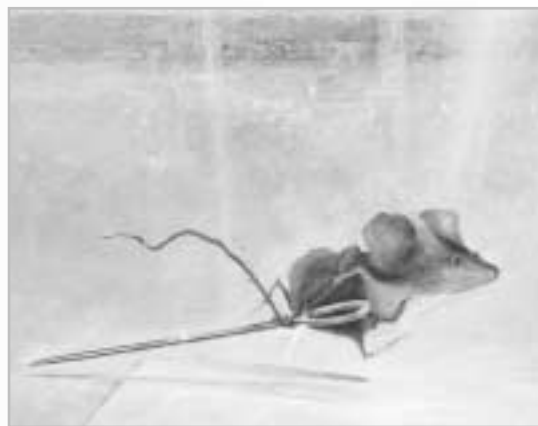
REVIEW AND CLOSURE

To reinforce the three kinds of connections, read aloud the connections on your chart. Let children know that the hero of the story of *The Tale of Despereaux* will be similar to Wesley in some ways. Tell children that they will be using the strategy of making connections as they read the first two Books of *The Tale of Despereaux*.



INTRODUCING THE BOOK

Let children look closely at the mouse on the cover of the book. Invite them to respond orally to the illustration. Do you notice anything special about Despereaux? What might he be doing with a needle? Does the expression on his face tell you anything about him? Then read the description on the front flap of the jacket. Invite questions and responses from the class.



BOOK THE FIRST: A MOUSE IS BORN



PLOT SUMMARY

Despereaux Tilling, born in the light and with his eyes open, is an unusually small mouse with big ears. He is not interested in learning the fine points of nibbling paper and scurrying for food like other mice. Instead, he likes to read, and he loves light and music. Despereaux falls in love with Princess Pea and breaks the strictest of all Mice Rules: he reveals himself to the human princess, sits at the feet of her father, Prince Phillip, lets the princess touch him, and even speaks to her. Despereaux's father reports this behavior to the Mouse Council, and they sentence him to death in the castle dungeon. After the threadmaster ties the red thread of death on Despereaux's neck, Despereaux is thrown into the dungeon by his brother Furlough. But Despereaux earns his life back by telling a story to Gregory, the jailer.



PREREADING QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES FOR *BOOK THE FIRST*

1. Have a discussion on what it means to conform. When is it necessary and not necessary in the lives of the students and people they know or have read about?
2. Have students look up the words *desperate* and *despair* in the dictionary. Ask students if they know anyone who feels *desperate* or *in despair*. Encourage the class to express their thoughts and feelings. For Spanish-speaking students, use the words *esperar* and *desesperar*.
3. Engage the class in a discussion about what it means to be a hero or heroine. Let children say what qualities of character their favorite heroes and heroines have. Who are their favorite heroes and heroines in real life, in the news, in other stories?



VOCABULARY

You may want to teach vocabulary words before or after reading *Book the First*. Create a space on a bulletin board or chalkboard for vocabulary so that children can add other words. Encourage children to contribute to the list.

litter, p. 11

speculation, p. 16

scurrying, p. 20

endangers, consorts, p. 43

perfidy, p. 45

egregious, p. 52

dungeon, p. 55

renounce, p. 55

repent, p. 55

implications, p. 71

beleaguered, p. 77

APPLYING THE STRATEGY OF MAKING CONNECTIONS TO *BOOK THE FIRST*



Objective: Use the strategy of making connections.

Preparation: Make copies of the activity sheet on page 17 of this guide.

DIRECT INSTRUCTION

Explain that to understand *The Tale of Despereaux*, students should make connections to the story just as they did with *Weslandia*. The questions they might ask are: *Is there something about Despereaux that's like me? Is there anyone in his family or in the castle who's like someone I know? Is there something going on that's like an event I know about? Is Despereaux's story like another story I have read?*

MAKE A CHART

On a chalkboard or bulletin board, make a chart like the one on page 3 of this guide.

READ ALOUD

Read aloud *Book the First: A Mouse Is Born*. Either read the entire section before you begin to model connections or read a few chapters at a time and model connections for each group of chapters.

MODEL THE CONNECTIONS

Choose places in the story that you relate to yourself, to your world, and to other stories. Read the selections aloud and tell students how you connect. Write notes about your connections on the chart.

Examples: (see page 13 for more examples)

Despereaux's mother, Antoinette, rejects him. "*Such the disappointment,*" she says and asks for a mirror and her makeup bag. In her worst moments, my mother cared more for me than Despereaux's mother cares for him. **(text-self)** p. 12

"Please," said Despereaux, "don't cry." And he held out his handkerchief. Here Despereaux breaks one of the important Mice Rules—he speaks to a human. Many brave and good people have broken the rules of their society. During the civil rights struggle in the 1960s, Rosa Parks broke a social rule by sitting in the front of the bus instead of the back. **(text-world)** p. 40

"And you love her, as a knight loves a maiden. You love her with a courtly love, a love that is based on bravery and courtesy and honor and devotion." When the threadmaster describes Despereaux's feelings for the Princess Pea, I think of some of the princes in fairy tales and some of the knights in King Arthur's Round Table. **(text-text)** p. 61

GUIDED PRACTICE

Distribute the activity sheets. In pairs, small groups, as a class, or individually, let children write notes about their own connections to *Book the First: A Mouse Is Born*. If all children do not have a copy of *The Tale of Despereaux*, then ask children which parts of the story they would like to hear again. Read aloud. When children have finished writing, invite them to share their connections. On your big chart on the chalkboard, write some of the children's connections in the appropriate column.

REVIEW AND CLOSURE

Read aloud the connections you have written in your chart. Remind children that they will be using the strategy of making connections with the next Book of *The Tale of Despereaux*.



