THE TALE OF DESPEREAUX

NOVEL STUDY + ANSWER KEY

- QUESTIONS
- VOCABULARY
- CUT & SORT



GRADES 3-5

32 STUDENT PAGES

Bright Path Sped

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About the book

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PREVIEW

How to Run the Novel Study

One plan for the whole book in 8 parts, a question page for each, and pages on the characters, the conflict, and the big ideas of courage, forgiving and light.

A plan for the whole book

Read	Part	My chapters	Page	Talk about it
Part 1	A Small Mouse (Book 1)		6	What makes a small hero?
Part 2	Music and a Princess (Book 1)		7	When is it right to break a rule?
Part 3	A Rat in the Dark (Book 2)		8	Why might someone who lives in the dark love the light?
Part 4	A Choice That Hurts (Book 2)		9	Does one bad choice make a person bad for good?
Part 5	A Girl Who Wants More (Book 3)		10	How can wanting something badly lead to a mistake?
Part 6	A Bad Plan (Book 3)		11	Can a person be brave and scared at once?
Part 7	Going Down (Book 4)		12	What does it take to forgive someone?
Part 8	Looking Back (Book 4)		13	Why does the narrator talk to the reader?

The routine

- **Read a part** aloud, in small groups, or on their own. Split your copy into 8 parts of about the same length and write your chapters in the table. The part names are ours, not the book's chapter titles, so the key says what to look for.
- **Students answer** that part's question page (pages 6 to 13). Each page has a recall, a think and a your-view question, and says it is okay to pass.
- **Keep the organizers going**: the plot path (page 14), character map (page 15), conflict chart (page 16), cause and effect (page 20) and how Despereaux changes (page 21).
- **Talk about courage and forgiving** with the forgive-or-not page (page 17), the page of your own choices (page 18), the brave-or-safe cut-and-sort (page 19) and the guide (page 37).
- **Teach the vocabulary** with the four word pages (pages 24 to 27) and the match (page 28).
- **Finish** with the final review (page 31), the essay (pages 32 to 34) and the final project (page 35).

Before you teach it

- Read the book yourself first. It has a loss, a dark dungeon and a character who is treated cruelly, and some students may find parts sad or scary. Questions are for talking, and any student may pass.
- Use the names and the order of events your own copy uses: this file has no book text in it.

Spoilers and your answer key

The answer key (pages 38 to 42) gives away how the story goes. Keep it from students until the book is finished. Most questions ask for an opinion or a detail from the student's own copy, so the key says Varies and tells you what to look for.

PREVIEW

My name _____ Date _____



Before You Read

Think about The Tale of Despereaux. Then write your ideas.

It is okay to pass on a question.

1. Look at the title, The Tale of Despereaux. What do you think this book is about?

2. Have you ever been the smallest or the newest in a group? How did it feel?

3. Have you ever been brave when you were scared? What happened?

4. Agree or disagree: a person who does something wrong can be forgiven.

☐ I agree ☐ I disagree

Why do I think so?

5. What do you want to find out as you read?

PREVIEW

Despereaux Novel Study - Questions, Part 3

My name _____ Date _____



Part 3: A Rat in the Dark (Book 2)

Read this part of the book. Then answer each question.

Questions about the book, Part 3. It is okay to pass on a question.

1. Recall: Who is Roscuro? Where does he live?

2. Think: What does Roscuro love that most rats do not? How can you tell?

3. Your view: Why might a creature who lives in the dark be drawn to light?

Starters: The book says ____. This shows ____. I think ____ because ____.

PREVIEW

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My name _____ Date _____

Part 5: A Girl Who Wants More (Book 3)



Read this part of the book. Then answer each question.

Questions about the book, Part 5. It is okay to pass on a question.

1. Recall: Who is Miggery Sow, called Mig? What is her life like?

2. Think: What does Mig wish for? Why does she wish for it?

3. Your view: Is it okay to wish to be someone else? What would you wish for, and why?

Starters: The book says ____. This shows ____. I think ____ because ____.

PREVIEW

My name _____ Date _____



Part 8: Looking Back (Book 4)

Read this part of the book. Then answer each question.

Questions about the book, Part 8. It is okay to pass on a question.

1. Recall: How does the story end for Despereaux and for Roscuro? Tell it in two sentences.

2. Think: What is different at the end for Despereaux? Use one early detail and one late detail.

3. Your view: What does this story say about courage and about forgiving? What does it say to you?

Starters: The book says ____. This shows ____. I think ____ because ____.

PREVIEW

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My name _____ Date _____

Character Map

Fill in a map for Despereaux and a map for another person.

Despereaux Tilling

Three words that describe

What this character wants

What gets in the way

A strength

A hard moment

A moment that shows who this character is

Another character _____

Three words that describe

What this character wants

What gets in the way

A strength

A hard moment

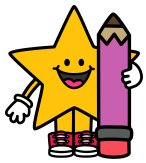
A moment that shows who this character is

One way these two people are alike, and one way they are different

PREVIEW

My name _____ Date _____

Your Own Choices



Read each problem. Check a choice and tell why.

