
Chapter 1: "Mr. Ocax"—Pages 1-8

Vocabulary

ebony (1)
vole (2)

appetizing (1)
ponderosa (2)

swiveling (2)
talons (3)

savory (2)
mused (3)

Discussion Questions and Activities

1. Who is telling the story? (*Third person narrative, varies between viewpoint of Mr. Ocax and Poppy.*)
2. How does the author get you into the story? (*He describes the setting, the owl, Poppy and Ragweed.*) What have been some of the very best beginnings of stories that you've read? Share with classmates and agree on a class best beginning.
3. What do you learn about Mr. Ocax and Poppy in this chapter? Record what you know on a character attribute web. (See pages 9-11 of this guide.)
4. How do Mr. Ocax, Poppy, and Ragweed find themselves in the same place on a moonlit night? (*The owl is looking for prey and the mice are "strolling" on Bannock Hill.*)
5. What is ironic about Ragweed's taunt to Poppy that she doesn't know how to live like he does? (*Right afterward, the owl swoops down and catches Ragweed, kills him and eats him.*)
6. Look at the map of the area included in the beginning of the book. Where did this chapter take place? (*Bannock Hill*) Look over the map and get a handle on the locations.
7. What do you think of the title of this chapter? (*Answers will vary.*)

Supplementary Activities

1. Set up a story map to begin to record the framework of the story. What are the uses of a story map? Why do stories need to have frameworks? (See page 8 of this guide.)
2. Writing, discussion and journal ideas:
 - a. Compare Poppy and Ragweed as each approaches life.
 - b. What kind of a mouse is Poppy?
 - c. What is a fantasy?

Chapter 2: "Poppy Remembers"—Pages 9-15

Vocabulary

ghastliness (9)
porcupines (11)
indignant (14)

protruding (10)
gruesome (11)

weasels (11)
vicious (13)

stoats (11)
ruffian (13)

Discussion Questions and Activities

1. Where is Poppy at the beginning of the chapter? (*Poppy is under a piece of rotten bark on Bannock Hill.*) Why is she confused? (*She has witnessed her sweetheart being killed and had been nearly caught by the owl herself.*) Explain a feeling of confusion. (*Answers will vary. Push students to relate the feelings in various sensory ways—physically, mentally, visually, orally.*)
2. Who is Lungwort? (*Lungwort is Poppy's father and the leader of the mice.*)
3. What does Lungwort have on his head in the illustration on page 12? (*A thimble*)
4. Why didn't Ragweed and Lungwort get along? (*Ragweed questioned what Lungwort said; he didn't take everything at face value; he thought about Lungwort's pronouncements.*)

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5. How does Lungwort discredit Ragweed? (*By criticizing his grammatical usage.*) What do you think of Lungwort's methods? (*Answers will vary.*)
 6. What is Poppy's rationalization for the death of Ragweed? (*He didn't ask Mr. Ocax's permission to be on Bannock Hill.*) How is it reminiscent of Mr. Ocax's rationalization? What do you think of rationalizations?

Supplementary Activities

1. Play a vocabulary game trying to get classmates to recognize and say selected words without using common descriptive words. (Usually comparisons help in the definitions.)
2. Think about the kind of music that you would choose to represent each of the characters in this book. What variations would you use for Chapters 1 and 2?
3. What do you think of the book's illustrations? What do they add to the book?

Chapter 3: "Poppy Alone"—Pages 16-24

Vocabulary

pellet (17)
pistons (19)
impudent (22)

clacked (17)
plummeted (20)
lair (22)

crevice (18)
careening (21)

haven (18)
catapulted (21)

Discussion Questions and Activities

1. How does Poppy figure out her situation and the dangers she faces at the beginning of Chapter 3? (*She checks out the time of day by looking to the east and considering Mr. Ocax's usual comings and goings.*)
2. On page 16, Poppy figures the area she needs to traverse is "the length of four cornfields." How long is that? How do you know? (*The length cannot be determined exactly because there are many different lengths of cornfields.*)
3. Why are there bigger spaces between some of the paragraphs in this chapter? (*The author is moving between Poppy and her point of view and Mr. Ocax and his point of view. The spaces are used between the different points of view.*)
4. Why does Mr. Ocax want to keep the mice terrified? (*He likes the feeling of power. Keeping the mice in one place keeps a ready supply of food for the owl.*)
5. What is your reaction to the illustration on page 19? (*Answers will vary—fear, apprehension for Poppy, speed, acceleration, the dreaded shadow.*)
6. How has Mr. Ocax's anticipation of a meal foiled him again? (*Poppy heard Mr. Ocax's beak clack and took evasive action.*)
7. Why is Poppy particularly bothersome to Mr. Ocax? (*She escapes him twice; never had a mouse done that before.*)
8. What does the red flag mean? (*It is a call for a mouse clan meeting.*) Why is this meeting called? (*Answers will vary.*)



Supplementary Activities

1. How do the animal characters in the book figure things out differently from what you do? Fill in the chart below.

	Animals in the Book	You	Nineteenth-Century Folks	Plains Indians	Eskimos
Time					
Location					
Distance					

2. What are the themes that are emerging in this book? Start a class listing.
3. Continue to fill in a story map with the details of the story as you know them so far.

Chapter 4: "The Emergency Meeting"—Pages 25-35

Vocabulary

lopsided (25)
revulsion (28)

wanly (26)
brethren (31)

delegation (28)

formality (28)

Discussion Questions and Activities

1. What is the reason for the emergency meeting? (*The mouse clan has grown too large to be supported in their present environment. They need to move or split into two groups, with one moving to another location.*) What ideas from your science study are relevant here? (*survival of the fittest, cycle of life and death*)
2. How has Lungwort prepared for the meeting? (*He has checked on food shortages, results, and discovered a possible place for relocation.*)
3. What is the one stumbling block in Lungwort's plan? (*They need permission from Mr. Ocax to relocate.*)
4. How does Poppy get into the predicament of having to accompany Lungwort in talking to Mr. Ocax? (*She doesn't look down when the meeting with Mr. Ocax is mentioned.*)
5. What is the "object lesson" from Ragweed's death? (*He didn't ask Mr. Ocax's permission and paid with his life.*) What is an object lesson? (*Usually, an object lesson is a negative event or circumstance which teaches a truth.*) What are some examples of object lessons you've heard about?

Supplementary Activities

1. Write a letter to Mr. Ocax asking permission to relocate.
2. Start a newspaper for the mouse community in the book. What kind of articles might be included? Look over your own newspaper to get ideas about particular kinds of articles and sections that might be included.
3. Make a drawing of the emergency meeting.
4. Dramatize in pantomime some of the different emotions mentioned in the book, such as anger, fear and outrage. Classmates will guess the emotion portrayed and then cite where it is found in the book.

Chapter 5: "Leaving Gray House"—Pages 36-47

Vocabulary

deputation (39)

obstructions (41)

joshing (43)



Discussion Questions and Activities

1. Compare a study you might use and Lungwort's study. (*Lungwort has adapted an old boot for his study, adding windows, a potato sack liner, and a plaid necktie curtain. The comparison will vary from student to student.*)
2. How does Lungwort prepare to approach Mr. Ocax? (*He writes and rehearses a speech, and a new white flag is prepared.*)
3. What were some of Ragweed's maxims? (*"You haven't lived unless you die for something." "A soft belly causes softness at both ends."*) What other maxims do you know that might have been appealing to Ragweed? (*Answers will vary.*)
4. Why do Lungwort and Poppy get such an elaborate send-off? (*The mission is important, and they are a special team going to talk to Mr. Ocax.*)
5. How do Lungwort and Poppy feel as they travel to talk to Mr. Ocax? Find specific words from the book to support your answer. (*They are fearful and worried, as evidenced by losing the thimble cap and dropping the white flag. Lungwort walks behind Poppy with the white flag. Lungwort is very agitated.*)
6. Why does Poppy tell herself not to give way at the end of the chapter? (*She wants to be strong in front of the owl.*)
7. **Prediction:** You've read nearly one-quarter of the book. What will happen? What clues has the author sprinkled in these chapters? (*Answers will vary.*)