TIME TO WRITE

Follow the Light with Despereaux

To help children understand the themes and deeper issues of *The Tale of Despereaux*, reread the parts of *Book the First* where Kate DiCamillo uses images of light.

The light was shining onto the ceiling in an oval of brilliance, and he was smiling up at the sight. (Despereaux's birth, p. 13)

He was staring at the light pouring in through the stained-glass windows of the castle. . . . "What is this thing? . . . Are we in heaven?" (Despereaux on tour with Furlough in the castle, just before he goes into the library, pp. 20–21)

"You will die, then, with a black heart." (Words of the Most Very Honored Head Mouse to Despereaux, just before the threadmaster ties the red thread of death, p. 56)

"Stories are light. Light is precious in a world so dark." (Words of Gregory, the jailer, to Despereaux, p. 81)

Engage children in a discussion about what they think light might mean in the story. Goodness? Beauty? What does dark mean? Does Despereaux really have a black heart? Let the children write a few sentences about what light means to them. Create a place in the classroom where you display children's writing.

BOOK THE SECOND: CHIAROSCURO



PLOT SUMMARY

Chiaroscuro, known as Roscuro, was born in the filth and darkness of the dungeon. But when Gregory lights a match, Roscuro is transformed. He does not turn away but looks directly at the exploding flame. Something about the light “dances” inside him, and he develops an unusual interest in illumination of all kinds. He thinks that light gives life meaning, and from his dark place in the dungeon, he yearns for light. Unfortunately, Roscuro’s mentor, another rat, named Botticelli Remorso, prefers the darkness of suffering and evil. He persuades Roscuro to torture prisoners. After betraying a prisoner who sold his daughter, Roscuro desperately craves the light, and he escapes to the upstairs of the castle. Observing a banquet from his perch in a chandelier, Roscuro falls into the Queen’s soup, and she dies of fright. Princess Pea looks at the rat with disgust, which breaks Roscuro’s heart. He sinks into darkness again and vows revenge, but not before he steals “something beautiful,” the Queen’s royal soup spoon. The King outlaws soup, as well as spoons and bowls and kettles.



PREREADING QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES FOR *BOOK THE SECOND*

1. In your town or city, what kinds of things are done in the dark and in the light? On the chalkboard, write headings for such categories as work, school, entertainment, play. Encourage children to list both good and bad things that happen under each category.
2. Have a brief discussion about rules and laws. Do children think all rules are good for everyone, or do some rules seem ridiculous? Do some rules keep everyone safe?
3. Compare poems on mice and rats. “Mice” by Rose Fyleman is available in many anthologies. Compare this with a verse from Robert Browning’s “The Pied Piper of Hamelin.”

Rats!

*They fought the dogs and the cats,
And bit the babies in the cradles,
And ate the cheeses out of the vats,
And licked the soup from the cooks’ own ladles,
Split open the kegs of salted sprats,
Made nests inside men’s Sunday bats,
And even spoiled the women’s chats
By drowning their speaking
With shrieking and squeaking
In fifty different sharps and flats.*

Ask children to recall the mice and rats in *Book the First* of Despereaux’s story. Were all the mice nice? Tell children that they will be meeting two rats in *Book the Second: Chiaroscuro*.



VOCABULARY

- chiaroscuro**, p. 86
- inordinate**, p. 88
- illumination**, p. 88
- confessor**, p. 90
- obsession**, p. 95
- solace**, p. 99
- chandelier**, p. 106
- revelation**, p. 109
- watercress**, p. 110
- dire**, p. 117
- consequences**, p. 120



APPLYING THE STRATEGY OF MAKING CONNECTIONS TO *BOOK THE SECOND*



Objective: Use the strategy of making connections.

Preparation: Make copies of the activity sheet on page 17 of this guide.

DIRECT INSTRUCTION

Remind children that the class will be making the same kinds of connections for the second section of Despereaux's story as they did for the first.

MAKE A CHART

On a chalkboard or bulletin board, make a chart like the one on page 3 of this guide. Remind children that it's the same kind of chart you used for *Book the First*.

READ ALOUD

Read aloud *Book the Second: Chiaroscuro*. As with the first Book, you may read the entire section before you begin to model connections or read a few chapters at a time and model connections for each group of chapters.

MODEL THE CONNECTIONS

Choose places in the story that relate to yourself, to your world, and to another text. Read the selections aloud and tell students how you connect. Write notes about your connections on the chart.

Examples: (see page 13 for more examples)

And the flame exploded around him and danced inside him. . . . He was always, in the darkness of the dungeon, on the lookout for light. The light transforms Roscuro in an instant. I remember the moment I figured out how the letters actually made words and I could read. It was a huge discovery, and my life is still filled with reading and writing. **(text-self)** pp. 86–88

"Mice are nothing but little packages of blood and bones, afraid of everything. They are despicable, laughable." Botticelli's words, persuading Roscuro that all mice are bad. That's like when people tell you to dislike someone who is different — Palestinians and Israelis, Serbs and Croats, and many, many more. **(text-world)** p. 90

"Oh," Roscuro said. "it is such a lovely game, such a lovely game! And it is absolutely chock-full of meaning." Botticelli's words to Roscuro when he is persuading him to torture a prisoner. Botticelli reminds me of Liliandra in *The Gold-Threaded Dress* by Carolyn Marsden. Liliandra likes to feel powerful, and she persuades Oy, a very nice Thai girl, to bring her best traditional dress to school and to let other girls try it on in the schoolyard. Oy gets into a lot of trouble. **(text-text)** p. 90

GUIDED PRACTICE

Distribute the activity sheets and let children write notes about their connections to *Book the Second: Chiaroscuro*. If necessary, read

parts of the story again. Let children share their connections. Write notes about their thoughts on your chart on the chalkboard.

