

# The Tale of Despereaux

Grades 4-6

Written by Nat Reed  
Illustrated by S&S Learning Materials

**About the Author:** Nat Reed is a retired teacher living in southern Ontario. He has written a number of magazine articles and short stories, as well as the children's novel, *Thunderbird Gold* (Journey Forth Books).

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# At Glance

## Learning Expectations

Chapters 1-4

Chapters 5-8

Chapters 9-12

Chapters 13-15

Chapters 16-19

Chapters 20-23

Chapters 24-26

Chapters 27-29

Chapters 30-33

Chapters 34-37

Chapters 38-41

Chapters 42-45

Chapters 46-49

Chapters 50-52

### Reading Comprehension

• Identify and describe story elements	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
• Summarize events/details	•	•		•		•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•

### Reasoning & Critical Thinking

• Character traits, comparisons	•			•	•	•	•				•			
• Use context clues – identify analogies												•		
• Make inferences (cause of events, characters' thoughts, etc.)	•	•	•	•	•		•		•		•	•	•	•
• Determine the meaning of colloquialisms and other phrases	•				•			•					•	
• Understand abstract concepts – i.e., conscience, revenge, fear					•		•			•	•	•		•
• Develop opinions and personal interpretations	•	•		•	•		•	•					•	
• Write a letter/newspaper editorial							•					•		
• Conduct an interview											•			
• Identify irony				•										
• Identify sarcasm/satire											•			
• Develop a poster												•		
• Create a book cover													•	
• Identify conflict								•						
• Create a time line													•	
• Identify cliffhangers and foreshadowing	•						•					•		
• Identify the climax of a story														•

### Vocabulary Development, Grammar & Word Use

• Identify synonyms, antonyms, and homonyms										•	•		•	•
• Identify similes		•												
• Identify syllables			•											
• Identify compound words													•	
• Identify descriptive words and phrases							•							
• Identify parts of speech										•	•			
• Dictionary and thesaurus skills		•												
• Use words correctly in sentences	•	•						•	•					
• Place words in alphabetical order						•								
• Identify singular/plural						•								
• Identify root words										•			•	
• Use capitals and punctuation correctly		•					•	•						
• Identify onomatopoeia						•								



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## Table of Contents

At A Glance ..... 2

Overall Expectations..... 4

List of Skills .....5

Teacher Suggestions..... 6

Synopsis/Author Biography.....7

Student Checklist..... 8

Reproducible Student Booklet ..... 9

Answer Key ..... 59



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## **Overall Expectations**

The students will:

- develop their skills in reading, writing, listening and oral communication
- use good literature as a vehicle for developing skills required by curriculum expectations: reasoning and critical thinking, knowledge of language structure, vocabulary building, and use of conventions
- become meaningfully engaged in the drama of literature through a variety of types of questions and activities
- identify and describe elements of stories (i.e. plot, main idea, characters, setting)
- learn and review many skills in order to develop good reading habits
- provide clear answers to questions and well-constructed explanations
- organize and classify information to clarify thinking
- learn about the destructive nature of societal prejudice and stereotyping
- relate events and feelings found in novels to their own lives and experiences
- appreciate the importance of family, friendship and loyalty in personal relationships
- learn about the nature of chivalry
- appreciate that the growth of one's character is important
- learn the importance of dealing with adversity and developing perseverance in the face of adversity
- state their own interpretation of a written work, using evidence from the work and from their own knowledge and experience



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## List of Skills

### Vocabulary Development

1. Identifying/creating similes
2. Locating descriptive words/phrases
3. Listing synonyms and antonyms
4. Using capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Listing compound words
7. Using singular/plural nouns
8. Using content clues and analogies
9. Identifying parts of speech
10. Determining alphabetical order
11. Identifying/creating onomatopoeia
12. Identifying of root words

### Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting
2. Create a time chart

### Plot Activities

1. Complete a time line of events
2. Identify foreshadowing
3. Determine the role of others in one's personal growth
4. Identify conflict in the story
5. Identify cliffhangers
6. Identify the climax of a novel

### Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Compare two characters
3. Understand concepts such as perseverance, self respect, stereotypes
4. Relate personal experiences

### Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write an editorial on an issue
3. Write a letter to a friend
4. Identify an example of irony
5. Conduct an interview
6. Identify poetic images
7. Write a description of personal feelings

### Art Activities

1. Design a poster
2. Design a cover for the novel



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## Language Activities

1. With a straight line, match each character from *The Tale of Despereaux* with a quotation made by that character.

a) Antoinette

1. "You've got to scurry."

b) Merlot

2. "Once upon a time."

c) The father mouse

3. "That, my dear Pea, is a bug, not a mouse."

d) Aunt Florence

4. "They are obscenely big ears."

e) Furlough

5. "Look, he's so afraid he's shaking."

f) Despereaux

6. "Oh, such a tragedy."

g) The king

7. "And he'll be dead soon. He can't live."

h) Princess Pea

8. "Those are the biggest ears I've ever seen."

2. **Foreshadowing** is defined as to **suggest beforehand** (or to hint as to what is about to happen). The author of *The Tale of Despereaux* seems to enjoy using this literary device. Chapter 3 contains a really good example of foreshadowing (near the end of the chapter). See if you can find it and then tell what event you think it might be foreshadowing.

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## Chapters 5 to 8

### Before you read the chapters:

Tell about a time in your life (or that of a friend's) when you felt **betrayed**. Explain the circumstances of the incident and how you felt. Why do you think it is feels especially bad when you think you are betrayed by a friend or family member?

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In Chapter Five the author describes **love** as being "powerful", "wonderful" and "ridiculous". How would **you** define love in your own words? Why do you think love is so important in the lives of most people?

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In this section we have our first glimpse of the negative feelings that many people have toward mice and other members of the rodent family. Think of at least **two** reasons why many people hate mice so much. Think of at least **one** positive benefit of mice to humans.

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## Vocabulary:

Using words from this chapter, complete the following crossword puzzle.

rodent	rhythm	statement	wept	Tilling	maiden	honor
protest	personal	oversize	sure	scurry	Furlough	dramatic
fervent	gave	Lester	ER	yet	nail	near manners
dungeon	echo	related	blame	Pea		