Supplementary Activities

1. Look for evidence of irony in the book. Irony is when a writer or character expresses a meaning contradictory to the literal meaning of his or her words or actions.
2. Act out Poppy and Lungwort on their trip to Mr. Ocax.
3. Make a list of feelings expressed in the book. Choose one or two of them to describe in a sentence or two.
4. Does the send-off Lungwort and Poppy receive remind you of anything you've seen or heard about? Ask your parents or others for ideas. Report your ideas in writing.

Chapter 6: "Standing before Mr. Ocax"—Pages 48-56

Vocabulary

upchucked (48)
skedaddle (54)

snarl (49)

queasy (50)

compassion (52)

Discussion Questions and Activities

1. How does Mr. Ocax put Lungwort and Poppy to a disadvantage? *(He continues partially sheltered from the rain while they are forced to stand in the rain. He is demanding, unpleasant and argumentative.)*
2. What are owl pellets? *(Owl pellets are undigested bits which owls regurgitate after they've eaten.)*
3. How does Mr. Ocax treat Poppy? *(He makes her feel as though she is being attacked, and then blames her for his unfavorable decision about the mice moving.)*
4. Why don't Lungwort's careful preparations help in his talk with Mr. Ocax? *(Mr. Ocax almost mocks the mouse leader. Mr. Ocax is unimpressed by Lungwort's deference and choice of words.)*
5. How does Mr. Ocax's demeanor change when Lungwort explains where the mice want to move? *(He hesitates. Poppy detects uncertainty in Mr. Ocax's voice.)*
6. Why does Mr. Ocax mention a new, particularly vicious porcupine spotted in the area? *(He mentions the porcupine to keep the mice fearful and indebted to Mr. Ocax.)*
7. What does Poppy find and take with her when she and Lungwort leave Mr. Ocax? *(She finds Ragweed's earring in an owl pellet.)*

Supplementary Activities

1. Put together a four-panel cartoon scenario of this chapter. Use simple line drawings or words to tell the story.

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2. As a science lesson, dissect an owl pellet.
3. Writing topics:
 - a. Deference
 - b. Persuasion
 - c. Power



Chapter 7: "Home Again"—Pages 57-64

Vocabulary

forage (57)
flustered (62)

calamity (57)

absurd (59)

ravenously (60)

Discussion Questions and Activities

1. What are the questions that Poppy asks herself in this chapter? (*What will happen to the mice clan if they aren't allowed to relocate? What did refusing permission allow Mr. Ocax to do?*)
2. Identify these items from the chapter:
 - a. Ragweed's earring
 - b. Lungwort's white flag
 - c. Log Cabin Syrup tin can
 - d. Owl eyes

Why is each of the items included in the story? How does Avi describe each item? Find the words in the book. (*Ragweed's earring is a small gold ring with a bead which survived Ragweed's demise and appeared in an owl pellet. The white flag became muddy and hardly white at all in the rain. The Log Cabin Syrup tin can is used by Poppy for her own room. The owl eyes haunt Poppy as she works out what to do.*)

3. Why does Mr. Ocax blame his decision on Poppy? (*Answers will vary. Perhaps he wants to discredit the spirited mouse who eluded his capture. Perhaps he wants an excuse for his decision.*)
4. What does Poppy decide she must do? (*She must go to New House to find out why Mr. Ocax doesn't want the mice to move there.*)

Supplementary Activities

1. Choose four important items from the story to draw. Put each drawing on a separate card. Then ask classmates to identify them.
2. What would be the news story carried on mouse television telling about Chapters 6 and 7? Write it up.