REVIEW AND CLOSURE

To reinforce the three kinds of connections, read aloud the notes in each column on your chalkboard. Tell children that they will be learning another strategy to help understanding as they continue to read *The Tale of Despereaux* but that they should remember to practice their connections strategy on other books they read on their own.



TIME TO WRITE

Roscuro Light and Dark

From *Book the Second: Chiaroscuro*, choose a few short passages that associate light with good things, and dark with bad. Read the passages aloud.

"Filthy rat," said Gregory. "You black-souled thing. Gregory has had it with you rats." (Gregory, the jailer, talking to Roscuro and scolding him for chewing on the rope. p. 87)

"You, my friend, are a rat. Exactly. Yes. Evil. Prisoners. Rats. Suffering. It all fits together so neatly, so sweetly. Oh, it is a lovely world, a lovely, dark world." (Words of Remorso Botticelli just after he has hypnotized Roscuro and persuaded him to torture a prisoner. p. 91)

"Who cares about the light? Your obsession with it is tiresome. Listen. We are rats. Rats. We do not like the light. We are about darkness. We are about suffering" (Remorso Botticelli's remark after Roscuro is entranced by the light behind the red tablecloth and decides to go upstairs. p. 95)

"I will have something beautiful. I will have a crown of my own. . . . And I will have revenge." (Roscuro's words just after the princess's look banishes him and he steals a spoon. p. 116)

Engage children in a discussion about how dark and light apply to Roscuro. Is he really a "black-souled thing"? Does Roscuro really enjoy torturing the prisoner? Is Roscuro attracted to the same kind of light as Despereaux? Do you think he will enjoy making the princess suffer? Is Roscuro good or bad? Is he the same as Botticelli? What do you think will happen to Roscuro later in the story? Let the children write a few sentences about the mixture of good and bad in Roscuro. Be sure to let children draw pictures. Display children's writing.

INTRODUCING THE STRATEGY OF QUESTIONING



Objective: Learn the strategy of six kinds of questions

Preparation: Make copies of the activity sheet on page 18 of this guide

DIRECT INSTRUCTION

Explain to children that proficient readers ask questions while they are reading. Tell them that good readers write their questions down and that answering them, often through sharing with others, helps understanding. Describe the six kinds of questions, writing the code letters as you instruct.

- A** for a question that is answered directly in the text.
- BK** for a question that needs background knowledge to answer.
 - I** for inference, a question that can be answered from hints and clues in the text.
- D** for a question that needs discussion with the teacher or other students
- R** for a question that can be answered only with the help and information from research in the library or on the Internet.
- C** for a question that is confusing, one that doesn't seem to have a clear answer.

MAKE A CHART

On a chalkboard or bulletin board, make a chart like the one below. Explain to children that they will be asking questions first and then will learn together how to code them. Tell the class that they will revisit the picture book *Weslandia* to learn the strategy of questioning.

A nswered	B ackground K nowledge	I nferred	D iscussion	R esearch	C onfused

READ ALOUD

Read aloud *Weslandia* by Paul Fleischman.

MODEL THE QUESTIONS

Choose six places in *Weslandia* that are useful for demonstrating the six kinds of questions. Present each question and read aloud relevant places in the text. Then ask the class to help you code the questions. Write notes about your question in the appropriate column on the chart on the chalkboard.

Examples: (see page 13 for more examples)

Why is Wesley an outcast? **(A)** On page 5, the answer is directly in

the text. *He alone in his town disliked pizza and soda. . . . He found professional football stupid. . . . He'd refused to shave half his head, the hairstyle worn by all the other boys.*

Are there many boys and girls like Wesley? **(BK)** No answer directly in the text. Children have to think about their own towns and about their own experience with children who think and feel differently from others.

Are Wesley's parents helpful and supportive? **(I)** There are clues in the text, so the answer can be inferred. *"He sticks out. . . . Like a nose,"* his parents say on page 4. And on page 5, the author says Wesley's father tried to bribe him with five dollars to get a haircut like the other boys. So no, his parents would really like him to be just like everyone else.

Would most boys join a "civilization" like the one Wesley creates? **(D)** This is a matter of opinion, so requires discussion. The narrator says on the last page of the book, *"He had no shortage of friends."* But maybe not everyone liked Wesley's new way of living.

What is a civilization? **(R)** Dictionary and encyclopedia, as well as some research about very early civilizations, are needed to answer this question.

Are people like Wesley really happy? **(C)** No clear answer and the author never says whether Wesley's family and community liked Weslandia or whether he kept it going as he grew up.

GUIDED PRACTICE

Distribute the activity sheets and let children write their own questions. When they have finished writing, invite them to share their questions with the class. As questions are read aloud, ask students to help you classify them **A, BK, I, D, R,** or **C**. Write good questions in the correct column on your chart. Instruct children to write the appropriate letter beside the question on their activity sheet. Remember that some questions may fit into more than one category.

REVIEW AND CLOSURE

Read aloud the questions in each column on your chart. Review the code as you read. Tell students that they will be using the strategy of questioning for the next two Books of *The Tale of Despereaux*.

BOOK THE THIRD:

GOR! THE TALE OF MIGGERY SOW



PLOT SUMMARY

When Miggery Sow was six, her mother died, and her father sold her to a man named Uncle, who makes Mig work very hard and who delivers painful clouts to her ears. On Miggery's seventh birthday, she sees the royal family and decides she wants to be a princess. Five years later, when soup is outlawed, a soldier enforcing the law sets Miggery free from her slavery. She is taken to the castle, where she works as a servant and has a hard time learning the tasks. But she does meet the princess. When Cook gives Mig the job of bringing Gregory, the jailer, his dinner, Roscuro escapes to the upstairs castle in Miggery's skirt. By promising her that she will become a princess, Roscuro convinces Miggery to aid him in his plan for revenge . . . to make the Princess Pea suffer.