These problems are invented. They are not from the book. Talk with a partner before you write.

A. The teasing

A classmate is being teased at recess. You are afraid that if you speak up, the teasing will turn to you.

☐ **I speak up** ☐ **I forgive** ☐ **I ask for help**

My reason

B. The sorry

A friend broke your favorite pencil case and hid it. Now your friend says sorry. You are still upset.

☐ **I speak up** ☐ **I forgive** ☐ **I ask for help**

My reason

C. The left-out

Some kids left you out of a game yesterday. Today they ask you to join.

☐ **I speak up** ☐ **I forgive** ☐ **I ask for help**

My reason

PREVIEW

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My name _____ Date _____

Cause and Effect

Write what happened. Then write what happened because of it.

A cause is why something happens. An effect is what happens because of it. Write five cause-and-effect pairs from different parts of the book.

Part	What happened (the cause)	What happened because of it (the effect)

Starters: Because ____, ____ happened. ____ happened, so ____.

Which effect surprised me most? What caused it?

PREVIEW

My name _____ Date _____



Write a Letter

Write a letter to Despereaux.

From (me) _____ **To Despereaux** _____

Dear

My letter: tell what you notice about him and how you feel

What I want him to know, and why

Signed _____

PREVIEW

Preview - Bright Path Shed

My name _____ Date _____

Words: Courage and Fear

Read each word. Write a sentence. Add a word that means the same.

brave (adjective)
ready to face something scary or hard.
My sentence

Same meaning _____

timid (adjective)
shy and easily frightened.
My sentence

Same meaning _____

hero (noun)
a person who does something brave or good for others.
My sentence

Same meaning _____

quest (noun)
a long search for something important.
My sentence

Same meaning _____

valiant (adjective)
brave and strong when things are hard.
My sentence

Same meaning _____

cower (verb)
to shrink back in fear.
My sentence

Same meaning _____

PREVIEW

Preview - Bright Ever After

My name _____ Date _____

Match the Meaning

Write the letter of each meaning.

1	**dungeon**	☐	A	hurting someone back because they hurt you
2	**servant**	☐	B	shy and easily frightened
3	**narrator**	☐	C	a strong wish for something
4	**timid**	☐	D	a dark room under a castle, once used as a prison
5	**quest**	☐	E	to shrink back in fear
6	**cower**	☐	F	to send someone away as a punishment
7	**forgive**	☐	G	the voice that tells a story
8	**revenge**	☐	H	kindness shown to someone you have power over
9	**regret**	☐	I	a long search for something important
10	**banish**	☐	J	to feel sorry about something you did
11	**desire**	☐	K	a person who works in someone else's home
12	**mercy**	☐	L	to stop being angry at someone who hurt you

PREVIEW

My name _____ Date _____



Prove It With the Text

Make a claim. Back it up with evidence.

The question I am answering

My claim: my answer

Evidence 1. Part _____

The book says (a short phrase)

This shows

Evidence 2. Part _____

The book says (a short phrase)

This shows

My reasoning: how the evidence proves my claim

Starters: The book says ____. This shows ____. I think ____ because ____.

PREVIEW

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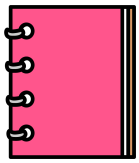
My name _____ Date _____



My Essay: Plan

Plan each part of your essay.

Opening and claim
Start with a hook. State your claim.

Reason 1
Evidence and part

Reason 2
Evidence and part

Reason 3
Evidence and part

Closing
Say why it matters.

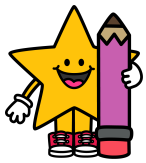
PREVIEW

My check before I write

- ☐ My claim is clear
- ☐ Each reason has evidence
- ☐ I named the parts
- ☐ I used a vocabulary word

Preview - Bright Path Sped

My name _____ Date _____



Final Project

Check one project. Plan it, then make it.

☐ **Project A**

Make a word poster

Write the name Despereaux in big letters. Add five words that describe him and one proof from the book for each.

☐ **Project B**

Write a note to a character

Write a short note to Despereaux, Roscuro or Mig telling what you think of their choices. Use at least two vocabulary words.

☐ **Project C**

Make a book review

Give the book a rating from 1 to 5. Give three reasons and tell who you think should read it.

My project: write here

My plan: what I need and what I will do first

My checklist

☐ I used the book to check my facts ☐ I used a vocabulary word ☐ I checked my spelling

PREVIEW

Answer Key

Spoiler warning: this key gives away how the story goes. A sample answer is one acceptable answer, not the only one; where a question asks for an opinion or a detail from the student's copy, it says Varies and tells you what to look for. The eight parts are a suggested split; write your own chapters on the how-to page.

Part 1: A Small Mouse (Book 1) (page 6)

1. **Recall: The hero.** Despereaux Tilling, a very small mouse. How he is different varies for the student's copy; accept an accurate detail such as his size, his ears or how he acts.

