

Comprehension: Rats of NIMH

Mrs. Frisby, a recently widowed mouse, finds herself facing an impossible situation. Living with her four children in a humble cinder block home on the edge of a field owned by a farmer named Mr. Fitzgibbon, she has always managed to provide for her family despite the challenges that come with life as a small creature in a dangerous world. But this year, as winter gives way to spring, a series of events puts everything she holds dear at risk.

Her youngest son, Timothy, has fallen seriously ill with pneumonia. Ordinarily, the family would move to their summer home as soon as the weather begins to warm, avoiding the deadly plough that will soon cut through the field. However, Timothy is too weak to be moved, and the thought of him being exposed to the elements during the journey is unthinkable. Desperate for a solution, Mrs. Frisby seeks out the help of Mr. Ages, an elderly mouse who had been a close friend of her late husband, Jonathan. Mr. Ages provides her with medicine for Timothy but warns that it may not be enough to save him if they cannot find a way to delay the ploughing.



On her way home from Mr. Ages, Mrs. Frisby encounters Jeremy, a young crow entangled in the farmer's cat's trap. Risking her own life, she frees Jeremy from the trap, and in return, he offers to fly her to visit the wise old owl who lives in the deep woods. The owl is known for his wisdom and may know of a way to save Timothy and the rest of her family.

The owl listens to Mrs. Frisby's plight and is initially reluctant to help, seeing little hope in the face of the oncoming plough. However, when he learns that Mrs. Frisby is the widow of Jonathan, he directs her to seek help from the mysterious rats who live in the rosebush on the Fitzgibbon farm. These are no ordinary rats; they are the product of a secret experiment

conducted by scientists at the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), which has granted them extraordinary intelligence and abilities.

Mrs. Frisby's encounter with the rats reveals a complex and sophisticated society living in the rosebush. The rats, led by Nicodemus, have developed technologies such as elevators, electric lighting, and advanced engineering skills. Nicodemus recounts the story of their escape from NIMH, aided by Jonathan and Mr. Ages, who were also part of the experiments. It was Jonathan who played a key role in helping the rats escape the lab and find refuge on the farm.

Out of respect for Jonathan's memory, the rats agree to help Mrs. Frisby. They devise a plan to move her cinder block home to a safer location before the ploughing begins. However, the plan is fraught with danger, as it requires drugging Dragon, the farmer's cat, to ensure their safety. Mrs. Frisby volunteers for the perilous task, knowing full well that her husband lost his life in a similar attempt.

As Mrs. Frisby carries out her mission, she is captured by the farmer's son and placed in a birdcage. From her cage, she overhears a conversation about a group of rats that were electrocuted at a nearby hardware store, sparking interest from the NIMH scientists who are eager to track down the escaped rats. With this knowledge, Mrs. Frisby is rescued by the rats and returns to warn them of the impending danger.

1. Why does Mrs. Frisby seek help from Mr. Ages?
 - A. He is a doctor.
 - B. He controls the ploughing schedule.
 - C. He was a friend of her late husband.
 - D. He lives in the same cinder block.

2. What can we infer about Mrs. Frisby's character from her decision to free Jeremy?
 - A. She is reckless.
 - B. She is kind and brave.
 - C. She does not care about her own safety.
 - D. She dislikes crows.

3. Why is the owl initially reluctant to help Mrs. Frisby?
 - A. He does not like mice.
 - B. He is afraid of the rats.
 - C. He is too busy with other matters.
 - D. He sees little hope in saving Timothy.

4. What can we infer about Jonathan from the owl's reaction to his name?
 - A. Jonathan was a villain.
 - B. Jonathan was highly respected.
 - C. Jonathan was a scientist.
 - D. Jonathan was unimportant to the owl.

5. Why do the rats agree to help Mrs. Frisby move her home?
 - A. They want to show off their intelligence.
 - B. They owe a debt to Jonathan.
 - C. They want to take over the cinder block.
 - D. They are afraid of the owl.

6. What is the significance of the rats' advanced technology?
 - A. It highlights their intelligence and resourcefulness.
 - B. It shows their dependence on humans.
 - C. It makes them more vulnerable to predators.
 - D. It isolates them from other animals.

7. Why does Mrs. Frisby volunteer to drug Dragon, the cat?
 - A. She wants to prove her bravery.
 - B. She feels responsible for her family's safety.
 - C. She wants to avenge Jonathan's death.
 - D. She is not aware of the dangers involved.

