

Book Title: *The Tale of Despereaux*

Book Author: Kate DiCamillo

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Star Teen Book Reviewer of Be the Star You Are! Charity

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The Tale of Despereaux follows the stories of a mouse who falls in love with a princess, a rat who longs to see the light, and a servant girl who wishes to be a princess. The mouse, named Despereaux, has odd traits that set him apart from other mice, and he gets exiled to the palace dungeon for exposing himself to humans. The rat, named Roscuro, is forced to live in the dark dungeon with other rats, but he dearly yearns to go upstairs to the palace where he can see light. The girl, named Miggery Sow, works as a servant in the palace. When Despereaux overhears Roscuro and Mig plotting to kidnap Princess Pea, he must act quickly to save the princess before it is too late.

This novel has a unique structure: it is split into four sections, called “books.” The first three books each focus on one specific character’s story, and all three stories come together and become intertwined in the fourth and final book. I really like this structure because it establishes a sense of mystery and ambiguity in the beginning of the novel, and DiCamillo adds clues throughout the plot which help the reader connect the dots that eventually bring the three characters together. In addition, I appreciate the sense of creativity and imagination in the world that DiCamillo creates in this novel, a world where animals can read, talk, and interact with humans.

Overall, *The Tale of Despereaux* is perfect as a gift for children in grades 3 – 5 (ages 9 – 11). They will appreciate the beautiful illustrations throughout the chapters, which depict important moments in the plot and help bring the characters to life in the reader’s mind. This novel can also be a great bedtime story that parents can read to children. There are important themes about courage, compassion, and loyalty that enhance the plot. Its satisfying ending dispels the animosity between humans and animals that was present in the beginning, and it depicts an environment in which everyone can live in harmony.

Recommended books

***Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* by Grace Lin**

***Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by Roald Dahl**

***James and the Giant Peach* by Roald Dahl**