2. **Think: How others treat him.** Varies. Look for a clear way they treat him (worry, shame, anger) and a detail from the student's copy.

3. **Your view: Being different.** Varies. A personal answer with a feeling and a reason. Any student may pass.

Part 2: Music and a Princess (Book 1) (page 7)

1. **Recall: What he loves.** He loves music, stories and light. He speaks to a human, Princess Pea. Accept details from the student's copy.

2. **Think: Breaking the rule.** Varies. Look for a reason the rule exists and a reason tied to what Despereaux loves.

3. **Your view: A rule you question.** Varies. Look for a clear line with a reason. Both sides can be argued with respect.

Part 3: A Rat in the Dark (Book 2) (page 8)

1. **Recall: The rat.** Roscuro is a rat who lives in the dungeon below the castle. Accept a detail about the dungeon from the student's copy.

2. **Think: A rat and the light.** Varies. The answer should name something he is drawn to (light is a key idea in the book) with a detail from the student's copy.

3. **Your view: Drawn to the light.** Varies. Look for a reason, literal or about feelings such as hope.

Part 4: A Choice That Hurts (Book 2) (page 9)

1. **Recall: What he did.** Varies. Accept an accurate event from the student's copy, in order, with who it happened to. Roscuro's choice leads to a loss that changes the whole kingdom.

2. **Think: Why he did it.** Varies. Look for a want or feeling tied to a detail from the student's copy.

3. **Your view: Fair or not.** Varies. Look for a view with a reason. Both sides can be argued with respect.

My notes on parts 1 to 4 (your wording)

PREVIEW

Answer Key

The final review and the cut-and-sort.

Final Review (page 31)

1. **Recall: The whole story.** Varies. Look for three accurate sentences in order: a small mouse named Despereaux loves music and light and talks to a princess; a rat named Roscuro and a servant girl named Mig make a plan that takes the princess to the dungeon; Despereaux goes down to try to save her.

2. **Recall: Who is who.** Varies. Princess Pea is the human he speaks to; Roscuro is the rat of the dungeon; Mig is the servant girl. Accept an accurate connection for each.

3. **Think: A choice that mattered.** Varies. A choice plus a different outcome.

4. **Think: Light and dark.** Varies. Look for a moment named by part and a meaning such as hope, fear, safety or sadness.

5. **Prove it: A word for Despereaux.** Varies. Two details named by part.

6. **Your view: Courage and forgiveness.** Varies. Opinion with a reason and a detail from the book.

Brave or Safe (page 19)

A brave move: Despereaux speaks to Princess Pea even though mice are told to stay away from people; Despereaux keeps loving music and light when other mice do not; Despereaux goes down into the dark dungeon to try to help the princess; Despereaux keeps going even when the dungeon is dark and scary; Despereaux stays true to what he loves even when others disagree.

A safe move: The other mice hide when a person comes near; A mouse follows the mouse rules and stays quiet; The mice send Despereaux away instead of listening to him; Despereaux's family worries about what the other mice will say; A mouse stays in the safe, warm place and lets someone else take the risk.

A reasoned different placement is fine: ask the student why.

My notes on the final review and the sort (your wording)

PREVIEW

Essay Rubric

For the essay on pages 32 to 34. Five criteria, three descriptions each; add your own notes.

Student _____ Prompt (A, B or C) _____ Date _____

Criterion	Strong	Getting there	Not yet	My notes
Opinion	A clear opinion that answers the prompt	An opinion, but it is vague or partly off the prompt	No clear opinion	
Evidence	Three or more details from the book, named by part	One or two details, or details with no part named	No details from the book	
Explaining	Each detail is explained and tied back to the opinion	Some explaining; some details stand alone	Details are listed but not explained	
Organization	Opening, three reasons, closing; clear order	Most parts are there; order is hard to follow	Parts are missing or mixed up	
Language	Vocabulary words used correctly; few spelling errors	A vocabulary word or two; some errors	No vocabulary words; errors get in the way	

How to use it

Circle or highlight one box in each row. There is no total: your notes and the student's next step matter more. The student's checklist is on page 33.

PREVIEW

Despereaux at Home

Dear family, our class is reading The Tale of Despereaux, a novel about a small mouse, a castle and the ideas of courage, forgiving and light. Questions are for talking, not for a grade, and any student may pass.

Student _____ Part we are reading _____

Three things to talk about

- Ask your student: what is the story about so far, in three sentences?
- Ask: who in the story is brave, and how do you know?
- Ask: when is it right to forgive someone, and when might it be hard? Share an example from your family, only if you want to.

My words from home

One thing I learned _____

One feeling I noticed _____

A question I have _____

Words that may come up

Brave: ready to face something scary or hard. **Forgive:** to stop being angry at someone who hurt you. **Dungeon:** a dark room under a castle. **Hopeful:** believing something good might happen.

Note from the teacher

Note from home

PREVIEW