

Story Summary

The Stowaways aren't like the other Weedle mice. They are inventive and curious, they go on adventures, and they are much too clever for their own good. In fact, everyone knows that Grampa Stowaway was killed in a trap on one of his adventures. So, who would want to associate with a family like that?

There's something else about the Stowaways. They keep secrets. Rory has made friends with a bird, their natural enemy; and his twin brother Morgan dreams of sailing away. But Gran has the biggest secret of all—and Rory has discovered what it is. If Rory and Gran act on their suspicions, will they be heading for disaster? Or will it be the greatest Stowaway adventure of all?

As a child, **Meghan Marentette** loved collecting odds and ends to build miniature worlds for her toys. Later, as a costume designer for film and television, she was assigned to make tiny costumes for stop-motion animation puppets. It was during this job that Meghan conceived of the miniature world of her first novel, *The Stowaways*, which has been a finalist for the Ann Connor Brimer Award, the CLA Book of the Year for Children Award, and the Monica Hughes Award for Science Fiction and Fantasy. Meghan lives in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Juvenile Fiction Ages 8–12 | ISBN: 978-1-927485-33-0 (HC) / 978-1-927485-88-0 (PB) | Pages: 240

Keywords:

Mice, Adventure, Family, Intergenerational, Courage, Ingenuity

BISAC Codes

JUV002180 JUVENILE FICTION / Animals / Mice, Hamsters, Guinea Pigs, etc.

JUV001000 JUVENILE FICTION / Action & Adventure / General

JUV037000 JUVENILE FICTION / Fantasy & Magic

Reading Level

Fountas & Pinnell: S | Lexile Measure: 700L

BOOK CLUBS

This guide has been developed for use in classroom book clubs/literature circles. Book clubs support and develop the love of reading as well as help students build comprehension and support the development of collaborative learning and critical thinking.

In book clubs students:

- meet in small groups (4–8) to discuss a book they are reading
- take turns assuming a leadership role within the group
- meet regularly and set the pace for their reading
- take ownership for their learning by:
 - selecting the book they will read (usually from a predetermined list provided by the teacher)
 - determine the pace of the reading
 - prepare for and run their discussions.

Prior to beginning with book clubs, teachers:

- take time to develop and nurture whole class discussions about books while modeling the skills and behaviors needed to collaborate and work together as a book club
- provide guidance, modeling, and support
- become familiar with all texts prior to making them available to students

During book club discussions, teachers:

- develop a schedule for book clubs ensuring they provide time for reading and discussion
- provide mini-lessons for any needs that may arise
- monitor through observation and conferring as well as supporting student self-assessment

Key elements:

- Groups meet on a regular basis, with time provided in class to read and discuss their book
- Students use a “reader’s notebook” to write notes, comments, insights, and questions while they read
- Students bring their reader’s notebook to each meeting to support their discussion
- Discussion topics may emerge from the students as they read; however, the teacher provides discussion topics and provocations to help students engage in rich discussions (suggestions are provided in this guide)
- Group meetings are collaborative, with each group developing a set of norms for their group
- The teacher serves as facilitator
- Assessment is grounded in teacher observation, student conversations, and student self-assessment
- Book clubs promote a love of reading

Thinking about Assessment...

This Discussion Guide offers a range of prompts, tasks, and provocations to support Book Club discussions. While using this guide in the classroom, teachers have a number of opportunities to use observation, conversation, and products to assess student thinking and learning. The tasks and prompts offered in this guide are designed to support discussion, sharing, and student thinking while providing an opportunity for students to demonstrate comprehension, extension of thinking, and critical literacy. Assessment can include self-assessment and peer assessment, conversations with students through teacher/student conferences, group discussions, and products created by the students.

For the teacher and student to have a clear, common understanding of the expectations and criteria to achieve success while reading the novels, educators develop learning goals based on curriculum expectations and share them with the students in language they can understand. Then together, the educator and students co-create criteria to make the path to success visible and clear.

These success criteria are posted in the classroom, are visible to all students, and may be revised and edited based on the learning and understanding of the students.

As the Book Club meetings are collaborative and begin with the groups developing a set of norms for their group, it is suggested that all groups open each meeting with a reflection of the previous discussion. These reflections can highlight what went well during the discussions; what needs to improve in these discussions; and considerations for the current discussion.

Discussion Guide:

This discussion guide will offer a variety of tasks, discussion prompts, and questions to provoke thinking and deepen comprehension before, during, and after reading of the novel. These are suggestions only and it is certainly not necessary to complete the entire list of suggested activities/questions. Educators are encouraged to make choices based on the strengths, needs, and interests of the students.

Highlighted Curriculum Expectations

Ontario Ministry of Education Language Arts Curriculum K–8

Oral Communication

- 1.5 Making Inferences / Interpreting Texts
- 1.6 Extending Understanding
- 2.4 Demonstrating Understanding

Reading for Meaning

- 1.4 Demonstrating Understanding
- 1.5 Making Inferences / Interpreting Texts
- 1.6 Extending Understanding
- 1.7 Analyzing Texts
- 1.8 Responding and Evaluating Texts

Reading: Understanding Form and Style

- 2.3 Text Features
- 2.4 Elements of Style

Writing: Using Knowledge of Form and Style of Writing

- 2.1 Form
- 2.2 Voice
- 2.3 Word Choice
- 2.5 Point of View
- 2.7 Revision



Before Reading

1. In this story we learn that mice are sometimes used for scientific and medical experiments. Conduct your own research to learn about why mice are used in many experiments for both scientific and medical purposes. Share your learning with your group.
2. The Stowaways have a heightened sense of both smell and hearing. Learn more about mice senses. How do they help mice survive? Record your learning in your Reader's Notebook.
3. Prior to reading this book, carefully review the maps provided on the inside flaps of the book. Ensure you return to these maps often during your reading to trace and review the journey of the Stowaway family.
4. *The Stowaways* is an “adventure” story. Read about the elements of an adventure story. What other adventure stories have you read? Do you enjoy them? Why/why not? Discuss with your group.
5. *The Stowaways* could also be considered a “hero” story.
 - a) What do you expect when you read a hero story?
 - b) From reading the inside cover and back cover of the book, who do you predict will be the “hero” or “heroes” of this tale? Explain your thinking.



During Reading

**Please check in with your book club at the suggested points in the novel.

Chapters 1–6

1. The two brothers in this story are named Morgan and Rory. They are twins and there is sibling rivalry between them. Although they have many things in common, they also have different personality traits and they often argue. Create a Venn diagram in your Reader's Notebook. As you read the story, add character traits to the Venn diagram that depict Morgan and Rory's character. Include similar characteristics in the intersecting part of the diagram. At the end of this section, share your Venn diagram with your group. List some of the qualities you have included for Morgan and some of the qualities you have included for Rory. Explain how each one demonstrates the personality trait you have listed.
2. Why is chapter two titled “Forbidden Friends”? Discuss with a partner. Explain your thinking.
3. In these early chapters we begin to learn that the Stowaways are different from other mice in their community.
 - How are they different?
 - How are they treated because they are different?
 - How do they deal with the fact that others see them as different?
 - Discuss with your group.
4. On page 24 Morgan's teacher, Miss Creemore, says, “Remember, an arrogant mouse is a lonely mouse.” Why does Miss Creemore make this statement? Do you think Morgan is arrogant? Explain your thinking in your Reader's Notebook and then share with your group.
5. Beginning on page 37, the Stowaways plan and then participate in a family adventure that takes them into Eekum and the market. Use the 3Rs framework to retell, relate, and reflect on this section of the book: pages 37 to 56. You may use the following link to help



you use the 3Rs framework (retell, relate, reflect).

<http://www.edugains.ca/resourcesDI/TeachingLearningExamples/COOP/CooperativeEducationExperientialLearning3RsAppendix.pdf>

6. In chapter six, Rory finds and reads a fable titled “The Proud Mouse and the Trap.” Why is Rory so interested in this fable? Does this fable remind you of any other fables you have read? How?