Chapter 8: "Poppy and Papa"—Pages 65-71

Vocabulary

whimpering (66)
nuzzle (70)

dismay (68)

piteously (68)

hostility (70)

Discussion Questions and Activities

1. How does Lungwort deal with his disappointment? (*He retreats to his boot-study, lying there whimpering.*) What other ways do people (and mice) deal with disappointment? (*Answers will vary—anger or activity, for example.*)
2. Why does Poppy decide to visit New House? (*She feels responsible for the unfavorable decision by Mr. Ocax, and she thinks that there is something at New House that Mr. Ocax doesn't want the mice to know. She is also influenced by her father's sad demeanor and her desire to sort out a mess that she thinks she has caused.*)

3. How does Lungwort communicate his support for Poppy's trip? (*He is resigned to her going and tells her to watch out for porcupines.*)
4. Look at the map at the beginning of the book to understand Poppy's options for going to New House. What are the risks of each route? (*See page 69 in the book for general risks, but then creatively add ideas.*)
5. What is the good luck charm that Basil gives Poppy? (*Basil gives her Ragweed's earring "for courage."*)

Supplementary Activities

1. Collect all the animal names in the book. Fill in the chart on page 12 of this guide to consider their naming, to review these characters, and to suggest another name you might choose.
2. Cause and effect is an explanation for action that suggests certain causes promote certain effects. What are some of the causes that you discern in this book? Begin to fill in the cause-and-effect graphic chart on page 13 of this guide.

Chapter 9: "On Her Way"—Pages 72-82

Vocabulary

camouflage (72)
 conspiracy (75)
 frantically (79)
 turbulent (80)

succulent (72)
 tranquillity (76)
 pummeled (79)
 ricocheted (80)

effrontery (75)
 anew (77)
 frazzled (79)
 evaporated (81)

coincidence (75)
 deftly (77)
 desperate (80)

Discussion Questions and Activities

1. What is Poppy's mood as she starts her journey? (*She is upbeat. The territory she is moving through is pleasant and inviting. She thinks "it's too nice a day to be worried and sad."*)
2. What is the effect of recalling Sweet Cicely's advice? (*Poppy remembers that "the only live mouse is an alert mouse," and realizes that she needs to enjoy less and keep on guard.*)
3. What is the author's organizational plan for this chapter? (*He alternates between Poppy's actions and Mr. Ocax, who is watching Poppy, although he only recognizes her as a mouse, and not this particular mouse.*)
4. Why does Mr. Ocax have trouble sleeping? (*He is concerned about Lungwort and Poppy, thinking that possibly they know his secret about New House. Mr. Ocax is concerned that he may be losing power over the mouse clan.*)
5. What is the advice Mr. Ocax recalls from his mother? (*"An alert owl is a well-fed owl."*)
6. What is the challenge of Glitter Creek for Poppy? (*It is too wide for Poppy to swim across and the water is moving rapidly.*)
7. What is Poppy's plan for crossing Glitter Creek? (*She'll jump from rock to rock in fourteen steps.*)
8. How does Poppy's plan go awry? (*The turtle moves, so that there is no space for her to land on one particular rock. Her alternative route lands her on a slippery, moss-covered rock, and she descends into the rushing water.*)
9. Why doesn't Mr. Ocax kill and eat Poppy? (*He assumes that she drowns and he goes to check out New House.*)
10. Reread the last paragraphs in this chapter reporting on Mr. Ocax, as well as the last paragraph reporting on Poppy. What are their particular problems? What do you predict for the rest of the book?

Supplementary Activities

1. Compare Poppy and Mr. Ocax, especially in this chapter. Use a T-diagram to record your ideas.

Poppy	Mr. Ocax
Small	Predator
Fearful	Fearful
Insightful in listening to others, especially Mr. Ocax	Ornery
Prey for owls	Enemy of mice
Influenced by her father, who believes Mr. Ocax	

2. Make up some maxims that owl or mouse parents might recite to their children.
3. What is the nature of the conflict that each character has as the story progresses? **Internal conflict** is conflict against yourself, **external conflict** can be against another character or forces of nature. List all the important characters in the book and then give examples of each character's conflicts. Cite parts of the book where you find the evidence for your choices.

