

Mrs. Frisby and The Rats of NIMH



By

Robert C. O'Brien

A Novel Study
by Nat Reed

Mrs. Frisby and The Rats Of NIMH

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About the author: Nat Reed was a member of the teaching profession for more than 35 years. He was a full-time instructor at Trent University in the Teacher Education Program for nine years. For more information on his work and literature, visit novelstudies.org.

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Suggestions and Expectations

This 83 page curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses two chapters of *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH* and is comprised of four different activities:

1. Before You Read
2. Vocabulary Building
3. Comprehension Questions
4. Language and Extension Activities

A **portfolio cover** (p.7) as well as a **Checklist** (p.6) are included so that students may track of their completed work.

Every activity need not be completed by all students.

Links with the Common Core Standards (U.S.)

Many of the activities included in this curriculum unit are supported by the Common Core Standards. For instance the *Reading Standards for Literature, Grade 5*, makes reference to

- a) determining the meaning of words and phrases. . . including figurative language;
- b) explaining how a series of chapters fits together to provide the overall structure;
- c) compare and contrast two characters;
- d) determine how characters ... respond to challenges;
- e) drawing inferences from the text;
- f) determining a theme of a story . . . **and many others.**

Themes which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include rats and mice, farms and farming, medical testing using laboratory animals, courage, self-sacrifice, teamwork, perseverance, prejudice/profiling, friendship, the importance of family and friends.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homophones
3. Identifying/creating *alliteration*
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Identify *foreshadowing*.
7. Identify *personification*.
8. Use of singular / plural nouns
9. Listing compound words
10. Identifying parts of speech
11. Determining alphabetical order
12. Identification of root words
13. Identify/create *similes*
14. Identification of *cliffhangers*.

Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

Plot Activities

1. Complete a *time line* of events
2. Identify conflict in the story
3. Identify the climax of the novel.
4. Five W's Chart

Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Protagonists and antagonists
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Comparing two Characters

Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Write a letter to a friend
4. Complete an Observation Chart
5. Complete a KWS Chart
6. Conduct an interview
7. Write a description of personal feelings
8. Write a book review
9. Complete a Comparison Chart
10. Complete a Research Organizer

Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Design a cover for the novel
4. Design an Information Card

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Synopsis

Mrs. Frisby, a widowed mouse with four small children, is faced with a terrible problem. She must move her family to their summer quarters immediately, or face almost certain death. But her youngest son, Timothy, lies ill with pneumonia and must not be moved. Fortunately, she encounters the rats of NIMH, an extraordinary breed of highly intelligent creatures, who come up with a brilliant solution to her dilemma. And Mrs. Frisby in turn renders them a great service. [Courtesy of the publisher]

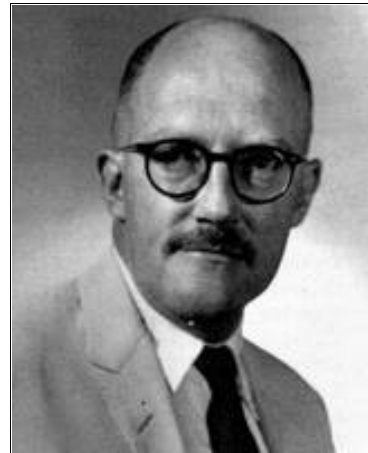
Check out the clips for *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH* -
movie and book trailers - on [YouTube](#)

Author Biography

Robert C. O'Brien

Robert Lesley Conly (Robert C. O'Brien - 1918 - 1973) was an American author best known for his 1975 novel *Z for Zachariah*. This renowned novel was published posthumously and won an Edgar Award. For many years, O'Brien was a journalist for *National Geographic Magazine*. O'Brien married Sarah McCaslin in 1943. The couple had four children. The marriage lasted until his death thirty years later in 1973.

O'Brien is also known for his 1971 novel *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH*. This novel won the prestigious John Newbery Medal. His works have also been made into movies including *The Secret of NIMH* (1982), *Z for Zachariah* (2015), and *The Secret of NIMH 2: Timmy to the Rescue* (1998).



Adapted from website: <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0639791/bio>

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Student Checklist

Student Name _____

Assignment	Grade / Level	Comments

Mrs. Frisby and The Rats of NIMH



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Name: _____

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Chapter 1 - The Sickness of Timothy Frisby / Chapter 2 - Mr. Ages



Before you read the chapters:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The protagonist of *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH* is quite unique – Mrs. Frisby, a widowed field mouse with four children. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels you have read or movies you’ve seen. What do you think makes for an especially intriguing protagonist, one that is difficult to forget?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

scarce	access	skirting	emerge	authoritatively
hypochondriac	delirious	tedious	relentless	vigorous

1. If he continues to complain about her health, people will think he is a _____.
2. Filing all of those folders will be a very _____ task.
3. “Clean up your room,” Aunt Gertie shouted _____.
4. This particular key will give you _____ to the safe in Mr. Chesterton’s office.
5. No one expected him to _____ uninjured from the wreck.
6. Gold coins are very _____ in today’s economy.
7. You must give that cord a _____ tug in order to start the outboard motor.
8. The injured trapper spent the day _____ the edge of the forest fire.
9. His fever was so high that Timothy soon became _____.
10. It was plain to see how _____ the detective was in his questioning.

Questions



1. An exciting story relies on a **crisis** to make things more interesting for the reader. What crisis is described in the first chapter?

