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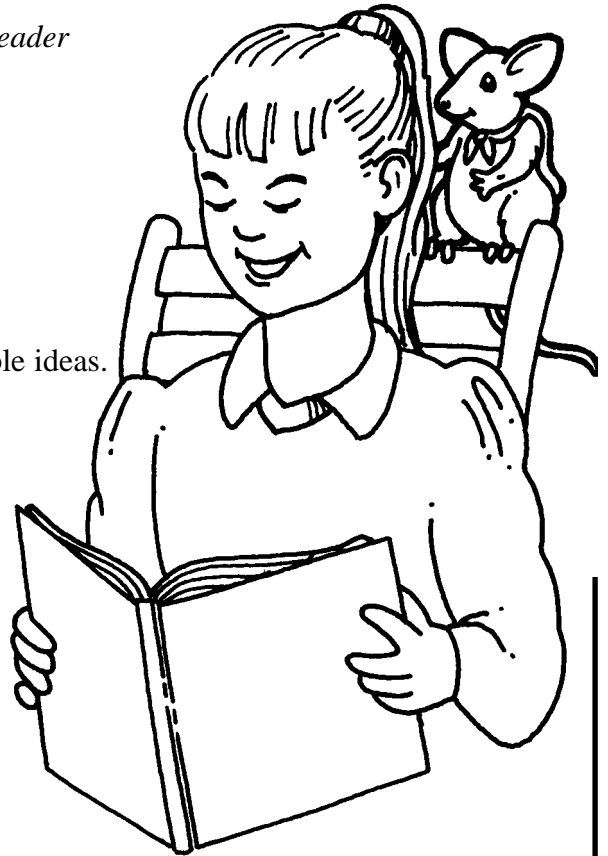
Introduction

An adventure book can lead us to new and exciting places; however, we do not have to travel anywhere but within the limits of our own imaginations. The adventure can become a valuable treasure in our lives forever.

In *Literature Units*, great care has been taken to select books that are sure to become good friends. Teachers who use this unit will find the following features to supplement their own valuable ideas.

- Sample lesson plans
- Pre-reading activities
- Biographical sketch and picture of the author
- Book summary
- Vocabulary lists and suggested vocabulary activities
- Chapters grouped for study with each section including:
 - a quiz
 - a hands-on project
 - a cooperative learning activity
 - a cross-curricular connection
 - an extension into the everyday life of the reader
- Post-reading activities
- Research ideas
- Culminating activities
- Three different unit test options
- Bibliography
- Answer key

Use this literature unit to supplement your own valuable ideas.



Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH

by Robert C. O'Brien

(USA Macmillan, 1971)

(Available in Canada and UK: Maxwell Macmillan; Aus; Macmillan)

Mrs. Frisby, a field mouse and widow, lives with her four children, Cynthia, Martin, Theresa, and Timothy, in an oval cinder block on Mr. Fitzgibbon's farm. It is a slightly damaged cinder block, lined with leaves, grass, cotton, feathers, and other things the mice collect for comfort.

At the end of winter, Mrs. Frisby and her children are faced with a terrible dilemma. Timothy is very ill with pneumonia and the weather is warming. When the weather warms, Farmer Fitzgibbon plows his fields and Mrs. Frisby's house is in the direct line of the plow. She and her family will have to move before the farmer begins to plow, thereby sleeping outside until they find somewhere else to live. The problem is that Timothy cannot sleep outside in the chilly nights because of the pneumonia.

Mrs. Frisby does not know what to do. On the recommendation of Mr. Ages, she goes to see the wise owl. The owl is annoyed to see Mrs. Frisby until he learns of her identity, the widow of Jonathan Frisby. He then suggests to her that she visit the rats. She does so.

First, Mrs. Frisby meets a hostile rat, Brutus, who refuses to let her enter the rats' quarters. Then, she encounters Nicodemus, another rat, and she learns the details of her husband's life and death in connection to the rats. She also learns that the rats are planning to move to Thorn Valley, a place with none of the conveniences of their present home but where they will not have to steal from others to survive.

Nicodemus agrees to help Mrs. Frisby, but first they must put the cat, Dragon, to sleep so they can work without interference from him. Mrs. Frisby agrees to put sleeping powder in his bowl. As she does so, she is captured by Billy, the Fitzgibbon's son. As his captive, she learns valuable information that will later aid the rats. With the help of the rats, she escapes from Billy.