Chapter 10: "Dimwood Forest"—Pages 83-92

Vocabulary

composure (85) livid (86) contemplate (89) cannonade (91)
barricaded (92)

Discussion Questions and Activities

1. What is the irony of where Poppy finds herself as she starts into Dimwood Forest? (*After the Glitter Creek episode, she lands near the bridge and the owl's lookout.*)
2. What is Mr. Ocax's moody contemplation about? (*The reader doesn't know, only that something at New House is very worrisome to him.*)
3. How is the author increasing the suspense in this part of the novel? (*He uses the alternating descriptions of Poppy and Mr. Ocax. The reader knows that the two are natural enemies and a confrontation is imminent.*)
4. Where are your sympathies as you read the story? (*The author has them with Poppy.*)

Supplementary Activities

1. Look for similes. Make a list of those you find in the book. For example, on page 89, Avi compares the yellow fungus on the hollow log to "stubby angel wings." For each simile you find, decide whether it helps your understanding of what is being described, and whether you can think of a better simile.
2. Reread the description of Dimwood Forest at the beginning of the chapter. Show your understanding of Dimwood Forest by drawing a picture, choosing a musical back-ground, or explaining your reaction in a letter to a friend.

Chapter 11: “Erethizon Dorsatum”—Pages 93-99

Vocabulary

murk (93)
confronted (97)

ponderously (93)
carnage (97)

stench (93)
braying (97)

aggressive (95)
sniveling (98)

Discussion Questions and Activities

1. Reread the first two paragraphs of the chapter. What information do you have about the animal Poppy has met in the log’s interior? What does the reader surmise about the new animal? (*The new animal sleeps during the day and has a gruff temperament. The animal is much bigger than Poppy and has a bit of a foul mouth. Answers will vary, but students can be drawn out on their ideas and asked to support their ideas with evidence from these paragraphs.*)
2. What turns Poppy, who is usually quite talkative, numb? (*She finds out that Ereth is a porcupine.*)
3. What happens to the fox? (*Ereth scares him off, first with a verbal warning and then with a whack—presumably of the porcupine’s tail.*)
4. How does Poppy react to all of this? (*She is terrified—sure that the porcupine will turn next on her. She believes the dire consequences of dealing with porcupines which Mr. Ocax had been telling the mice.*)
5. What is the surprising revelation at the end of the chapter? (*Poppy is hiding in Ereth’s toilet—thus the foul smell.*)

Supplementary Activities

1. Memorable scenes from books you’ve read: Choose critical, memorable scenes to include in a picture album page (see page 30 of this guide).
2. Act out the dialogue between Poppy and Ereth.
3. If you were casting an animated version of the book, whose voices would you choose for the various characters? Discuss with classmates and then explain and defend your answers in a multi-paragraph paper.

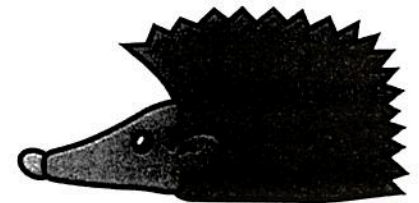
Chapter 12: “What Poppy Learns”—Pages 100-106

Vocabulary

nauseates (100)

bilge (102)

earwig (104)



Discussion Questions and Activities

1. What are three emotions that Poppy displays in Chapter 12? (*She shows fear, foolishness and exhaustion.*)
2. What is a vegetarian? (*A vegetarian is someone who doesn’t eat meat.*) What is significant about Ereth being a vegetarian? (*He, as a porcupine, wouldn’t be a natural enemy of mice.*)
3. What truths about Mr. Ocax does Ereth share with Poppy? (*The owl is an enemy of the mice and he is afraid of porcupines himself.*)

Supplementary Activities

1. On page 105, Poppy says that she thinks Ragweed would have liked Ereth. Explain why in a short paragraph.
2. Imagine the mouse school Poppy mentions on page 102. Draw a picture, or describe it in a short paragraph. Have fun with this idea; be as creative as you like.