PREREADING QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES FOR *BOOK THE THIRD*

1. Discuss what parents are obligated to provide for children, and what "extras" are provided by the parents of the students.
2. Ask students if they have ever wanted something so badly that they were willing to do something they shouldn't to get it. Do they know anyone who has done something bad to get something they want?
3. In the library, look up castles in encyclopedias and nonfiction books. Make a sketch of a castle or floor plans of the castle of the Kingdom of Dor. *Castle Diary* by Richard Platt is a helpful book.



VOCABULARY

- inquire**, p. 128
- clout**, p. 128
- cauliflower**, p. 129
- vicious circle**, p. 130
- innumerable**, p. 139
- curtsy**, p. 145
- crisis of confidence**, p. 146
- reputation**, p. 153
- descended**, p. 157
- olfactory**, p. 158
- ominous**, p. 160
- ferocious**, p. 163
- tragic**, p. 167
- aspirations**, p. 169
- passionately**, p. 171

APPLYING THE STRATEGY OF QUESTIONING TO *BOOK THE THIRD*

Objective: Use the strategy of questioning.

Preparation: Make copies of the activity sheet on page 18 of this guide.

DIRECT INSTRUCTION

Explain again the six kinds of questions :

- A** for a question that is answered directly in the text
- BK** for a question that needs background knowledge
- I** for inference, a question answered from clues in the text
- D** for a question that needs discussion
- R** for a question that can be answered only with help and information from research in the library or on the Internet
- C** for a question that is confusing

MAKE A CHART

On a chalkboard or bulletin board, make a chart like the one on page 8 of this guide.

READ ALOUD

First, remind students that it's a good idea to ask questions *while* they are reading. Encourage them to raise their hands when they have questions. Tell them you will write the questions on your chart. Then, read aloud *Book the Third: Gor! The Tale of Miggery Sow*, stopping to field questions as you read.

MODEL THE QUESTIONS

Choose places in the story that will help students understand the strategy of questioning. Present the questions, and for each one, explain how you code it. Write the question in the appropriate column on your chart.

Examples: (see page 13 for more examples)

What does Miggery really want? **(I)** "*Lord, child . . . and who is asking you what you want?*" (pp. 126–127)

Why does Mig's father sell her? **(D) (C)** "*She squeezed Mig's hand once, twice, and then she died, leaving Mig alone with her father, who . . . sold his daughter into service for a handful of cigarettes, a red tablecloth, and a ben.*" (p. 126)

What is the vicious circle Miggery is trapped in? **(A)** "*The less Mig heard, the less she understood, the more things she did wrong; and the more things she did wrong, the more clouts to the ear she received, and the less she heard.*" (pp. 128–130)

What is a tapestry? **(R)** "*I am making a history of the world, my world,*" said the Pea, "in tapestry." (p. 149)

What are aspirations? **(BK) (I) (R)** Roscuro smiled again, displaying a mouthful of sharp yellow teeth. "*Aspirations,*" my dear, *are those things that would make a serving girl wish to be a princess.*" (p. 170)

GUIDED PRACTICE

Distribute the activity sheets. Let children reread parts of Book the Third and write their questions. When they have finished writing, bring the class together and have questions read aloud. As each question is read, invite the class to suggest an appropriate code. Remember that a question can sometimes be coded in more than one way. During the discussion, write some of the questions on your chart.

REVIEW AND CLOSURE

From your chart on the chalkboard, choose six questions that are good examples of the question code **A, BK, I, D, R,** and **C.** Read them aloud and explain the reasoning for each kind of question.



TIME TO WRITE

Seek the Light with Miggery Sow

At this stage students have already done some thinking and writing about the image of light and how it relates to beauty and to issues of good and evil. To help children *seek the light* with Miggery Sow, choose a few places in *Book the Third* that relate to previous themes and read them aloud.

Looking at the royal family had awakened some deep and slumbering need in her; it was as if a small candle had been lit in her interior, sparked to life by the brilliance of the king and the queen and the princess. (Narrator describing Mig's reaction to royalty. p. 134)

This hope, this wish, that she would see the princess again, was lodged deep in Meg's heart; lodged firmly right next to it was the hope that she, Miggery Sow could someday become a princess herself. (Narrator describing Mig's deep want and longing, years after she first sees the princess, pp. 139–140)

Sent to clean a room, she stood, open-mouthed and delighted, admiring the gold walls and floors and tapestries, exclaiming over and over again, "Gor, ain't it pretty? Gor, ain't it something, then?" and did no cleaning at all. (Narrator describing Meg's reactions to the beauty of the upstairs castle, p. 153)

Engage children in a discussion about the three characters they know so far and what light seems to mean to each one. Is Miggery's attraction to light more like Roscuro's or Despereaux's? How are Mig's surroundings at the castle different from those of her former life? After the discussion, let children write their thoughts about Mig and her longing for light. Display writing and pictures with students' work on the first two Books.

BOOK THE FOURTH: RECALLED TO THE LIGHT



PLOT SUMMARY

Despereaux escapes from the dungeon with Miggery when Gregory places him in a napkin on his dirty food tray. Despereaux overhears Roscuro's plan and vows to save Princess Pea. The mouse is discovered by Cook, who orders Miggery to kill him. But Miggery cuts off his tail instead. Miggery and Roscuro kidnap Princess Pea and take her to the dungeon. Unfortunately, Despereaux cannot foil the plan because he sleeps too late. On the way to the King, Despereaux encounters the Mouse Council and his father. He forgives his father. The King is no help, so Despereaux decides to rescue the princess himself. The threadmaster gives Despereaux a needle for protection and thread to find his way out of the dungeon. Cook makes up with Despereaux and gives him watercress soup for sustenance. Despereaux gives himself courage by telling himself his story. When Despereaux meets Botticelli, the rat offers to take him to the princess, who is still with Miggery and Roscuro. Of course it is a trap. Miggery has found out that Roscuro never meant for her to be a princess. She joins with Princess Pea, who stops Despereaux from killing Roscuro. Roscuro is forgiven and allowed to go upstairs as he pleases and to eat soup. Despereaux and Princess Pea become fast friends who have adventures together.