2. What did Mrs. Frisby assume happened to the animal(s) who stored the food that she found?

3. For each of Mrs. Frisby's children, write one thing which would describe him/her.

Teresa	
Martin	
Cynthia	
Timothy	

4. Although Timothy was quite frail, what did he have going for him?

5. Define ***hypochondriac***.

6. Why was it dangerous for Mrs. Frisby to venture too close to the farmhouse and barn?

7. Why did she go to see Mr. Ages? What did he advise her?

8. What traumatic event seemed to be the beginning of Timothy's health problems?

9. Although Mr. Ages tells Mrs. Frisby that the medicine will help Timothy recover, what stern warning does he also offer? For how long will this be in effect?

10. **Foreshadowing** is a literary device where the author provides a hint as to what happen later in the story. How might the warning of Mr. Ages be an example of this?

11. Describe the **setting** of these chapters.

Language Activities



A. The Field Mouse

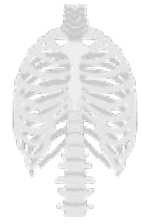
The Frisbys are field mice living on the Fitzgibbons' farm. Also known as a **meadow vole** in North America, the field mouse is active year-round, usually at night. It also digs underground burrows where it stores food for the winter. Using resources in your school library or on the Internet, investigate additional information about this industrious little rodent. Below record three fascinating facts from your research and include a drawing of the field mouse.



1.	
2.	
3.	

--	--

B. Personification is giving human qualities to something that is not human. Examples from Chapter 2 include: *There were harsher plants as well. . .* In this example **plants** is personified - **harsher** is an attribute usually given to a person. Another example is found in the very next paragraph: . . . *the dry skeletons of the weeds* . . . Here the weeds are described as **skeletons**.



a) Why do you think **personification** is a literary device used by many authors?

b) Create your own example of personification.

c) Bonus: Keep your eyes open for another example of personification. When you find one, come back to this page and record it below.

C. The word “**weed**” can be used as a **noun** or a **verb**, depending on the sentence. Use your imagination and write sentences to illustrate how these words can be used as both a noun and a verb.



WEED

Noun	
Verb	

BANDAGE

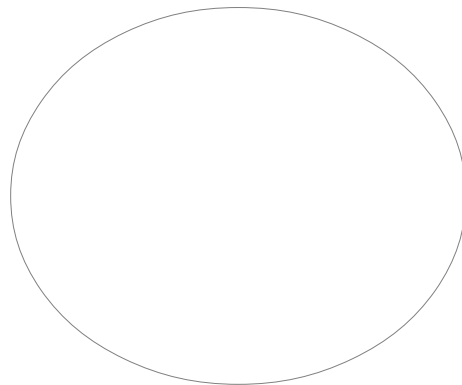
Noun	
Verb	

D. 5 Ws and an H.

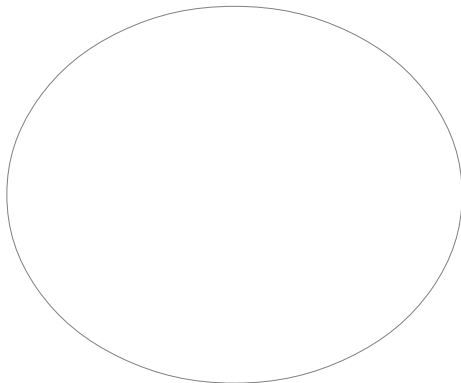
Choose an event from this section (or earlier in the novel) that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



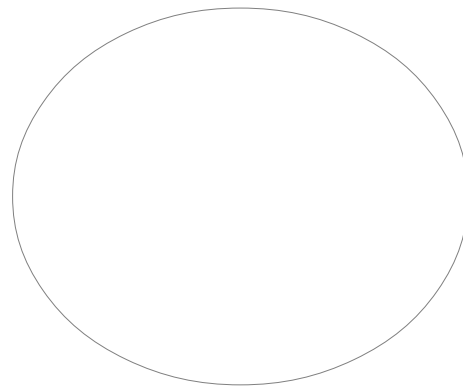
WHO?



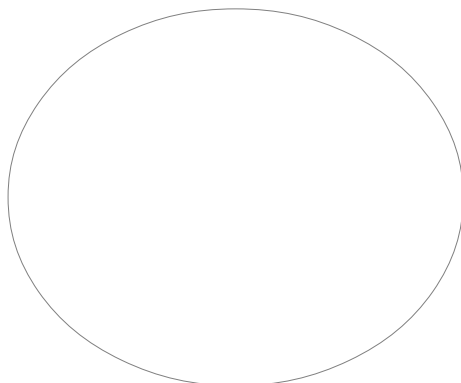
WHAT?



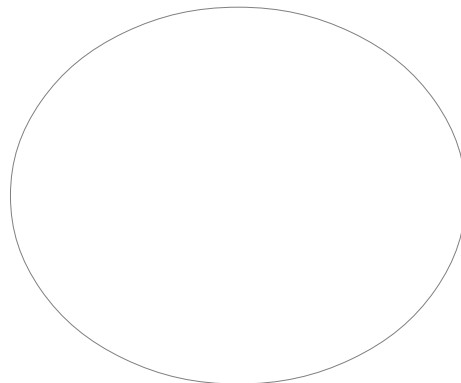
WHEN?



WHERE?



WHY?



HOW?

Extension Activities



Storyboard

A storyboard is a series of pictures that tell about an important event in a story. A storyboard can tell the story of only one scene – or the entire novel.



Complete the storyboard below illustrating the events described in the first two chapters of *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH*. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

1	2
3	4
5	6