



TEACHER'S PET PUBLICATIONS

LITPLAN TEACHER PACK™

for

Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH

based on the book by
Robert C. O'Brien

Written by
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert C. O'Brien

Robert C. O'Brien was the pen name for Robert Leslie Conly, an American author and journalist for National Geographic. Born January 11, 1918, he was the third of five children. Shortly after his birth, his well-educated Irish-Catholic family moved from Brooklyn, New York to Amityville, Long Island where he later attended parochial school. As a child, he suffered from illness and nervousness. Conly sought comfort from his childhood difficulties in his love of music. He was adept at singing and piano playing.

He had an interest in both music and literature. Conly studied for a time at Juilliard, but ultimately went on to receive his Bachelor of Arts in English at the University of Rochester. Eventually, he became a journalist and writer.

He married Sarah McCaslin in 1943. This marriage lasted until his death thirty years later. Their daughter, Jane Leslie Conly, later published two novels based upon her father's characters.

Conly died at the age of 55 on March 5, 1973 in Washington, D.C. His wife and daughter finished his final book based on Conly's notes and published under his pseudonym, Robert C. O'Brien.

In 1982, *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH* was made into an animated film, *The Secret of NIMH*.

Major Works

The Silver Crown (1968) *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH* (1971) *A Report from Group 17* (1972) *Z for Zachariah* (1975)

Awards

1972 Newbery Medal (*Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH*)

1976 Edgar Award from the Mystery Writers of American for Best Juvenile Mystery

INTRODUCTION *Mrs. Frisby And The Rats Of NIMH*

This LitPlan has been designed to develop students' reading, writing, thinking, and language skills through exercises and activities related to *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH*. It includes nineteen lessons, supported by extra resource materials.

The **introductory lesson** introduces students to animal rights and the pros and cons of using animals for testing. Following the introductory activity, students are given a transition to explain how the activity relates to the book they are about to read. Following the transition, students are given the materials they will be using during the unit. At the end of the lesson, students begin the pre-reading work for the first reading assignment.

The **reading assignments** are approximately twenty pages each; some are a little shorter while others are a little longer. Students have approximately 15 minutes of pre-reading work to do prior to each reading assignment. This pre-reading work involves reviewing the study questions for the assignment and doing some vocabulary work for 8 to 10 vocabulary words they will encounter in their reading.

The **study guide questions** are fact-based questions; students can find the answers to these questions right in the text. These questions come in two formats: short answer or multiple choice. The best use of these materials is probably to use the short answer version of the questions as study guides for students (since answers will be more complete), and to use the multiple choice version for occasional quizzes.

The **vocabulary work** is intended to enrich students' vocabularies as well as to aid in the students' understanding of the book. Prior to each reading assignment, students will complete a two-part worksheet for approximately 8 to 10 vocabulary words in the upcoming reading assignment. Part I focuses on students' use of general knowledge and contextual clues by giving the sentence in which the word appears in the text. Students are then to write down what they think the words mean based on the words' usage. Part II nails down the definitions of the words by giving students dictionary definitions of the words and having students match the words to the correct definitions based on the words' contextual usage. Students should then have an understanding of the words when they meet them in the text.

After each reading assignment, students will go back and formulate answers for the study guide questions. Discussion of these questions serves as a **review** of the most important events and ideas presented in the reading assignments.

After students complete reading the work, there is a **vocabulary review** lesson which pulls together all of the fragmented vocabulary lists for the reading assignments and gives students a review of all of the words they have studied.

Following the vocabulary review, a lesson is devoted to the **extra discussion questions/writing assignments**. These questions focus on interpretation, critical analysis, and personal response, employing a variety of thinking skills and adding to the students' understanding of the novel.

There is an **group theme project** in this unit. Students will break up into groups and create their ideal community just like the rats do in *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH*.

There are three **writing assignments** in this unit, each with the purpose of informing, persuading, or expressing personal opinions. In Writing Assignment #1, students compare and contrast a character from the story and its real life animal equivalent. In Writing Assignment #2, students write Nicodemus's memoirs about the adventures he encountered after leaving the Boniface

Estate but before settling on the farm. Finally, in Writing Assignment #3, students persuade the rat community to either support Jenner's argument or Nicodemus's.