PREREADING QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES FOR *BOOK THE FOURTH*

1. What brings you comfort? Make a list of the things students come up with.
2. What does it mean to "hold a grudge"? How does it feel? What can you do about it?
3. Ask children to think of some everyday situations when they have been offended or hurt and really wanted to forgive someone. Write situations on the chalkboard. Then ask children to role-play characters in an impromptu minidrama.



VOCABULARY

- slick**, p. 176
- skedaddle**, p. 177
- covert**, p. 184
- divine comeuppance**, p. 185
- defiant**, p. 193
- ignorant**, p. 194
- dappled**, p. 197
- molding**, p. 204
- forgiveness**, p. 207
- cascading**, p. 210
- quest**, p. 218
- inspiring**, p. 227
- anxiously**, p. 233
- maneuvering**, p. 237
- devious**, p. 237
- gnarled**, p. 238
- surrender**, p. 241
- infringe**, p. 249
- consigned**, p. 253
- torment**, p. 264
- access**, p. 266

APPLYING THE STRATEGY OF QUESTIONING TO *BOOK THE FOURTH*



Objective: Use the strategy of questioning.

Preparation: Make copies of the activity sheet on page 18 of this guide.

DIRECT INSTRUCTION

Review the six kinds of questions.

MAKE A CHART

On a chalkboard or bulletin board, make a chart like the one on page 8 of this guide.

READ ALOUD

Remind students that proficient readers ask questions while they are reading. Tell them to raise their hands when they have questions and that you will write them on your chart. Then read aloud *Book the Fourth: Recalled to the Light*. Stop to field questions as you read.

MODEL THE QUESTIONS

Choose places in the story that will help students understand the strategy of questioning. For each question you present, explain how you code it, and then write the question in the appropriate place on your chart.

Examples: (see page 13 for more examples)

What was Roscuro's plan for revenge, and what flaw did Miggery see in the plan? **(A)** *We go into the princess's room and she will be sleeping . . . We take her to the deep downs. . . . to keep the glittering, glowing, laughing princess there in the dark.* (pp. 183–187)

Why is it important to Roscuro that the princess recognize him? **(I)** *"No," she said, lowering her head, "I don't know you." But, reader, she did know him.* (pp. 191–193)

Were you surprised that Despereaux's father realized he was wrong and that Despereaux forgave him? Why does it make Despereaux feel better? **(D)** *"I was wrong. What I did was wrong. . . . Forgive me," Lester said.* (pp. 207–208)

What is a quest? Name other books or movies that are about a quest. **(R) (BK)** *"Who am I to stand in the way of a quest?" he said. "Roll her away."* (p. 218)

Why are some people's hearts very dark while other people's are full of light? **(C) (D)** *Like most hearts, it was complicated, shaded with dark and dappled with light.* (p. 197)

What makes you really happy? Does the story have a happy ending for everyone? **(BK) (D)** *But the question you want answered, I know, is did they live happily ever after?* (pp. 266–269)

GUIDED PRACTICE

Distribute the activity sheets. Let children reread parts of *Book the Fourth* and develop their questions. When students have finished writing, let them read questions aloud. Invite the class to help you categorize them according to the code. Write some of the questions on your chart on the chalkboard.

REVIEW AND CLOSURE

Choose six questions that are good examples of **A, BK, I, D, R,** and **C** questions. Read them aloud and explain the reasoning for each question.



TIME TO WRITE

Fight for the Light with Despereaux

By now, students have already been thinking and writing about light, dark, and the related themes of wanting, forgiveness, and goodness of heart. Before beginning the final piece of writing, ask students to revisit Despereaux's declaration of his mission. *There is somebody who loves me. . . . And I love her and that is the only thing that matters.* (p. 48) Then choose some passages from *Book the Fourth* that are related to love and light.

He dreamt of the stained-glass windows and the dark of the dungeon. In Despereaux's dream, the light came to life, brilliant and glorious, in the shape of a knight swinging a sword. The knight fought the dark. (Despereaux's dream, p. 181)

Love . . . is a powerful, wonderful, ridiculous thing, capable of moving mountains. (Narrator's comment, speaking of Despereaux's chances of succeeding in his quest, p. 223)

All I wanted was some light. That is why I brought the princess here, really for some beauty . . . some light of my own. (Roscuro, having a change of heart, p. 263)

Invite students to join in a discussion. Was Despereaux's quest successful? Did the strength of his love help him? Did his love and determination change anyone's heart? Teach the letter form and ask students to write a letter giving their thoughts and opinions. Students could begin "Dear Readers," and tell their classmates what they think. Or they could write a letter directly to Despereaux.

EXAMPLES FOR CONNECTIONS AND QUESTIONING STRATEGIES

CONNECTIONS

TEXT TO SELF

He was listening, with his big ears, to the sweet sound that no other mouse seemed to hear. (pages 18–19) Despereaux is different because he can hear and smell music. When I hear music, I feel it inside my body and have to move to the beat.

Love is ridiculous. But love is also wonderful. And powerful. And Despereaux's love for the Princess Pea would prove, in time, to be all those these things: powerful, wonderful, and ridiculous. (page 32) Some people would say that it's ridiculous how much I love my dog, but he gives me what I don't get from people: love with no arguments, just total adoration. This is a powerful form of love.

