

## Literature Circle Questions

Use these questions and the activities that follow to get more out of the experience of reading *The Tale of Despereaux* by Kate DiCamillo.

1. List three mice rules that Despereaux breaks in the beginning of the story. What punishment does he receive from the Mouse Council?
2. Why isn't Miggery Sow afraid as she stands in the dungeon with Gregory's meal?
3. What does Botticelli tell Roscuro will happen if he goes up into the light? Was his prediction accurate? Explain your answer.
4. Describe Despereaux's dream about the Knight. How does the dream help Despereaux on his quest?
5. Despereaux encounters the cook on two occasions. How is the cook's attitude toward Despereaux different during their second meeting? What do you think is the reason for the change in her attitude?
6. Describe the relationship between Miggery Sow and the Princess Pea. What do they have in common? What are their differences?
7. Which characters help Despereaux overcome the challenges he faces on his quest to save the Princess Pea? How does each character help him? Imagine Despereaux meets you on his way to the dungeon. Using your knowledge of the dungeon, what advice would you give Despereaux to help him succeed?
8. Imagine you have broken a rule and have been banished from your community. What would you miss most? If it meant you could return to the community, would you say you were sorry, even if you felt you had done nothing wrong?
9. Miggery Sow tells several characters that she is going to be a princess. To which characters does she say this? Compare and contrast their reactions to Miggery's statement. What does each character's reaction tell us about him or her? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
10. In the beginning of the story, Despereaux reads a fairy tale to himself in the library. In what ways is the book you just read like a fairy tale? In what ways is it like real life?
11. Imagine you are Lester at the moment the Mouse Council votes to banish Despereaux to the dungeon. What, if anything, would you say to convince the council not to send Despereaux away? Why do you think Lester remained silent?

12. Roscuro tells Miggery Sow that aspirations are “those things that make a serving girl want to be a princess.” Choose three characters from the story and describe their aspirations. Which character’s aspirations do you admire most? Least?
13. Did you like the way the story ended. Why or why not? Use examples from the text in your answer. Now imagine the Kingdom one year after the story has ended. Do you think anything has changed?
14. Now that you know more about Despereaux, think back to the moment of his birth when his parents and siblings first laid eyes on him. What was unusual about him? Do you think the author gave Despereaux these unusual traits for a reason? What might these features symbolize about Despereaux’s character?
15. Reread the author’s explanation of Roscuro’s full name, Chiaroscuro, on page 85. Do you think the author chose a good name for this character? If so, support your argument using evidence from the text. If not, suggest another name and explain your reason for doing so.

*Note: These questions are keyed to Bloom’s Taxonomy as follows: Knowledge: 1-3; Comprehension: 4-6; Application: 7-8; Analysis: 9-10; Synthesis: 11-13; Evaluation: 14-15*

## **Activities**

1. When Despereaux returns to the dungeon to rescue the Princess Pea, he tells himself a story to cheer himself up. Imagine you are going to write a story to cheer yourself up. Where would the story take place? Who would be the main characters? How did these characters meet?
2. On page 149, the Princess Pea explains to Miggery Sow that she has made a tapestry showing the history of her world. Using reference books, see if you can find any famous tapestries from history. Then, just as the Princess Pea did, draw a history of your world. Include two people close to you and show each person doing a common activity.
3. At the end of the story, we learn that Miggery Sow has been reunited with her father. Imagine Miggery comes back to the castle to visit the Princess Pea one year later. Now that you know what these characters are like and how they speak, write a scene showing Miggery and the Princess together again. What room are they in? What do they talk about? Is anyone else with them? Be sure to show how you think each character may have changed over the year.

**Other Books by This Author**

*Because of Winn-Dixie*, Candlewick Press (September 2001)

*The Tiger Rising*, Candlewick Press (August 2002)

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