



Novel Guide for Gifted and Advanced Readers



This guide is appropriate for use with gifted and advanced readers. It addresses their affective and cognitive needs through questions that can be used for discussion. Depending on the length of the book, students should read the entire book before conducting the bibliotherapy lesson, the **Group Discussion** using the higher order questions and the **After Discussion** activities. Students should be given the **Before Discussion** activities to complete during their time while reading the book. If the book is exceptionally long, you may need to modify this lesson plan. See **Novel Guide: Notes for Implementing** for additional procedures and recommendations.

Book Title: *Emmy and the Incredible Shrinking Rat*

Author: Lynne Jonell

Interest Level: 3rd-5th Grade

Lexile: 780L

Length: 368

Guide developed by: Cherry Moody

Summary

Emmy tries to be a good girl, but no one; not even her parents seem to notice her. One day at school, the classroom pet, a talking rat takes notice her. When she helps the rat escape from his cage, Emmy is in for an adventure and finds a world full of rodents with magical powers. Emmy's horrible Nanny, Miss Barmy is already familiar with the rodents and uses their powers to her own advantage. Jonell includes several delightful characters, both human and rodent, that allow to Emmy find meaningful friendships, the love of her parents, as well as with solving many mysterious events that have been taking place in her life.

Conceptual Connections:

Conceptual Lens: belonging

Other Key Concepts: friendship; change, relationships

Essential Understandings:

- Everyone feels the need to belong.
- Friendship can provide a sense of belonging.
- Change is a part of relationships.

Essential Questions:

- What does it mean to belong? What makes you belong?
- How do relationships with others transform people?

Affective Focus (Bibliotherapy)

Introductory Activity/Hook

Open a discussion with the students about how it feels to be ignored? Ask students if they remember a time when they really wanted to be a part of something, but were totally ignored? The teacher will share a time that she felt that way and have students to volunteer to share also. Lead students in a discussion as to whether or not it's their place to step in if they know someone is feeling this way.

Menu of Bibliotherapy Questions

Identification:

- What is Emmy's problem at the beginning of the story?
- What is Miss Barmy's role in the problems that Emmy faces?
- Why do you think the Rat is always so sarcastic?
- Which of Emmy's relationships is most alarming? Who are her true friends?

Catharsis:

- Does the development of the friendship between Emmy and the Rat remind you of any of your own relationships? In what ways?
- How do Emmy's feelings about herself change when she begins to get noticed by her classmates?
- How does Emmy feel about Joe? How does Joe Feel about Emmy?

Insight:

- How do you feel when you are not noticed by others?
- How do you know if a relationship is healthy or hurtful?
- What are the elements that build strong friendships?

Universalization/Follow Up

All of the rodents (and humans) in this book have special talents and gifts. What are your talents or special gifts? Create a presentation to share these talents with others. You may use any format you choose: technology, song, artwork, skit, dance, etc.

Reading Comprehension: Independent Work and Group Discussion

To foster strong reading comprehension, literacy skills, and love of literature, students need to read critically, respond to what they read with text-based evidence, develop a robust vocabulary, and engage in high level discussion with peers. The following activities address these components.

Before Group Discussion (Activities for students to complete independently)

A. Knowledge and Comprehension Questions related to the novel. Students use sticky notes to locate answers in the text as they read. Teacher may use student's answers for a grade.

Knowledge Questions

- Who are the main characters?
- Why is Emmy so obedient?
- What does Emmy think about her family?
- What does Mr. Vole want from Emmy at her school?
- What do you think is going to happen with Emmy when Miss Barmy finds out that she did not go to lessons?

Comprehension Questions

- Why do you think no one ever really sees Emmy?
- Why do you think Emmy was not afraid or surprised when the rat started talking?
- Why does Mr. Vole get upset at Emmy for not giving him the rat with the triangle on its fur?
- Why is the rat always so mean to Emmy even though she shows him nothing but kindness?
- Do you think that Brian, Mr. Vole's nephew, is going to help Emmy and Joe?
- Do you think all of these experiences will help Emmy in her social life?

