



The Tale of Despereaux

by Kate DiCamillo

Recommended Ages:

8 and up

Summary: The adventures of Despereaux Tilling, a small mouse of unusual talents, and the princess he loves, the servant girl who longs to be a princess, and a devious rat determined to bring them all to ruin.

Discussion Questions: Spoiler alert! Some of the questions contain key elements of the plot. Do not read if you don't want to know what happens!

1. Describe Despereaux and Roscuro. What is special about their names? What about them is different to other mice or rats, respectively? How is the "normal" mouse or rat supposed to behave?
2. What happens at the party in the castle and what are the consequences?
3. What significance does soup have in this book?
4. The characters in the book all have special dreams that get them into trouble. What are their dreams?
5. Who was your favorite character and why?
6. Is there a central thread in the story? Did you like how the four story lines are weaved together?
7. Is this story a fairy tale? Is there a "happily ever after" at the end? If so, how does it look for the different characters?
8. Miggery Sow and the princess have entirely different lives. How do they differ? What connects them nevertheless?
9. Love is "powerful", "wonderful" and "ridiculous." Do you agree? How does it affect Despereaux's life?
10. Discuss the behavior of Despereaux's family throughout the book.
11. Despereaux decides to go back into the dungeon he had just escaped. Why? What gives him the strength to do so? What helps him find his way?
12. "Stories are light," Gregory the jailer tells Despereaux. What does this mean to you? Did you find some light in this story?

Snack Ideas: Of course, soup! (i.e., soup with chicken, watercress, and garlic). Or try celery (with dips), the threadmasters' favorite food.