There is a **non-fiction reading assignment**. Students must read non-fiction articles, books, etc. to gather information about their themes in our world today.

The **review lesson** pulls together all of the aspects of the unit. The teacher is given four or five choices of activities or games to use which all serve the same basic function of reviewing all of the information presented in the unit.

The **unit test** comes in two formats: multiple choice or short answer. As a convenience, two different tests for each format have been included. There is also an advanced short answer unit test for advanced students.

There are additional **support materials** included with this unit. The **Unit Resource Materials** section includes suggestions for an in-class library, crossword and word search puzzles related to the novel, and extra worksheets. There is a list of **bulletin board ideas** which gives the teacher suggestions for bulletin boards to go along with this unit. In addition, there is a list of **extra class activities** the teacher could choose from to enhance the unit or as a substitution for an exercise the teacher might feel is inappropriate for his/her class. **Answer keys** are located directly after the **reproducible student materials** throughout the unit. The **Vocabulary Resource Materials** section includes similar worksheets and games to reinforce the vocabulary words.

The **level** of this unit can be varied depending upon the criteria on which the individual assignments are graded, the teacher's expectations of his/her students in class discussions, and the formats chosen for the study guides, quizzes and test. If teachers have other ideas/activities they wish to use, they can usually easily be inserted prior to the review lesson.

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UNIT OBJECTIVES *Mrs. Frisby And The Rats Of NIMH*

1. Students will practice reading orally and silently.
2. Students will answer questions to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the main events and characters in *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH*.
3. Students will study vocabulary from the book to better understand the book and to enrich their own vocabularies.
4. Students will read aloud, report, and participate in large and small group discussions to improve their public speaking and personal interaction skills.
5. Students will create their own ideal communities and present their creation to the class through an oral presentation.
6. Students will work together in a cooperative group.
7. Students will read non-fiction text that relates to *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH* and will present it to the class.
8. The writing assignments in this unit are designed for several purposes:
 - a. To check and increase students reading comprehension.
 - b. To make students think about the ideas presented by the novel
 - c. To encourage logical thinking
 - d. To provide an opportunity to practice good grammar and improve students' use of the English language.
 - e. To encourage students' creativity

READING ASSIGNMENTS *Mrs. Frisby And The Rats Of NIMH*

Date Assigned	Assignment	Completion Date
	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Assignment 1</i> The Sickness of Timothy Frisby & Mr. Ages</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Assignment 2</i> The Crow and the Cat, Mr. Fitzgibbon's Plow, & Five Days</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Assignment 3</i> A Favor from Jeremy, The Owl, & "Go to the Rats"</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Assignment 4</i> In the Rosebush, Brutus, & In the Library</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Assignment 5</i> Isabella, A Powder for Dragon, & The Marketplace</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Assignment 6</i> In the Cage & The Maze</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Assignment 7</i> A Lesson in Reading & The Air Ducts</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Assignment 8</i> The Boniface Estate, The Main Hall, & The Toy Tinker</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Assignment 9</i> Thorn Valley & Captured</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Assignment 10</i> Seven Dead Rats & Escape</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Assignment 11</i> At the Meeting, The Doctor, & Epilogue</p>	

UNIT OUTLINE *Mrs. Frisby And The Rats Of NIMH*

1 Introduction Group Theme Project	2 PVR 1	3 Study ?s 1 PVR 2 Conflict Types	4 Study ?s 2 PVR 3 Non-fiction Reading Assignment	5 Study ?s 3 PVR 4 Character Analysis
6 Study ?s 4 PVR 5	7 Study ?s 5 PVR 6 Writing Assignment #1	8 Study ?s 6 PVR 7	9 Study ?s 7 PVR 8 Writing Conferences	10 Study ?s 8 PVR 9 Writing Assignment #2
11 Study ?s 9 PVR 10	12 Study ?s 10 PVR 11 Writing Conferences	13 Study ?s 11 Writing Assignment #3	14 Vocabulary Review	15 Extra Discussion Questions
16 Discussion of Non fiction Assignment	17 Presentation of Community Projects	18 Unit Review	19 Unit Test	