B. Vocabulary Study: Students will complete the following activities with vocabulary from the novel. The activities may be used for a grade, but should also be included in the discussion.

Vocabulary Words

- Incredulous p. 17
- Exasperated p. 53
- Droned p. 75
- Affronted p. 85
- Petulantly p. 212
- Blighted p. 225
- Abashed p. 313
- Preened p. 327

Group Discussion: Teacher-facilitated small group discussion. Teacher may choose to provide students with a set of the questions prior to the discussion. Students should also be encouraged to create their own questions.

Higher-Level Questions (using Bloom's Categories):

1. Application

- Will Emmy steal the other rat so that she and Ratson will be together?
- What will happen when the two rats meet? Do you think there is something magical to it?
- Why is Ratson always so mean to Emmy even though she shows him nothing but kindness?

2. Analysis

- Why is Miss Barmy so full of hate for Emmy?
- What were Emmy's parents like?
- The Rat tells Emmy she should try being unkind so that people treat her with respect. Do you agree with Ratson? How can a person earn respect without showing unkindness?
- When Emmy says, "I wouldn't mind being ordinary," Is Emmy ordinary an ordinary girl? What are her extraordinary qualities?

3. Evaluation

- Which character do you feel was most evil, Miss Barmy or Professor Vole? Justify your answer.
- Do you think having rodents for friends is a good or a bad thing?
- What do you think about the sacrifice the Endear mouse was willing to do for Emmy?

4. Synthesis

- Ratson made the comment, "Freedom has its bitter side." What do you think he means? Do you think he would have rather stayed captive?
- How could the story have been different if Ratson was a kind rodent like Sissy? Do you think it would have been as entertaining?
- Being able to talk to animals is a common theme in books. What would you like to talk to animals about?

After Group Discussion: Activities for students to complete with a partner, in a small group, or individually. Activities may be used for a grade.

A. Connections to the Curriculum: Students will make connections to a curriculum area using one of the concepts from the story. The product should reflect creative as well as critical thinking.

- **Language Arts:** Discuss fables and remind students that fables are short stories that often feature animals with human characteristics to teach a lesson. Rats and mice are favorite animals in fables. Students will search for fables about rats and mice to share with the class. Students will write a fable about rodents that will be used to create a class book of fables.
- **Social Studies:** Research the different areas where the various rodents from the story originate. Students will be given a choice of how they would like to present their findings to the class.
- **Science:** Students will research the many species of rodents that we discovered while reading the text. The students will become very interested in the different types and want to find out more about them. Students will choose a format in which to present their information.
- **Math:** Throughout the book humans are shrinking due to being bitten by rodents. Students will do a unit of study on measurement and compare sizes of the characters actual size to those of the shrunken size. Students will make representations of both sizes from butcher paper to compare.
- **Art:** The book contains flipbook illustrations of Rat crawling across a branch and tumbling into Emmy's hands. Have students create their own flipbook illustrations for a scene in the book.

b. Creative Reading: Using the following list of creative products, students will complete a project reflecting their personal connection with the novel (students may determine their own creative product with the approval of the teacher)

1. Create a puppet play based on a favorite scene in the story
2. Create a poem based on the novel, a character, or favorite scene
3. Illustrate a favorite scene(s) from the story
4. Create a story board of the plot of the story
5. Write a screen play based on the story
6. Create new ending for the story
7. Create a map of the location(s) of the story
8. Create a mural representative of the story and characters
9. Extend the story into a sequel
10. Rewrite a portion of the story from another character's perspective
11. Rewrite the story in another time or culture
12. Create an online product: infographic, video, character blog, etc.
13. Write a song that one or more of the characters might sing
14. Create an interpretative dance for the story
15. Student idea for a creative product related to the story: Illustrate each of Hollis' pictures as described in the book.