Chapters 7–8:

1. This book includes some pencil illustrations throughout. How do the illustrations help you as a reader? How do they contribute to our understanding and enjoyment of the story? Discuss with a partner.
2. Why do you think the author titled chapter ten “Dividing Interests”? Reflect on this after reading this chapter and then record your thinking in your Reading Journal. Share your thinking with your group.
3. At the end of chapter ten, Papa decides that the entire family should go home. Why do you think Papa made this decision? Do you think he made the right decision? How are all the other members of the family feeling about having to go back home? Discuss with your group. Explain your thinking using evidence from the text.
4. It seems that every member of the family has learned a great deal during this first adventure. What do you think some of them have learned? Record your thinking in your Reader’s Notebook.
5. During the characters’ visit to the toy store there is a great deal of action. We can use a visualization strategy to help us follow the action. Choose one of the following ways to express your interpretation and visualization of this section of the story:
 - Consider a song or piece of music you might select to complement this section of the story. Explain your music selection and the reasons why you selected this music/song in your Reader’s Notebook. Share with your group.

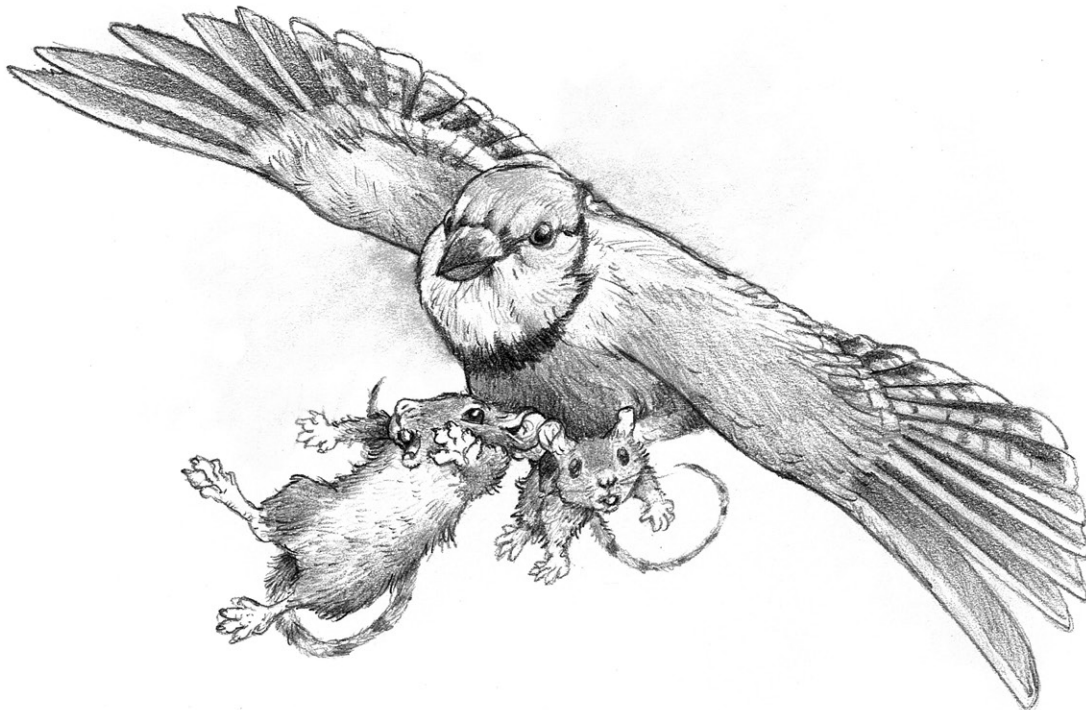
- Draw an illustration to depict the action in this section. Share with your group.
- Create a map, storyboard, or other type of graphic illustration that outlines the movement and action in the toy store. Share with your group.

Chapters 12–13

1. On page 138, Rory makes a very difficult decision when he decides to stay with Gran.
 - What does this decision reveal about Rory’s character? Discuss with your partner.
 - Do you think he made the right decision? Why or why not? Explain your thinking to your partner.
2. Revisit the Venn diagram you created for Rory and Morgan when you first began to read this book. Take some time to add to the Venn diagram now that we are learning more about each brother.
3. On page 155 Rory thinks, “Even if he couldn’t see how to find Grampa now, the answer would show itself eventually. At least he had some time to search before Gran healed and the Humans put her to work. They would have to escape before that.” These thoughts reveal Rory’s courage and his hopefulness. Why do you think he is hopeful? Where do you think he gets his courage? Discuss with your group.
4. On page 156 Morgan is missing his brother Rory and wonders if Rory ran away on purpose. He thinks, “If that was the case, then he kind of understood.”
 - What do you think Morgan means by this?
 - Why does he understand Rory wanting to run away on purpose?
 - Share your thinking with your group.
5. On page 159 Rory reads about Speciman ES-2, who he believes is his Grampa. What he reads on the computer screen is scientific and may be difficult to understand. Take some time to read it together with a partner. Working with your partner, restate what is written about Speciman ES-2 in your own words using point-form notes. Share your notes with the entire group.