Despereaux shuddered. His own brother was delivering him to the dungeon. (page 69) My sister and I fight, but we would NEVER betray each other like Furlough betrays Despereaux.

TEXT TO WORLD

Now, while Despereaux did not indulge in many of the normal behaviors of mice, he did adhere to one of the most basic and elemental of all mice rules: Do not ever, under any circumstances, reveal yourself to humans. But . . . the music, the music. The music made him lose his head and act against the few small mouse instincts he was in possession of, and because of this he was revealed. (pages 27–28) Some teenagers dye their hair and pierce their tongues and noses. Can you think of other examples of non-conformist behavior?

"He must be punished. He must be brought up before the tribunal." (pages 35–36) Going before the mouse tribunal must be like going before a jury in a courtroom when accused of a crime.

"I would like very much to torture a prisoner," said Roscuro. "I would like to make someone suffer." (page 90) Botticelli's locket hypnotizes Roscuro and convinces him to give up seeking light and to torture someone instead. Sometimes people's voices can sway you into doing something you wouldn't normally do if you really thought carefully about it.

TEXT TO TEXT

"He's the smallest mouse I've ever seen," said his aunt Florence. "It's ridiculous. No mouse has ever, ever been this small." (page 16) Despereaux reminds me of the book *Stuart Little*. Both heroes are mice, and they're both much smaller than everyone around them.

"Because you, mouse, can tell Gregory a story. Stories are light. Light is precious in a world so dark. Begin at the beginning. Tell Gregory a story. Make some light." . . . It was in this way that Despereaux was saved. (page 81) A story can save Despereaux. I remember another person who saved her life with stories—Sheherazade of the *1001 Arabian Nights*.

Every action, reader, no matter how small, has a consequence. For instance, the young Roscuro gnawed on Gregory the jailer's rope, and because he gnawed on the rope, a match was lit in his face, and because a match was lit in his face, his soul was set afire. (pages 117–118) Cause and effect are so important in this book. Each incident drives the plot. It's like the story of "The Old Woman and Her Pig."

QUESTIONING

A (ANSWERED)

"Of all the good-for-nothings I have encountered," shouted Cook, "surely you are the worst, the most cauliflower-eared, the good-for-nothing-est. There's only one place left for you. The dungeon." (pages 153–154) How did Miggery Sow end up in the dungeon?

The king, as I have mentioned, had several faults. He was nearsighted. He made ridiculous, unreasonable, difficult-to-enforce laws. . . But there was one extraordinary, wonderful, admirable thing about the king (pages 210–211) What are King Phillip's strengths and weaknesses? Can you think of examples of other leaders who have both strengths and weaknesses? (D)

BK (BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE)

"I would like . . .," said Mig shyly. "I wish to be one of them princesses." (pages 136–137) How does one become a princess? Why does Miggery want to become a princess? (D)

"Miss Miggery, my dear, I do not want to appear too forward so early in our acquaintance, but may I inquire, am I right in ascertaining that you have aspirations?" (page 169) What are aspirations?

I (INFERRED)

"How old were you when she died?" "Bold was I?" said Mig, taking a step back, away from the princess. (page 149) How do you know that Miggery's hearing is bad?

And he was crying now. He couldn't help it. "Please. The princess." "Tears!" shouted the rats. "We smell tears, mousie, we do." "Please!" shouted Despereaux. (page 24) How does the text on page 249 illustrate Despereaux's name?

D (DISCUSSION)

Reader, I am pleased to tell you that the Pea was a kind person, and perhaps more important, she was empathetic. (page 198) When have you felt empathy for someone?

That night, Despereaux rolled the thread from the threadmaster's lair, along the innumerable hallways and down three flights of stairs. (pages 222–223) Have you ever had to do something that seemed overwhelming and impossible but really important?

R (RESEARCH)

This happened often enough that it interrupted the proper workings of Mig's olfactory senses. (page 158) What does "olfactory" mean?

"My name, little friend, is Botticelli Remorso." (page 244) What does "remorse" mean? Why did the author make it Botticelli's last name? (I)

C (CONFUSED)

Despereaux put his head up in the air. He sniffed. He sniffed some more. He had never in his life smelled anything so lovely, so inspiring (page 227) Why did the smell of the soup inspire Despereaux?

"And times are terrible. And when times are terrible, soup is the answer. Don't it smell like the answer?" (pages 231–232) How is soup the answer?

CHARACTER EDUCATION

Discuss with students how Kate DiCamillo helps us to understand the characters in *The Tale of Despereaux*. She tells us how they look, what they say, what they do, and what others say about them. On your chalkboard, write the six qualities of

character listed below. Then invite students to give their thoughts about how different characters in *The Tale of Despereaux* exemplify these qualities.

TRUSTWORTHINESS

Be honest:

What did Botticelli do that was the opposite of honesty?

Having the courage to do the right thing:

How did Despereaux show this in *Book the Fourth*?

Don't deceive, cheat, or steal:

How did Botticelli and Roscuro deceive the prisoners?

Be loyal and stand by your family:

How did the following characters betray their families?

Despereaux's father? Despereaux's brother Furlough? Miggery's father? Miggery?

RESPECT

Treat others with respect:

How did Uncle show a lack of respect for Miggery?

Be tolerant of differences:

Was the Mouse Council tolerant or intolerant of Despereaux's differences?

Deal peacefully with anger, insult, and disagreements:

How did Princess Pea manage to get out of danger without hurting anyone? How did Roscuro deal with his anger?

RESPONSIBILITY

Persevere:

What obstacles did Despereaux have to surmount in *Book the Fourth*?

Think before you act. Consider the consequences:

Did the king think through his outlawing of soup? Who else in the book acted before they thought about consequences?

