

The Tale of Despereaux
Kate DiCamillo
Candlewick Press
2003
5-6th grade

Background Knowledge:

The Tale of Despereaux won the John Newbery Medal and was the #1 National Bestseller. The author, Kate Dicamillo also wrote several other wonderful books such as Because of Winn-Dixie, which was also made into a movie.

Intended Audience:

I will be using this booktalk to recruit readers for an after school book club for 5th and 6th graders. This book should be at the independent reading level of most students.

My Script:

Despereaux Tilling is a mouse, but he is not very good mouse. He is too small and his ears are too big. He would rather read a book than eat its pages. He loves to hear the king play his guitar and –oh yeah- he is in love with the princess.

He is a mouse outcast and is sentenced to the dungeon full of rats where he is sure to die. There he discovers that one of the rats is planning to harm the princess, he will do whatever he can to save her!

The story of Despereaux, the princess, a nasty rat, and a slow-witted servant girl is a true adventure from start to finish. Sign up to join us reading this wonderful story of an unlikely hero. (I will pass the book around for all students to look at.)

Curriculum Connections:

Kate Dicamillo's website (www.katedicamillo.com) is an interesting place for students to visit. They can read summaries of all of her books, her story of becoming an award-winning author, frequently asked questions, and her writing tips for young authors.

Her website could also be used to prompt a writing exercise. She tells a story of a writing assignment that she had to do once. Students could read her story and her tips and then write their own description of something or their own story.

This book could be easily used as part of a unit on fairy tales. This is one of many books that could be considered a new fairy tale. Students could also read Ella Enchanted, The Princess Tales, or The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane.