

SYNOPSIS

As the main protagonist of the story, Despereaux was born as a castle-mouse and the only living mouse of his mother's last litter. Named by her from the many despairs of that time, Despereaux has been an oddball among the mouse community from birth, as he was born with a small body, huge ears, and his eyes open. He then grew up to be radically different from the other mice in this tale, choosing to read books instead of eating them, from where he develops a fascination toward fairy tales and learns from them ideas such as chivalry and courage, which his fearful peers dismiss as absurd. Through his large ears, Despereaux is able to listen to the music that the king plays for his daughter Princess Pea, and because of this, he is able to meet and fall in love with the human princess. This behaviour, however, does not go unnoticed by the mice, and when he is sent to the dungeon as punishment, Despereaux must rely on his wits, bravery, and inner strength in order to save him and the princess.

As an antagonist character, Chiaroscuro was born innocent among the evil rats of the castle dungeon some years before Despereaux. Because of a match-related warning from the jailer, Roscuro comes to be fascinated by light and goodness, despite objections from fellow rats. However, his love of light is what causes him to make a grave mistake in the human world, resulting in his plot to take revenge on the humans by kidnapping the princess. In the end, it is through the actions of Despereaux and the princess, and Roscuro's own true love for light that he finds his self-redemption.

The last main character is Miggery Sow. Born in the countryside of Dor; she

was an often-mistreated child, since nobody around her cared much for what she wanted. Her mother died and her father then sold her to a man whom she called "uncle", when she was very young. Miggery had to work for the man to the uncle for many years with little or no thanks. The man would also give her "clouts to the ear," causing her to be almost completely deaf. However an accidental meeting with the royal family on her seventh birthday causes Miggery to wish to be a princess. When she turns twelve, she is rescued from slavery by the soldiers of the castle who was in a task of collecting soup-related apparatus, and she is given the position of serving-maid in the castle itself, befriendng Princess Pea, but becoming an unintentional pawn in Roscuro's plan.

Every character in this story has a dream to fulfil. Despereaux wants to be with the princess, and in addition, a knight in shining armour just like the one he reads in the library. Roscuro longs for the "light" after he suffers the match incident with Gregory. And Miggery wishes to be a princess after she sees one at her birthday. However, each dreams brings each own consequences. Because of his desire to be with the princess, Despereaux is bound to have trouble with his family and the mouse council, which lead him to be banished into the dungeon. The inordinate interest in light makes Roscuro finds himself hanging on a chandelier and then accidentally kills the queen because he slips off of his grip and falls into the queen's bowl of soup. As for Miggery, her wish to be a princess makes her being used by Roscuro to help him with his evil plan to revenge the king. These unwanted consequences also happen because the misfortune condition suffered by each character.

Due to the different timeline applied in each story of each section, the

characters do not know one another at the start of the story, but by the end of the story the timeline starts to interconnect and they come into each other's lives. Thus, altering the course of their destiny. In achieving their dreams or purposes, each character experience certain conflict with each others. And as their path come across with each others', the conflict becomes clearer. Although there are conflicts among the characters, by the end of the story those conflicts are resolved by the manner of amity. The princess' decision to allow Roscuro to be upstairs where he can see the "light", Miggery reunion with his father, and Despereaux's friendship the princess.

Looking back at the events that have happened as well as the actions and reactions that those characters have experienced, it can be concluded that they all are merely victims of circumstances and misfortunes. In the end, those circumstances and misfortunes are the ones that lead them all together.

APPENDIX

The Tale of Despereaux by Kate DiCamillo

by Elizabeth Kennedy

(<http://childrensbooks.about.com/cs/fairytales/fr/despereaux.htm>)

The Tale of Despereaux, by Kate DiCamillo, is an odd and engrossing fairy tale. The hero, Despereaux Tilling, is a mouse with large ears. While of the same high literary quality as her previous two children's books, *Because of Winn-Dixie*, a Newbery Honor Book, and *The Tiger Rising*, a National Book Award finalist, and also geared to same 8-12 year old age range, this novel is distinctly different from her others. It has a lot in common with Grimm's fairy tales.

The subtitle of *The Tale of Despereaux* gives the reader a clue that this is not an ordinary book. It states, "Being the story of a mouse, a princess, some soup, and a spool of thread." What prompted Kate DiCamillo to write such a book? According to the author, "My best friend's son asked if I would write a story for him. 'It's about an unlikely hero,' he said, 'with exceptionally large ears.' When DiCamillo asked him, 'What happened to the hero,' his response was, 'I don't know. That's why I want you to write this story, so we can find out.'"

The result is a wildly entertaining novel with some important messages about being yourself and redemption. The characters include a very special mouse with an affinity for music, a princess named Pea, and Miggery Sow, a poorly treated, slow-witted serving girl. Since every tale needs a villain, even a sometimes sympathetic one, there is a rat named Roscuro to fill that role. This odd assortment of characters is drawn together because of their desire for something more, but it is Despereaux Tilling, the unlikely hero with large ears, who, along with the narrator, is the star of the show. As the narrator states, "Reader, you must know that an interesting fate (sometimes involving rats, sometimes not) awaits almost everyone, man or mouse, who does not conform."

The unnamed narrator adds wit, humor, and intelligence to the story, frequently speaking directly to the reader, asking questions, admonishing the reader, pointing out the consequences of certain actions, and sending the reader to the dictionary to look up unknown words. Indeed, her use of language is one of the gifts that Kate DiCamillo brings to the story, along with her imaginative storytelling, character development, and "voice."

It was interesting to me to see how Kate DiCamillo incorporated several of the central themes of her other two books, parental abandonment and redemption, in *The Tale of Despereaux*. Parental abandonment comes in several forms in DiCamillo's books: a parent leaving the family forever, a parent dying, or a parent withdrawing emotionally.

Despereaux has always been different from his siblings and when his actions result in life-threatening punishment, his father does not defend him. Princess Pea's mother died as a result of seeing a rat in her soup. As a result, her father has withdrawn and has decreed that soup may no longer be served anywhere in his kingdom. Miggery Sow was sold into servitude by her father after her mother died.

However, Despereaux's adventures change the lives of the adults as well as the children and the rat. These changes hinge on forgiveness and again emphasize a central theme: "Every action, reader, no matter how small, has a consequence." I found this an extremely satisfying book, with lots of adventure, wit, and wisdom.

The Tale of Despereaux was published in 2003 by Candlewick Press. The book itself is beautifully designed, with high-quality paper with torn edges (I am not sure what you call that, but it looks great). It is illustrated with strange and beguiling, dense pencil drawings by Timothy Basil Ering. Each of the four books of the novel has a title page, with an intricate border by Ering. I highly recommend this book, both as a novel for 8-12 year olds and as a read aloud for families to share and younger children to also enjoy.

January 12, 2004 - Newbery Medal Winner!

On January 12, 2004, Kate DiCamillo's *The Tale of Despereaux* was awarded the prestigious 2004 Newbery Medal. According to the American Library Association (ALA), the Newbery Medal is awarded annually "to the author of the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children." This is the first time that I have been correct about which book would win the Newbery Medal. I hope you and your children enjoy the book as much as I did.

The Tale of Despereaux

by andrangel20

(<http://andrangel20.multiply.com/reviews/item/6>)

The Tale of Despereaux (Kate DiCamillo) adalah buku anak-anak yang gue rekomendasikan. Kisahnya sederhana, tapi sangat mendalam dan penuh teladan, tanpa ada bahasa yang menggurui. Cocok juga untuk dibacakan kepada anak-anak, dan dihiasi dengan ilustrasi yang manis dan memikat, walaupun hanya hitam putih.

Di buku ini dikisahkan tentang Despereaux Tilling, seekor tikus kastil yang terlahir berbeda dari tikus-tikus yang lain. Badannya yang beratnya diperkirakan hanya setengah berat tikus normal, yaitu 200 gram (hihi gue gak tau apa si pengarang cukup iseng mengukur berat badan tikus), dan memiliki sepasang telinga yang besar.

Ternyata perbedaan Despereaux bukan hanya dari segi fisik saja. Tapi segi minat dan kebiasaan dia juga berbeda dengan tikus-tikus kastil pada umumnya. Dia

sangat menyukai musik, cerita-cerita (dia suka banget baca buku di perpustakaan istana hahahaha, nih tikus kayaknya cocok temenan dengan gue), dan jatuh cinta bukan dengan sesama tikus, tapi dengan seorang puteri, Pea. Karena perbedaan dan kelakuan yang dianggap mengotori dunia tikus kastil, maka dia dihukum sehingga dia terpaksa harus berada di ruang bawah tanah yang penuh dengan tikus got.

Di buku ini juga diceritakan tentang seekor tikus got bernama Chiaroscuro (Roscuero), yang sangat terobsesi dengan cahaya. Dalam perjalanannya mencari cahaya yang dia idamkan, dia mengalami hal yang cukup tragis sehingga timbul dendam di hatinya, dan keinginannya untuk membalas dendam sangat besar.

Dan satu lagi tokoh adalah Miggery Sow, anak piatu yang dijual ayahnya untuk menjadi pelayan, demi segenggam rokok, selebar taplak meja merah, dan seekor ayam betina. Mig sangat terobsesi ingin menjadi puteri, karena pada suatu saat dia melihat rombongan kerajaan, termasuk Puteri Pea lewat dekat rumah tuannya.

Mereka bertemu dalam istana, tepatnya di ruang bawah tanah istana, dengan tujuan yang berbeda.

Penggabungan kepentingan ketiga tokoh inilah yang menjadi kelebihan buku ini. kepentingan-kepentingan yang sebenarnya “gak nyambung” itu jadi terjalin menjadi cerita yang cukup enak dibaca dan jelas cocok untuk anak-anak.

Mungkin kelebihan-kelebihan buku ini yang membuat Kate DiCamillo menang dalam Newbery Book tahun 2004.

'Despereaux' is no 'Ratatouille'

by Claudia Puig

(www.usatoday.com/life/movies/reviews/2008-12-18-tales-of-despereaux_N.htm)

Cute little Despereaux the lop-eared mouse is just that. To borrow from A Chorus Line, his tale can be summed up thusly: Looks: 9. Originality: 5.

Since it focuses on mice and rats, it invites comparisons with Ratatouille and falls short. Ratatouille is easily the definitive rodent movie, should such a thing exist.

Despereaux clearly suffers from bad timing. But even if Ratatouille hadn't existed, it still wouldn't be as charming as the image of the adorable mouse suggests.

The story, narrated by Sigourney Weaver, is a bit dreary, bogged down by repetitive messages.

Despereaux (Matthew Broderick) is not only a delightful little critter, he also possesses a trait unlike any other mouse: bravery. Much is made of how courage is discouraged in his native Mouseworld. The scenes focusing on how he refuses

to cower are initially funny and clever.

The animation is handsomely rendered, but the story, based on the award-winning children's book by Kate DiCamillo, meanders.

Despereaux Tilling lives in the kingdom of Dor, a magical place where everyone enjoys life and feasts happily on tasty bowls of soup. Then one day an accident occurs and a gloom falls over the kingdom. The king grows depressed. Princess Pea (Emma Watson) is filled with longing, and the townspeople are weighed down by despair.

Despereaux is destined to save the day. Born brave, he loves music and books, and he dreams of performing virtuous deeds. Though his family and teachers are constantly after him to shrink in fear just as they do, Despereaux is too bold and is banished for refusing to obey. He makes friends with a gruff but good-natured rat named Roscuro (an engaging Dustin Hoffman).