FAIRNESS

Be open-minded and listen to others:

Many of the problems in the book start with characters being narrow-minded and prejudiced. What are some examples of this?

Don't blame others carelessly:

Was it fair for Roscuro to blame the princess? Was it fair for the king to banish Despereaux from the princess?

CARING

Be kind:

How do the following characters show acts of kindness in the book? Gregory? The Cook? Miggery? Despereaux?

Be compassionate and show you care:

How did Botticelli teach Roscuro to use compassion to torture the prisoners?

Forgive others:

Why did Despereaux forgive his father? Would you?

Help people in need:

How did the following people help others in need? The Threadmaster? Gregory? Cook? Despereaux? Miggery?

CITIZENSHIP:

Cooperate:

How did the King, Despereaux, and Roscuro cooperate at the end of the story?

Obey laws and rules:

How can you deal with unfair laws and rules such as the Mouse Council's rules about mouse behavior and the King's law against soup?



CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

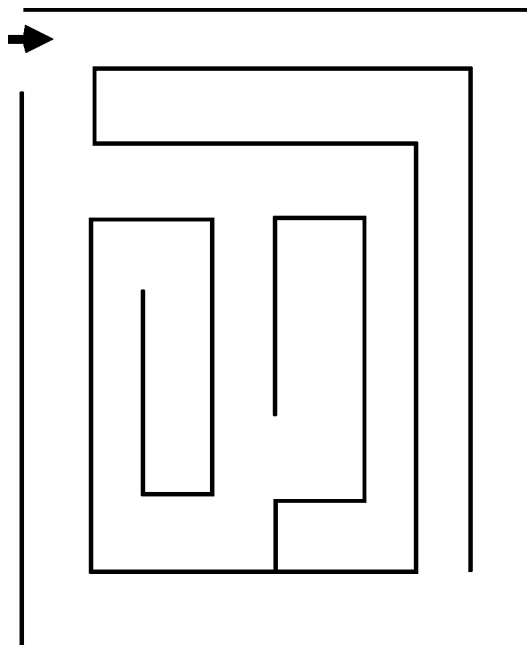


USING *THE TALE OF DESPEREAUX* IN MATH, SCIENCE, AND ART



MATH

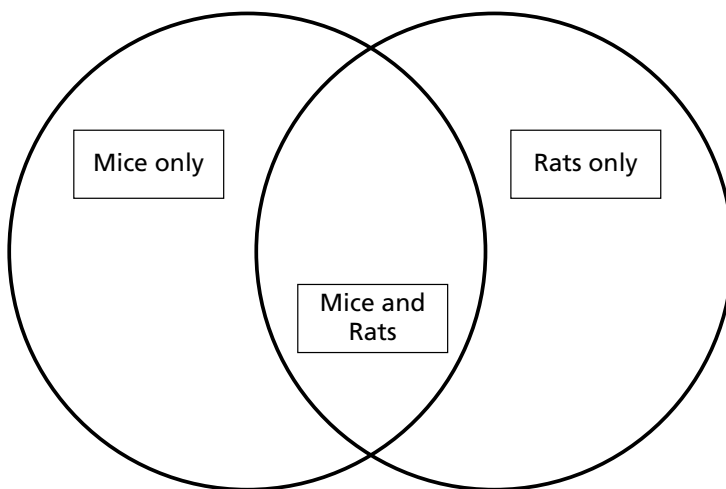
- Cook's watercress soup provides a lively way of reviewing fractions: concepts of whole, half, and one fourth. A delicious recipe for watercress soup can be found at: http://www.foodstyles.com/Soups/watercress_soup.htm (be sure to use a capital "S" in /"Soups"/). Suggest that students make the soup with a parent or caregiver. Ask them to bring samples for a Despereaux lunch at school.
- Design mazes on graph paper. Let children imagine they are finding their way in the dungeon. Suggest that they show the positions of characters from *The Tale of Despereaux* during their time in the dungeon. Display students' mazes in the classroom.
- In the schoolyard or on a basketball court, let children draw mazes and try to find their way through.
- For more examples of how to use mazes for math, visit the website of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics: standards.nctm.org.



SCIENCE

- In *The Tale of Despereaux*, mice and rats seem quite different in their behavior, but they also have some qualities in common. Let children find out what the scientific similarities and differences are.
- Visit the school library. In pairs, small groups, or individually, let students do research and make notes on both mice and rats. You may assign specific topics to different groups: physical appearance and characteristics, habitat, food, enemies, and habits (diurnal and nocturnal). Ask one group or pair to find out what animals make up the rest of the rodent family.
- Bring students together in the classroom. Make a Venn diagram on the chalkboard. As children volunteer information they have collected, write it on your diagram.

Venn Diagram





List all the characters on the board. Explain that readers know about characters by what they say, look like, do, what others say, and what the author says. Write these on the board. Choose a minor character from *The Tale of Despereaux*. (Choosing a

minor character leaves the major characters for the students to do.) Verbalize what the character is like. Use specific details from the text for each area. For instance, the brainstorming on Antoinette might look like this:

Antoinette

Looks like:

- vain because she asks for her makeup right after childbirth

Says:

- French because she uses French words
- Pessimistic because she says Despereaux will die shortly after birth, and she gives her son such a sad name

Does:

- faints when Despereaux was led to the dungeon to put the attention on herself. Shows she is self-centered.

Others say:

- The narrator says she is not a good mother because Antoinette says "adieu" instead of "take me instead."

Tell children to choose a character. Then go back to the text and write words that pertain to the character. That's where they'll find evidence of what the author says. In Antoinette's case, the author says on p. 12 that "disappointment" is one of her favorite words. Let children draw the character on an unlined sheet of paper or construction paper. Use the words as a "frame," as seen in the picture at right by a third-grade student. Have children talk through their visualization with a partner. Remember to display children's art.



