

4th Grade Lesson Plan –
Small Animals
Donna Hennessy

THE “TALE OF DESPEREAUX” & OUR CLASSROOM MICE

A BOOK, 2 MICE AND A CLASSROOM



Students will be learning to welcome new pet mice into the classroom. They will observe the mice while we read “The Tale of Despereaux” by Kate DiCamillo. Students will make connections and comparisons to the main character in the story, Despereaux (a small mouse) and our mice in the classroom. In addition, the class mice will help us to “see” the action while we read this delightful story of “a mouse, a princess, some soup, and a spool of thread.”

COMMON CORE STANDARD: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.1

REFER TO DETAILS AND EXAMPLES IN A TEXT WHEN EXPLAINING WHAT THE TEXT SAYS EXPLICITLY AND WHEN DRAWING INFERENCES FROM THE TEXT

Prior to getting our class mice, the class will do some research on their own about mice. Students will have a variety of books, magazines, and websites where they can obtain information about mice. Students will work individually to research and then we will come together at the end of the period to make a list of what was learned.

Students will learn how to care for the mice and to understand what mice do and what we would need to have in their habitat to make them happy and active members of our classroom.



COMMON CORE STANDARD: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3

DESCRIBE IN DEPTH A CHARACTER, SETTING, OR EVENT IN A STORY OR DRAMA, DRAWING ON SPECIFIC DETAILS IN THE TEXT (E.G., A CHARACTER'S THOUGHTS, WORDS, OR ACTIONS).

Shortly after purchasing our classroom mice and setting up their habitat, students will be reading the story of “The Tale of Despereaux” by Kate DiCamillo. The main character in the story is a mouse. Students will spend time each morning observing our class pets in order to understand how Kate DiCamillo describes Despereaux, the mouse.

In the first few chapters, the author describes Despereaux’s physical features (eyes, tail, coloring, etc.). Students will write the response in their journal to answer this question: “Compare Despereaux and his brothers and sisters to our pet mice. How are they the same and how are they different?”



COMMON CORE STANDARD: INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.7

MAKE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE TEXT OF A STORY OR DRAMA AND A VISUAL OR ORAL PRESENTATION OF THE TEXT, IDENTIFYING WHERE EACH VERSION REFLECTS SPECIFIC DESCRIPTIONS AND DIRECTIONS IN THE TEXT.

While reading “The Tale of Despereaux”, the author describes the way he moves (scampers, gnaws, twitches, etc.). Students will make connections between the author’s descriptions of Despereaux and the way our class mice behave.

In their writing journals, students will answer the question: “How does having mice in our classroom help me “see” the actions of Despereaux in the story?”



COMMON CORE STANDARD: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.4.4.B

READ GRADE-LEVEL PROSE AND POETRY ORALLY WITH ACCURACY, APPROPRIATE RATE, AND EXPRESSION ON SUCCESSIVE READINGS.

To help students with reading fluency, they will take turns reading to and listening to a partner. They will practice reading until they can read each paragraph with fluency and accuracy.

Students will take turns “reading to” our class mice. Our pets will especially like the parts where Despereaux falls in love with Princess Pea.



COMMON CORE STANDARD: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.1.A

INTRODUCE A TOPIC OR TEXT CLEARLY, STATE AN OPINION, AND CREATE AN ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE IN WHICH RELATED IDEAS ARE GROUPED TO SUPPORT THE WRITER'S PURPOSE.

Once students complete “The Tale of Despereaux”, they will come up with ideas to write an essay on this question: “If our class pet was in the story of “The Tale of Despereaux” instead of Despereaux, what things do you think would have been different in the story?”

They will introduce their topic, and come up with at least 3 ways the story would be different based on the personality of one of our class pets. They will support their ideas using evidence from their observations of that particular mouse. Their writing can also include drawings to support their ideas.



COMMON CORE STANDARD: THIS LESSON HAS INCLUDED STANDARDS IN READING AND WRITING THAT REQUIRES HIGHER LEVEL THINKING AND REASONING.

In conclusion, reading this delightful story and being able to compare the character Despereaux to our mice will create many different learning experiences for my fourth graders. I believe it will instill in them a love not only for our pets but for reading as well.