The situation turns upside down when Jeremy the crow takes her to see the owl rather than the rats as is necessary to complete the work. How the highly intelligent rats of NIMH help Mrs. Frisby solve her dilemma, and the great service she renders them in return, is an adventure no one will ever forget.



Vocabulary Activities

Each section of the book contains several new vocabulary words. (See page 8.) You may wish to divide these words and assign them to small groups of students. The groups may define the words, find them in the context of the book, and present the information to the class to record in a vocabulary notebook. You can also help the students to learn and retain the necessary vocabulary for *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH* by using some or all of the following activities.

- Have the students create a word search or crossword puzzle and exchange their puzzles with a partner.
- Ask the students to write a story using the vocabulary words. Let volunteers share their stories with the class.
- Play vocabulary charades. In this game, the words are pantomimed.
- Have a vocabulary bee. This is very similar to a spelling bee, but in addition to spelling each word correctly, the same participants must correctly define the words.
- Play vocabulary concentration. The goal of this game is to match vocabulary words with their definitions. Divide the class into groups of two to five students. Have the students make two sets of cards the same size and colour. On one set, have them write the vocabulary words. On the other set, have them write the definitions. All cards are then mixed together and placed face down on a table. The first player then picks two cards. If the pair is a word and definition match, the player keeps the cards and takes another turn. If the pair does not match, the player turns both cards face down once more, and it is then the second player's turn. Each player must concentrate to remember where the words and definitions are. The game continues until all matches have been made.
- Have the students practise their writing skills by creating sentences and paragraphs in which multiple vocabulary words are used correctly. Ask them to share their compact vocabulary sentences and paragraphs with the class.
- Challenge your students to use a specific vocabulary word at least ten times a day. They must keep a record of when and how the word was used.
- As a group activity, have the students make illustrated dictionaries of the vocabulary words.
- Play a clue game with the vocabulary words. Have one student give a clue as to the words he or she draws from a hat. He or she can give one clue at a time, and one other student at a time can take a guess after each clue until the correct word is guessed.

What Can You Do to Promote a Healthy Lifestyle?

Having a healthy lifestyle means doing things that will help you stay well. Being and staying physically fit is one part of a healthy lifestyle. Your body's regular defences work best against disease when you are in good physical condition. Regular exercise helps you stay healthy and fit. A healthy lifestyle also includes eating properly. One way to do this is by choosing foods that are low in fat, salt, and sugar. Another way is by avoiding illegal drugs, alcohol, or tobacco. This is crucial to good health.

Think about the lifestyle habits that you maintain. Are you healthy? How could you improve your health?

1. List as many things as you can think of that you do right now that promote a healthy lifestyle for yourself.
2. Think of some areas that you would like to change that would ensure a healthier you. List them.
3. In a well-written paragraph, describe a plan that you can follow to improve your health.

The Rats and Their Habitats

In these chapters, Mrs. Frisby is told by the owl that she must go to the rats. The owl believes that if the rats decide to help her, they will be successful. Mrs. Frisby, however, doubts that a rat could move her house. The owl tells her, “The rats on Farmer Fitzgibbon’s farm have things—ways — you know nothing about. They are not like the rest of us. They are not like, I think, even most other rats.” Mrs. Frisby has no alternative but to listen to the owl. She needs help, and this seems to be her only option. So, the next morning, Mrs. Frisby takes the owl’s advice, but she finds that the rats are difficult to reach. They tend to keep to themselves, and Mrs. Frisby does not feel welcome trespassing in their domain.

The rats Mrs. Frisby encounters are not like the common rats with which we are familiar, the brown rat and the black rat. With a partner, research either the brown or the black rat’s habitat. Compare (find likenesses) and contrast (find differences) the habitat of the rat you selected with that of the rats living on the Fitzgibbon farm.

Now, also as partners, write a brief synopsis of the two rats — the one you chose and the rats of NIMH. Do so on the back of this paper.

Finally, construct the habitats of the rat you researched and the rats of NIMH. Each partner can build one habitat. Be sure to show the likenesses and the differences. Share your habitats with the whole class.

	Black or brown rat	Rats of NIMH
Compare		
Contrast		