Key: P = Preview Study Questions V = Vocabulary Work R = Read

LESSON ONE

Objectives

1. To introduce *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH* unit
2. To discuss the pros and cons of using animals in laboratory tests
3. To write a paragraph expressing personal feelings regarding animal testing
4. To distribute books, study guides and other related materials
5. To introduce the Community Projects

Activity 1

Explain to students that they will be reading a book about rats who have been the subject of experiments in which they were injected with special serums that made them more advanced than other rats. In this activity, you will conduct a discussion about the pros and cons of using animals (such as mice, rats, and monkeys) in laboratory experiments. First, ask students to brainstorm why laboratories use animals in the first place. Then, create a T-chart on the board or on an overhead. Label the left-hand column pros and label the right-hand column cons. Give students sixty seconds to come up with at least one idea for each column. Then, as a class, fill in the T-chart on the board or overhead. You may want to have a student in the class keep a record of the T-chart to display on the bulletin board.

Some additional questions to ask may include: What is the benefit of using animals? Why do we test animals and not humans? What is the difference between a human and an animal? Why does society consider rodents as inferior to other animals like dogs, cats, and monkeys? Is it fair to perform tests on animals for the sake of human progress?

At the end of the activity, have students write a paragraph discussing their personal feelings on the topic. You may want to choose the best paragraphs to post on the bulletin board or select a few students to read their paragraphs to the class.

Activity 2

Distribute the materials students will use in this unit. Explain in detail how students are to use these materials.

Study Guides

Students should read the study guide questions for each reading assignment prior to beginning the reading assignment to get a feeling for what events and ideas are important in the section they are about to read. After reading the section, students will (as a class or individually) answer the questions to review the important events and ideas from that section of the book. Students should keep the study guides as study materials for the unit test.

Vocabulary

Prior to reading a reading assignment, students will do vocabulary work related to the section of the book they are about to read. Following the completion of the reading of the book, there will be a vocabulary review of all the words used in the vocabulary assignments. Students should keep their vocabulary work as study materials for the unit test.

Reading Assignment Sheet

You need to fill in the reading assignment sheet to let students know by when their reading has to be completed. You can either write the assignment sheet up on a side blackboard or bulletin board and leave it there for students to see each day, or you can make copies for each student to have. In either case, you should advise students to become very familiar with the reading assignments so they know what is expected of them.

WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1 - *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH*
Writing to Inform

PROMPT

Most of the main characters in *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH* are animals. These animals have many human qualities like the ability to talk, think, and read. Your job is to write a composition in which you compare and contrast one character from the story and his/her real-life equivalent.

PREWRITING

Choose one of the following character/animal combinations: Mrs. Frisby/mouse, Mr. Ages/mouse, Nicodemus/rat, Justin/rat, Dragon/cat, The Owl/owl, Jeremy/crow. Using the internet, encyclopedia, and other resources, research the animal you have chosen. Make sure to take careful notes. Your notes should include topics like: appearance, habitat, food source, and other interesting facts. Then, reread through the parts in the book where your character appears and take notes on similar topics as described by the author.

DRAFTING

Introduce your character/animal combination in the first paragraph. Tell why you chose this particular pair to write about. Give a preview of what the rest of the paper will be about. Then write several paragraphs about your character and animal choice. Each paragraph should have a main idea and supporting details. Since this is a compare and contrast essay, you may want to compare and contrast one topic about your character/animal combination in each paragraph. For example, your first paragraph might be a comparison and contrast of the appearance of Mrs. Frisby vs. real life mice. Then your second paragraph might be about the habitat of Mrs. Frisby vs. real life mice. Your last paragraph should summarize the information in the report.

PEER EDITING/PROOFREADING

When you finish the rough draft of your paper, ask a student who sits near you to read it. After reading your rough draft, he/she should tell you what he/she liked best about your work, which parts were difficult to understand, and ways in which your work could be improved. Reread your paper considering your critic's comments, and make the corrections you think are necessary. Ask your classmate what he/she thought of the character/animal you chose for your assignment.

Do a final proofreading of your paper double-checking your grammar, spelling, organization, and the clarity of your ideas.

FINAL DRAFT

Follow your teacher's directions for making a final copy of your report.