Chapter 13: "Early Morning—Pages 107-115

Vocabulary

luxuriant (108)
lummoX (113)

threshold (109)

maggot (111)

carcass (113)

Discussion Questions and Activities

1. What are some contrasts and opposites suggested in this chapter? (*day/night; Dimwood Forest—forbidding/luxuriant; Ereth—likable/unlikable creature*)
2. Explain "Nobody rules" from page 112. (*Mr. Ocax doesn't rule the Dimwood territory.*)
3. What happens when Ereth confronts Mr. Ocax? (*He reveals Poppy's presence in the hollow log.*)
4. Why does Poppy call Ereth a lummoX, a lump, and a rattling pincushion? (*She is irritated that he has let Mr. Ocax know she's nearby and now Mr. Ocax has threatened her.*)
5. What deal do Poppy and Ereth make? (*Ereth will get Poppy to New House, and she'll get the salt lick for him.*)
6. **Prediction:** What will Mr. Ocax do to stop Poppy?

Supplementary Activities

1. Choose one of the contrasts from the chapter to explore. Collect ideas on a T-diagram.
2. Choose something to describe in a similar way as Poppy describes Dimwood Forest at the beginning of Chapter 13.

Chapter 14: "On the Way to New House"—Pages 116-122

Vocabulary

eddied (116)

sarcastically (119)

drooling (121)

bellowed (117)

dilapidated (120)

resemblance (122)

venomously (117)

fallow (121)

trundled (117)

profusion (121)

Discussion Questions and Activities

1. Why does Poppy say Ereth's quills rattle like a snare drum? (*Following Ereth makes her notice the sound as the pair proceeds to New House.*)
2. What is Poppy's close call? (*Mr. Ocax makes a dive at her.*)
3. What is Ereth's object in taking Poppy to New House? (*He wants to get the salt lick.*)
4. Why does Poppy's heart sink when she sees the salt lick? (*The salt lick is large and high on a pole. There is no way she can deliver on her promise to Ereth.*)
5. What is under the overhang of the red barn? (*There is an owl twice the size of Mr. Ocax.*)

Supplementary Activities

1. Make up some new animal curses.
2. Sort out the book's characters using these labels: bullies, leaders, comforters, confronters, pacifiers.

Chapter 15: "Alone Again"—Pages 123-127

Vocabulary

luscious (123)
ferocious (126)

lashing (124)

flooned (124)

arsenal (125)

Discussion Questions and Activities

1. How do Ereth's and Poppy's reactions to arriving at New House differ? Why? (*Ereth is enraptured by the salt lick and Poppy is apprehensive about the large owl below the overhang.*)
2. Why does Ereth leave Poppy? (*He has fulfilled his part of the bargain and wants to go home.*)
3. How is tripping in the grass a lucky break for Poppy? (*She trips over a porcupine quill, which she takes as a weapon.*)
4. Why does Poppy defer judgement on moving to New House? (*The huge owl is a threat, but perhaps it's just a passing bird and not a permanent resident.*)

Supplementary Activities

1. What thinking skills does Poppy show? Make a list and then choose one skill to define and describe using examples from the book. (*Some possible thinking skills might include sorting, problem-solving, analysis, brainstorming and visualizing.*)
2. How will Poppy get the salt lick for Ereth? Brainstorm some possibilities.