Chapters 14–18

1. On page 164 Morgan reveals to Glee that he does not think his brother and Gran were killed by a cat. Why does he feel this way? Discuss with your group.
2. Glee responds by saying, “Perhaps the doubt in your heart is a message from the brain.”
 - What does Glee mean?
 - What are some personal connections you can make to this statement? Think about a time when you might have felt this way.
 - Record your thinking in your Reader’s Notebook.
3. In Chapter 14 we learn that since Rory and Gran were lost, the Stowaways have been shunned. What does this mean?
 - Why do you think the other mice shun them?
 - Record your thinking in your Reader’s Notebook. Share with your group.
4. At one point in this chapter Morgan describes his grandparents as “feisty”. What does “feisty” mean? Do you agree with Morgan that they are feisty? Give evidence from the text to support your answer.
5. Throughout the book the mice and the birds have an interesting relationship. Despite the fact that Rory and Morgan are told to stay away from birds, a bird ultimately helps them...more than once. What do you think the Stowaways learn from this? Discuss with your group.
6. In these chapters Morgan has a difficult journey as he tries to find his brother and Gran. Despite the challenges along the way he is persistent and he decides to keep going even when things are difficult. What does this reveal about Morgan? Return to your Venn diagram and add additional character traits for Morgan.
7. In the final few chapters Papa and Grampa finally meet again. Their final moments together are very emotional. How do you feel as you read this final encounter between Grampa and Papa? What are some personal connections you can make to this? Record your thinking in your Reader’s Notebook.
8. In the final chapter the Stowaways experience a hurricane and have to pick up, move, and start over again. How do they manage to survive the hurricane and then cope with moving to a new home/community? Discuss with your group.



After Reading

1. Throughout this story we learn a great deal about the Stowaways. How is this family like/unlike your own family? What does the family teach us? Reflect and then record your thinking in your Reader's Notebook.
2. This text touches on several “big ideas” including:
 - the importance of friendship and family
 - the power of persistence and optimism
 - the importance of accepting others/accepting differences
 - loyalty
 - courage
 - others
3. What do you think is the big idea in this text? Explain your thinking in your reader's notebook. Share your thinking with your group.
4. Return to your notes about the qualities of an “adventure” story or a “hero” story. Would you describe *The Stowaways* as an adventure or hero story? Why or why not?
5. Who was your favorite character? Describe the character's personality traits. Explain why this character is your favorite.
6. Prior to reading this book, you learned about the use of mice in science and medical experiments. Do you think we should use mice for these type of experiments? Discuss with your group.
7. What do you think Morgan, Rory, and Papa learned over the course of this story? Explain your thinking in your Reader's Notebook. Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
8. This book includes many cliffhangers. Choose one cliffhanger that stood out for you. Read it aloud and then discuss with your group. What techniques has the author used to make this a great cliffhanger?
9. How does the author build tension and suspense throughout this story? Reflect and record your thinking in your Reader's Notebook.
10. Do you think the author uses “stereotypes” in this novel? Consider how Gran, Mama, Papa, and Grampa are portrayed. Are any of them portrayed in a stereotypical manner? Explain your thinking.
11. Why do you think Rory was so determined to find his lost grandfather? Record your thinking in your Reader's Notebook.
12. What were both Rory and Morgan trying to prove to their father? Explain your thinking. Give evidence from the text to support your answer.
13. The Stowaways' entire world is not very big; in fact it sometimes appears as a “miniature” world. Throughout the book we see everyday objects, such as buttons and thimbles, from the perspective of a mouse. Select one place in the book where this miniature world stands out for you. Read this selection to your partner. Explain why this selection stands out for you.



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