



**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 6-8**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# **Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH**

Robert C. O'Brien

**READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT**

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Robert C. O'Brien

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**NOTE:**

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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## Skills and Strategies

### Thinking

Brainstorming, classifying and categorizing, evaluating, analyzing details, comparing/contrasting, making judgments, making generalizations

### Literary Elements

Character, setting, plot development, flashback, conflict

### Vocabulary

Synonyms/antonyms, words in context, root words, prefixes/suffixes

### Comprehension

Predicting, sequencing, cause/effect, inference, comparing information from more than one source

### Writing

Lists, journal, narrative, figures of speech, descriptive, advertisements, newspaper story

### Listening/Speaking

Participation in discussion, participation in dramatic activities

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**Summary of Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH:**

Mrs. Frisby, a widowed mouse with four small children, is faced with a terrible problem. She and her four children live in a cinder block in the middle of a vegetable garden. With spring coming they must move to be out of the way of the farmer's plow. But this year it is impossible to move because little Timothy is seriously ill.

The wise old owl advises Mrs. Frisby to go to the rats of NIMH for help with her dilemma. She soon discovers that they are not ordinary rats but that they can read, write and use machines and electricity. The rats of NIMH solve Mrs. Frisby's problem by moving her cinder block house and she, in turn, helps them to escape to a life of freedom.

**Initiating Activities:**


1. Setting the Purpose—Previewing the Book: Have the students examine the cover. Can you find any clues about the story? The characters? (*A large bird and a mouse seem to be the main characters.*)
2. Given the following clues, write a paragraph predicting what you think will happen in the story: mother mouse, sick baby mouse, a move, danger.

**Prereading Discussion Topics:**

1. Learning new skills: Have you ever been faced with an unusual problem which required you to learn some new skill or skills? What was the situation? How did you feel at first? What skills did you lack? How did you learn these skills? How did you feel when the whole thing was over?
2. Facing a frightening situation: Have you ever been in a situation where nature frightened you (such as finding that electricity was cut off by a storm, or that a hurricane raged around you, or that you were lost in the woods, etc.)? What made you afraid? What did you think about? How did you overcome your fear?
3. Thinking positively: Have you ever heard the expression "the power of positive thinking"? What does it mean? Do you believe in it? If not, why not? If so, when have you seen it work for someone else? When has it worked for you?
4. Patience: Think of a time when you needed to have a lot of patience. Describe the situation. Was it difficult to have patience? Why or why not? What was the outcome? Is patience always a good thing to have?

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## Prediction Chart

What characters have we met so far?	What is the conflict in the story?	What are your predictions?	Why did you make those predictions?
			

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## Chapter One: “The Sickness of Timothy Frisby”— Pages 3-11

### Vocabulary:

oval 3	abandoned 3	spacious 4	preceding 4
rancid 4	cope 5	sward 5	warily 5
protruded 6	accompanied 7	crude 7	festive 7
authoritatively 9	intensity 10	hypochondriac 10	tedious 11
delirious 11			

### Vocabulary Activity — Prereading:

Have the students show knowledge of words before reading a chapter by writing simple definitions in their own words of what they think the words might mean. These activities are based on context and structural analysis. After reading, ask students to check the meaning by referring to context and/or the dictionary.

### Discussion Questions and Activities:

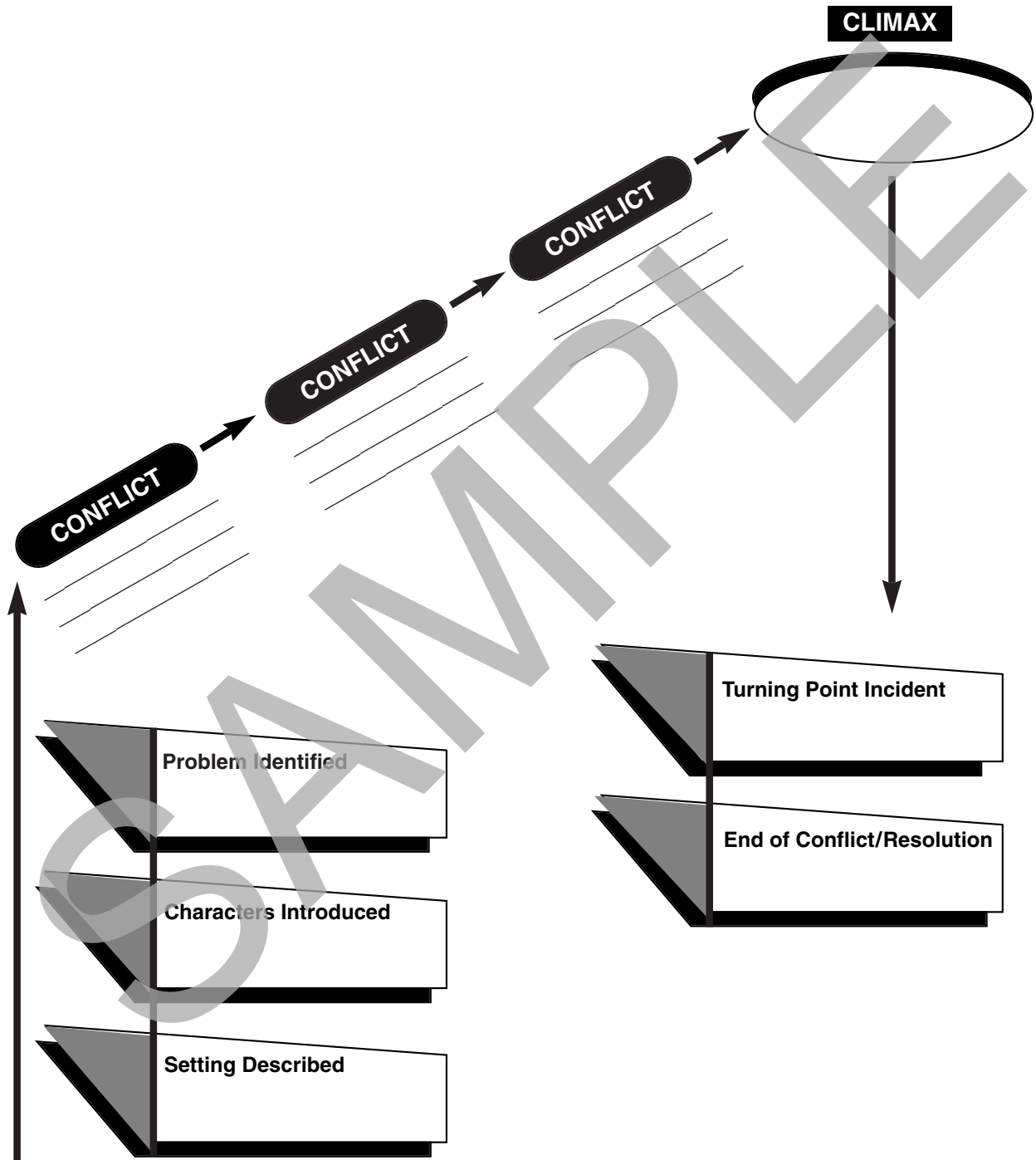
1. What kind of food did Mrs. Frisby’s family eat? How is a mouse’s diet different from ours? How is it similar? (pages 3-5)
2. What was the crisis that drove Mrs. Frisby to see Mr. Ages? (Page 11, Timothy was terribly ill and Mrs. Frisby wanted to get medicine for Timothy.)
3. What did you learn about the setting? (pages 3-4, a cozy underground house in a vegetable garden)
4. Let’s begin this book with a story map and a timeline. We are going to look for pieces to a puzzle (clues) and we need a road map or story map to see where we are going. This story can be confusing because when the rats begin to tell their story they go back to earlier times. We will start the timeline on “Now,” the day Timothy is sick on page 3. We need to learn about the setting, who the characters are, what the problem is, and how they solve it. (See pages 11-12 of this guide.)

### Research Activities:

1. **Bulletin Board:** Collect information about mice’s and rats’ foods and habitat. Make individual and/or class charts. Compare using a Venn diagram.
2. Use Venn diagrams to see how two animals are alike and how they are different. (See page 13 of this guide.)

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# Story Map



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## Timeline

There are flashbacks in time in *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH*. These are hard for students to understand without a time chart.