Chapter 16: "The Truth at Last"—Pages 128-135

Vocabulary

saunter (128)
perplexed (131)
foliage (135)

rustled (129)
astounding (134)

threshold (129)
irony (135)

baffled (130)
contentment (135)

Discussion Questions and Activities

1. What does Poppy observe of the cat and the boy? (*They are calm, easy-going and don't seem to take any notice of the owl.*)
2. How does Poppy recognize the boy if she's never seen a real person? (*Answers vary.*)
3. What understanding about the owl begins to form in Poppy's mind? (*It is a fake.*)
4. What does Poppy learn from George? (*The large owl is a fake; it scares off Mr. Ocax and other small animals.*)

Supplementary Activities

1. What is the "Big Lie" principle of propaganda? Research, and then explain in a short paragraph using examples from the book.
2. How do you know *Poppy* is fantasy? Explain in a short paragraph.

Chapter 17: "A Surprising Conversation"—Pages 136-140

Vocabulary

luxuriating (136)
humiliate (137)

miserable (137)

sulking (137)

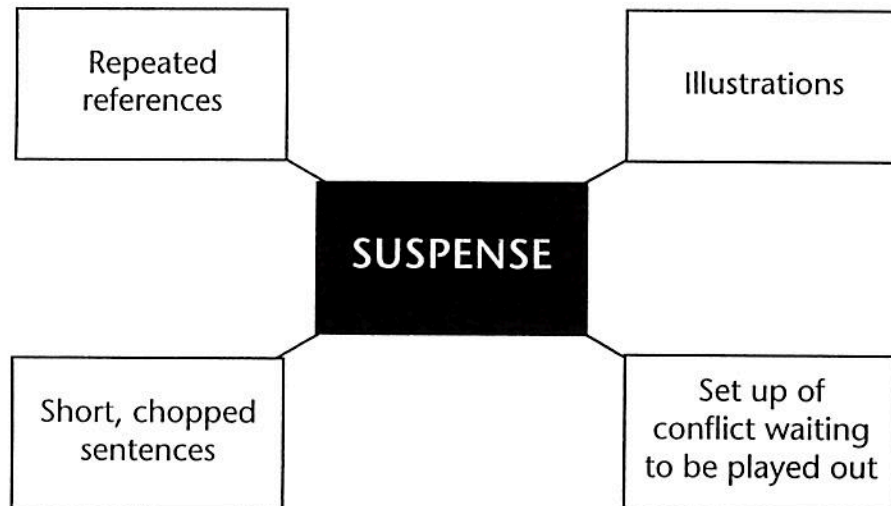
jubilant (137)

Discussion Questions and Activities

1. Why does Poppy awaken refreshed? (*She has figured out several truths about Mr. Ocax and has found a promising new home for her mouse family.*)
2. Why does Poppy decide to tease Mr. Ocax? (*She is thrilled with the idea of turning the tables on the owl bully.*)
3. What does fear look like in the animals in the book? (*The owl is nervous and fidgety. Poppy shakes in fear. Lungwort withdraws.*)
4. How does Mr. Ocax coax Poppy out of her safety in the corn stalks? (*He flatters her by telling her how smart she is.*)

Supplementary Activities

1. Describe these emotions from the book: fear, trust, hope, sadness. Use narrative, illustration, or oratory, and include examples from the book.
2. How do authors build suspense in novels? Collect ideas by talking to a partner. Record the ideas on a web or other word map.



Chapter 18: "The Battle"—Pages 141-150

Vocabulary

sneered (141)
feint (144)
impeded (146)

confronted (142)
infuriate (145)
convulsively (147)

momentary (142)
flailed (146)
plummeted (148)

flourished (144)
excruciating (146)
ignominiously (148)