A portrait of Princess Pea by Sophie Duncan from the Arcadia Neighborhood Learning Center.

MY CONNECTIONS

1. Is there something or someone in the story that's like me? (**text-self**)

2. Are there people in the story who remind me of people I know? Are things happening in the story that are like things going on all around me —in my family, among my school friends and neighbors, in what I learn from the news? (**text-world**)

3. Is there someone or something in this story that's like another story I've read? (**text-text**)

MY QUESTIONS

Page	Question	Code

A—for a question that is answered later in the text.
BK—for a question that is answered by your background knowledge.
I—for a question that is answered by an inference from the text.

D—for a question that requires discussion with someone else.
R—for a question that needs research to answer.
C—for a question that signals confusion.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR



KATE DiCAMILLO

Kate DiCamillo credits one friend's son for inspiring her extraordinary new book, *The Tale of Despereaux: Being the Story of a Mouse, a Princess, Some Soup, and a Spool of Thread*. As she tells it, "A few years ago, my best friend's son asked me if I would write a story for him. Well, Luke Bailey, three years later, here is the story of what happened to your exceptionally large-eared, unlikely hero."

The Tale of Despereaux is Kate DiCamillo's third novel. Her first, *Because of Winn-Dixie*, received an astonishing array of awards, including a Newbery Honor. Her second novel, the National Book Award finalist *The Tiger Rising*, is "considerably darker" than *Because of Winn-Dixie*, she notes, "but there's light and redemption in it."

Kate DiCamillo was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, but moved to Florida when she was five years old. She currently lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where she faithfully writes two pages a day, five days a week. "E. B. White said, 'All that I hope to say in books, all that I ever hope to say, is that I love the world,'" she says. "That's the way I feel too."



Because of Winn-Dixie
HC: 0-7636-0776-2
PB: 0-7636-1605-2



The Tiger Rising
HC: 0-7636-0911-0
PB: 0-7636-1898-5



TIMOTHY BASIL ERING

In his illustrations for *The Tale of Despereaux: Being the Story of a Mouse, a Princess, Some Soup, and a Spool of Thread*, Tim Ering steers his extraordinary talent in the direction of a classical style—with a contemporary flair. Says the illustrator, "My mother may have been a mouse in her past life, as I watched her save and help so many mice in our house while I was growing up. The illustrations I've done of Despereaux Tilling are, in a way, my tribute to her."

The Tale of Despereaux is Tim Ering's third book for Candlewick Press. He is both author and illustrator of *The Story of Frog Belly Rat Bone*, his first picture book—the tale of a boy who finds strange, specklike treasures, and the unforgettable creature who watches over them while they grow. For Adam Rapp's young adult novel *33 Snowfish*, Tim Ering created not only the haunting cover image, but also interior drawings that represent notebook sketches of a troubled teenage character.

Tim Ering's artwork has appeared in books, magazines, theater sets, private murals, and fine art galleries. The invariably paint-splattered artist lives and works in Somerville, Massachusetts.



The Story of Frog Belly Rat Bone
HC: 0-7636-1382-7



33 Snowfish
HC: 0-7636-1874-8

EXCERPT FROM *THE TALE OF DESPEREAUX*

THIS STORY BEGINS within the walls of a castle, with the birth of a mouse. A small mouse. The last mouse born to his parents and the only one of his litter to be born alive.

"Where are my babies?" said the exhausted mother when the ordeal was through. "Show to me my babies."

The father mouse held the one small mouse up high.

"There is only this one," he said. "The others are dead."

"*Mon Dieu*, just the one mouse baby?"

"Just the one. Will you name him?"

"All of that work for nothing," said the mother. She sighed. "It is so sad. It is such the disappointment." She was a French mouse who had arrived at the castle long ago in the luggage of a visiting French diplomat. "Disappointment" was one of her favorite words. She used it often.

"Will you name him?" repeated the father.

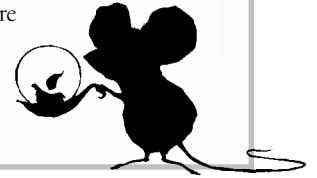
"Will I name him? Will I name him? Of course, I will name him, but he will only die like the others. Oh, so sad.

Oh, such the tragedy."

The mouse mother held a handkerchief to her nose and then waved it in front of her face. She sniffed. "I will name him. Yes. I will name this mouse Despereaux, for all the sadness, for the many despairs in this place. Now, where is my mirror?"

Her husband handed her a small shard of mirror. The mouse mother, whose name was Antoinette, looked at her reflection and gasped aloud. "Toul  se," she said to one of her sons, "get for me my makeup bag. My eyes are a fright."

While Antoinette touched up her eye makeup, the mouse father put Despereaux down on a bed made of blanket scraps. The April sun, weak but determined, shone through a castle window and from there squeezed itself through a small hole in the wall and placed one golden finger on the little mouse.



Reviews and Accolades for *The Tale of Despereaux*!

★ *"The author of Because of Winn-Dixie demonstrates her versatility. Reader, . . . I must tell you, you are in for a treat."*
—starred, Publishers Weekly

★ *"With a masterful hand, DiCamillo weaves four storylines together in a witty, suspenseful narrative that begs to be read aloud."*
—starred, School Library Journal

"A terrific, bravura performance."
—The New York Times

★ *"As soul stirring as it is delicious. . . . A classic fairy tale, rich and satisfying."*
—starred, Booklist

★ *"A tale with twists and turns . . . and all the ingredients of an old-fashioned drama."* —starred, Kirkus Reviews



Winner of the 2004 Newbery Medal

A Booklist Editors' Choice for 2003
A 2003 Publishers Weekly Best Book of the Year

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