8. What can we infer about the relationship between Mrs. Frisby and Jonathan?
 - A. They had a troubled marriage.
 - B. They deeply cared for each other.
 - C. They were strangers before marriage.
 - D. They never discussed his past.

9. Why is it important for the rats to move the Frisby home?
- A. To show their power.
 - B. To fulfil a promise to Jonathan.
 - C. To avoid the destruction of the house.
 - D. To escape the NIMH scientists.
10. Why does Mrs. Frisby feel compelled to warn the rats about the scientists?
- A. She wants to impress the owl.
 - B. She fears for the safety of the rats.
 - C. She wants the rats to leave the farm.
 - D. She needs the rats to repay a debt.
11. What can be inferred about the character of Nicodemus from his leadership of the rats?
- A. He is a tyrant.
 - B. He is indifferent to others' needs.
 - C. He is afraid of change.
 - D. He is wise and fair.
12. Why do the rats want to abandon their current lifestyle?
- A. They are bored with their technology.
 - B. They want to live independently from humans.
 - C. They plan to join the owl in the woods.
 - D. They fear retribution from NIMH.
13. What does the story suggest about the impact of intelligence on the rats' lives?
- A. Intelligence has isolated them from others.
 - B. Intelligence has made their lives easier.
 - C. Intelligence has only caused them pain.
 - D. Intelligence has brought them closer to humans.
14. What motivates the owl to help Mrs. Frisby after learning of her connection to Jonathan?
- A. He fears the rats.
 - B. He wants to honour Jonathan's memory.
 - C. He seeks to manipulate Mrs. Frisby.
 - D. He wants to destroy Dragon.

15. Why does the story focus on Mrs. Frisby's perspective?
- A. To show the dangers of being a mouse.
 - B. To highlight her bravery and determination.
 - C. To downplay the importance of the rats.
 - D. To make the story more relatable to children.
16. Why do the rats choose to dismantle their advanced technology before the exterminators arrive?
- A. To protect their secrets from the humans.
 - B. They no longer need the technology.
 - C. To move their society underground.
 - D. To comply with NIMH's demands.
17. Why does Mrs. Frisby risk being caught by the farmer's son?
- A. She wants to meet the farmer.
 - B. She is determined to save her family.
 - C. She seeks revenge for Jonathan's death.
 - D. She is unaware of the danger.
18. What can be inferred about the NIMH scientists based on their actions towards the rats?
- A. They want to help the rats.
 - B. They are only interested in their experiments.
 - C. They respect the rats' independence.
 - D. They plan to release the rats into the wild.
19. What does the rats' willingness to help Mrs. Frisby suggest about their values?
- A. They value honour and loyalty.
 - B. They are only motivated by fear.
 - C. They seek to dominate other animals.
 - D. They want to make Mrs. Frisby their leader.
20. What is the significance of the rats' escape from NIMH?
- A. It shows their desire for freedom.
 - B. It proves that humans are weaker than animals.
 - C. It suggests they want revenge on the scientists.
 - D. It foreshadows their eventual downfall.

21. What does the word "fraught" most likely mean in the context: "the plan is fraught with danger"?
- A. Lacking
 - B. Filled
 - C. Avoiding
 - D. Empty
22. What does the word "compelled" suggest about Mrs. Frisby's decision to warn the rats?
- A. Forced by external pressure
 - B. Indifferent to consequences
 - C. Unwilling
 - D. Reluctant
23. What does "mechanised" mean in the context of the rats' society?
- A. Made of metal
 - B. Automated by machines
 - C. Controlled by humans
 - D. Slow and inefficient
24. What does "perilous" mean in the phrase "Mrs. Frisby volunteers for the perilous task"?
- A. Safe
 - B. Exciting
 - C. Dangerous
 - D. Easy
25. What is the meaning of "sophisticated" as used to describe the rats' society?
- A. Simple
 - B. Complex and advanced
 - C. Rudimentary
 - D. Weak and fragile

Rats of Nymph answers:

1. C
2. B
3. D
4. B
5. B
6. A
7. B
8. B
9. C
10. B
11. D
12. B
13. A
14. B
15. B
16. A
17. B
18. B
19. A
20. B
21. B
22. A
23. B
24. C
25. B