Discussion Questions and Activities

1. How does Ragweed's earring save Poppy a second time? *(Mr. Ocax's powerful descent pushes a wave of air that causes the earring to flutter, warning Poppy, who leaps to safety at the last moment.)*
2. How do Poppy and Mr. Ocax taunt each other as the battle ensues? *(Mr. Ocax sneers at Poppy with a single porcupine quill as a weapon, and Poppy taunts him about the fake owl frightening him.)*
3. What is Poppy's mistake in the battle? *(She hesitates and loses her chance to get back into the corn to hide.)*
4. What is Mr. Ocax's mistake in the battle? *(He underestimates the pain potential of the porcupine quill in his eagerness to capture and eat Poppy.)*
5. How are Poppy's problems solved through a series of circumstances? *(She is fearful of letting loose of the quill until she is too high in the air to fall safely. The quill hurts Mr. Ocax so much that he dive-bombs into the salt lick. The force of the owl's descent shatters the salt lick. The owl falls to the ground and dies.)*
6. How are Mr. Ocax's last words ironic? *(He is still mouthing his lie about protecting the mice.)*

Supplementary Activities

1. Add to your cause-and-effect flow chart to summarize the main plot twists of the novel.
2. Write an obituary for Mr. Ocax and another for Ragweed.

Chapter 19: "The Return"—Pages 151-158

Vocabulary

roisterous (153)
forage (156)

awesome (154)
triumphantly (158)

ossified (154)

disperse (156)

Discussion Questions and Activities

1. What are the various emotions that Poppy has as she looks at Mr. Ocax's lifeless body? *(She feels pride and weariness.)*
2. How does Ereth react when Poppy arrives at his log? *(He is disturbed by being awakened, but asks quickly about the salt lick.)*
3. Why does Poppy save one of Mr. Ocax's feathers? *(Answers will vary because the author doesn't tell us directly—perhaps because the feather is pretty, as a proof of Poppy's dominance over the owl, etc.)*
4. Why does Ereth call Poppy "the salt of the earth"? *(Ereth really likes salt and it's a play on words for him to compliment Poppy in this way.)*
5. What is the state of the mice when Poppy returns to her family? *(Lungwort is dispersing the mice in different directions because of the scarcity of food. He is offering a brief tribute to Poppy, who is believed to be dead.)*
6. How does Lungwort take Poppy's message about Mr. Ocax and the new home possibility? *(He acts triumphantly and takes credit for Poppy's success, because of his advice.)*

Supplementary Activities

1. Look for irony in this chapter. Create a mind map about irony, including examples from this book, as well as others, and examples from your own life.
2. What are the survival needs of the mice? Why is the old barn near New House a good place for mice?

Chapter 20: “A New Beginning”—Pages 159-160

Discussion Questions and Activities

1. Why does Poppy affix Ragweed’s earring to the branch of a small hazelnut tree? (*She does this to provide a memorial to Ragweed and to tell her children about him.*)
2. What is a dancing place? (*It is the place so proclaimed by Poppy, who perhaps wanted to remember Ragweed’s unconventional love of fun and dancing.*)

Post-reading Activities

1. How does this book fit with other titles by Avi? Choose another one to read and compare the two books.
2. Write a letter to the author, including questions you might have about the book.
3. What is the point of the story? It has been described as an allegory. Why? Is allegory an apt description?
4. Create a book jacket, book review, or bookstore display to promote the book.
5. How can fantasies with animals talking and interacting with other animals share some truths for human readers? Discuss the idea, and then share truths you may have gleaned from *Poppy*.

Concluding Activities

Overview

Several concluding activities are included, from which you may choose those appropriate for your particular students. The activities are grouped into four sections: literal retelling of the story; creative expansion beyond the literal scope of the novel; communicating about the issues in the book; and applying the comprehension skills taught.

Literal Retelling

1. Complete a comprehensive story map of the book.
2. Create a board game for *Poppy*.
3. Explain why Avi is a published author and why *Poppy* is a popular book.

Creative Expansion

1. How will the mice clan live after the end of the book?
2. Write a letter from Poppy to Ereth a year after the end of the book.
3. Cast a movie of the book. See page 29 of this guide.
4. Compare the plot of the book to another book you’ve enjoyed.
5. How would the book *Poppy* be different if it were set in Alaska?

Issues in the Book

1. Why did Avi write this book?
2. What are the themes in *Poppy*? Support your answer with evidence from the book.