But each is hampered by how they are regarded: Mice are cute, rats are disgusting. Despereaux befriends the princess, while Roscuro frightens her. Their lives intertwine with Botticelli (Ciaran Hinds), the despotic ruler of rats, and with Miggory Sow (Tracey Ullman), a serving girl who dreams of being a princess.

The impressive voice cast includes William H. Macy as Despereaux's timid father, Frank Langella as the mayor, and Kevin Kline as Andre, the royal chef.

While the story does not quite come to magical life, the themes of courage, hope and decency are sweetly inspiring.

The Tale of Despereaux Critic Reviews

by Sheri Linden

(http://www.fandango.com/thetaleofdespereaux_116873/criticreviews)

Lovable rodents and a fussy French chef -- there's a soupçon of Ratatouille in The Tale of Despereaux, but this old-fashioned fable cares not a whit about culinary competition or entrepreneurial triumph. It revolves around matters as elemental as grief and longing, the stuff of fairy tales.

Among recent animated features, Despereaux is a rare creature, not only for the handmade look and subtlety of its computer-generated imagery but also for its irony-free embrace of once-upon-a-time storytelling. At the heart of this sometimes lumbering saga are the illuminated pages of a storybook and the way they embolden a child or, in this case, a mouse.

The filmmakers don't rely on frenetic action or nonstop yammering of the wink-wink postmodern kind. But in adapting Kate DiCamillo's Newbery Medal-winning children's novel, a work of intricacy and depth, they do struggle to orchestrate multiple stories and to overlay the proceedings with moral lessons.

In this regard, the nudging narration tries too hard, however melodious its delivery by Sigourney Weaver.

Despereaux (Matthew Broderick) is an exceptionally diminutive mouse whose bravery and curiosity are as outsized as his ears. It's impossible to resist a creature who so adorably resists the social conditioning of orderly Mouseworld. Despereaux's unwillingness to scurry and cower like a good little mouse provokes hushed conferences between his parents (William H. Macy, Frances Conroy) and principal (Richard Jenkins).

He incurs Grimm-worthy penalties after venturing into the forbidden human side of the castle and befriending Princess Pea (Emma Watson). Rules are rules, after all, and the Mayor (Frank Langella) banishes him to the dungeon, a.k.a. Ratworld.

In this dank labyrinth, a place Bosch might have imagined, ruler Botticelli (played with delicious menace by Ciarán Hinds) casts his beady white irises on the newcomer, who finds a protector and soul mate in Roscuro, the story's most compelling character. An outcast like Despereaux, he's a light-loving rat, a rat of the world. Best of all, he has soulful hazel eyes and the pitch-perfect voice of Dustin Hoffman.

Much to his shame, Roscuro has been exiled because he ruined the kingdom's annual Soup Day celebration. The festivities began with a bit of overdone shenanigans between the chef and his strange muse (Kevin Kline and Stanley Tucci, departing from the generally low-key tone of the performances). They ended when the queen succumbed to a manner of death not seen in popular entertainment since "Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman."

The grief-stricken king bans soup, rats and, in a nod to present-day hysterias, anyone who shelters a rat.

The focus on hurt and anger is admirable, but Gary Ross' script too often feels like a clunky lesson in character motivation. "Sometimes when your heart breaks, it grows back crooked" is among the narrator's enunciations. True enough, but the preachments on forgiveness are less convincing, particularly after the villain receives a gruesome (off-screen) comeuppance.

And the way Princess Pea inspires mouse, rat and her own maid, the tellingly named Miggery Sow (Tracey Ullman), is less interesting or coherent than the mood that directors Sam Fell and Robert Stevenhagen create. They don't fear the dark. Ratworld is a place of rot and skeletons and cruel gladiator games, none of it sugared-up for kids. Ushering our hero into the underworld is blind mouse Hovis (Christopher Lloyd), a feeble Charon and a wonderfully sunless creation. The absence of shiny cartoon people is as refreshing as the muted palette, even if the royals' Modigliani-narrow faces are far less expressive than those of the rodents.