

New Windmills

2004

Resource sheets

The Amazing Maurice and his Educated Rodents

By Terry Pratchett

Activities by Alan Pearce
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The Amazing Maurice and his Educated Rodents

by Terry Pratchett

Synopsis

Bad Blintz is a medieval town, somewhere in Europe, that appears to have been over-run by rats. Two rat-catchers seem to be catching huge numbers of rats, but still there are significant food shortages, supposedly because the rats are stealing all of the food. Keith, a young boy; Maurice, a speaking cat; and a community of speaking rats, enter Bad Blintz. They team up with Malicia, the Mayor's daughter, to investigate the suspicious behaviour of the rat catchers. It is discovered that the rat catchers have been breeding rats and organising fights between rats and fierce dogs for entertainment. The rat catchers' plot is foiled and the people of Bad Blintz learn to live in harmony with Maurice and his educated rodents.

Prior learning

- a Malicia, the Mayor's daughter, alludes to a number of fairy stories. It would be helpful if the students had read some of the Grimm brothers' collection of stories. A website with Grimm brothers' stories online can be found through www.heinemann.co.uk/hotlinks. Type in Express code **1001P** to access this and other websites useful for the study of *The Amazing Maurice and his Educated Rodents*.
- b Bad Blintz is a medieval town that resembles the German town of Hamelin in many ways. It might help the students to imagine the architecture of Bad Blintz if they visit www.heinemann.co.uk/hotlinks. Alternatively, enter 'Hameln' into Google, and click on 'Images'.

Study Areas

This is a very entertaining novel, with some extremely amusing moments. However, there are also dark moments when, for example, some of the educated rodents are killed. The novel will definitely encourage students to consider their attitude towards animals.

Possible areas for study include:

- **Persuasive writing:** Write Maurice's speech to Bad Blintz's town council, persuading them that rats should be treated as equals.
(Persuasive writing: **Yr7 W15; Yr8 W13; Yr9 W13**)
- **Creative writing:** Imagine a pet could record his or her thoughts. What would they think of their owners?
(Writing to imagine: **Yr7 Wr5; Yr8 Wr6; Yr9 Wr5**)
- **Informative writing:** Write an article for a nature magazine, about the educated rodents found in Bad Blintz.
(Informative writing: **Yr7 S13; Yr8 S9, Wr10; Yr9 Wr9**)

- **Independent research/information writing:** Produce a leaflet about keeping rats as pets.
(Independent research: **Yr7** R1, Wr10; **Yr8** R2, Wr10; **Yr9** R2, Wr9)
- **Personal view:** Who would you identify as the hero of the novel?
(Writing reflectively: **Yr7** Wr19; **Yr8** Wr16; **Yr9** R9)
- **Group discussion/presentation:** Imagine you are members of the Bad Blintz town council. Debate the advantages and disadvantages of treating the educated rodents as equals.
(Group discussion: **Yr7** S&L12; **Yr8** S&L10; **Yr9** S&L10)
- **Collaborative drama:** Dramatise significant scenes from the novel:
 - The highwayman’s attempt to rob Maurice;
 - The Bad Blintz town council meeting to discuss the educated rats;
 - Maurice and Keith’s first encounter with Malicia.
 (Collaborative drama: **Yr7** S&L16; **Yr8** S&L16; **Yr9** S&L14)

Teacher Guidance

Resource Sheet 1

This resource sheet asks the students to research the subject of rats and their behaviour, and then to use the researched information to produce a booklet for students of their own age. To give their research some focus they are asked to answer seven questions that have been suggested by the behaviour of the rats in *The Amazing Maurice and his Educated Rodents*.

Literacy Framework Objectives

Year 7: R2 Extract relevant information; **W10** Organise texts appropriately.

Year 8: R2 Undertake independent research; **W10** Organise and present information.

Year 9: R2 Synthesize information from a range of sources; **W9** Integrate diverse information.

Guided Reading

The students are asked to carry out some independent research, in order to answer seven questions:

- 1 What do rats eat?
- 2 Do communities of rats have a leader?
- 3 How intelligent are rats?
- 4 Do rats ‘widdle’ on food? If they do, why?
- 5 Can rats climb along a rope?
- 6 If you put lots of rats in a pit, would they just panic?
- 7 Are rats brave enough to bite a dog?

You could select a small group of students who have difficulty carrying out independent research. You could initially present them with some difficult reading material from the Internet then, ask them to identify, as quickly as possible, whether the material is suitable for them. You could ask them to consider the language that has been used on the National Fancy Rat Society website. Just go to www.heinemann.co.uk/hotlinks and click the link. The language is very difficult, and the page does not provide any information that will help students to answer any of the seven questions. Afterwards, you could present the group with more appropriate material. Again, go to www.heinemann.co.uk/hotlinks and click on Suite 101. Ask the students to identify why this material is more appropriate for them. Ask the students to skim read this page to find an answer to Question 1: What do rats eat?

Resource Sheet 2

This resource sheet asks the students to produce a brochure advertising Bad Blintz as a tourist attraction. The students need to re-read selected pages from the novel in order to find the necessary information. The students are asked to find information about five different aspects of Bad Blintz. To support the students' information gathering, page references are suggested. The students are also provided with hints about the style and presentation of their brochure.

Literacy Framework Objectives

Year 7: R6 Adopt active reading approaches; **W11** Select and present information.

Year 8: R4 Review active reading skills; **W10** Organise and present information.

Year 9: R1 Review active reading strategies; **W12** Exploit presentational devices.

Guided Reading

The students are asked to re-read selected pages from the novel in order to select information about five different subject areas.

Brochure information	Page references
The town's problems	22, 46–47
Bad Blintz's architecture	20–21, 47, 188
The town clock	208
Tourist attractions	208–209, 221–222
Harmony	204–208, 219

You might want to identify a small group of students who have difficulty selecting appropriate information when they read independently. You could ask the students if they can remember any ways that the people of Bad Blintz hope to sell their town as a tourist attraction? You could then tell the students that they are going to read two pages from the novel in order to find information about how Bad Blintz could sell itself as a tourist attraction. Read pages 208–209 with the students, and help them to identify the relevant information. If necessary, you could model how you select appropriate information. Afterwards, you could ask the students to work as a group, reading pages 221–222 in order to find more information about how the people of Bad Blintz hope to sell their town as a tourist attraction.

Resource Sheet 3

This resource sheet asks the students to produce character notes on the most important characters from the novel. The students are asked to find the following information about each character: a physical description; their personality; their abilities. To support the students, eight characters have been identified as the most important. Page references are suggested to help the students find information about each of these characters.

Literacy Framework Objectives

Year 7: R2 Extract relevant information.

Year 8: R7 Identify implied and explicit information.

Year 9: R2 Synthesise information from a range of sources.

Guided Reading

The students are asked to find the following information about eight characters from the novel: a physical description; their personality; their abilities. The following characters and page references are suggested.

Character	Page references
Maurice	2–7, 91–92, 114–115
Keith	22–23, 24–27, 46, 49–50, 54
Malicia	28–29, 67
Hamnpork	14–16, 31–32, 80–81, 100
Darktan	33, 34–35, 60–62, 72, 80–81, 125–128
Peaches	6, 12, 14, 30, 31–33, 41
Dangerous Beans	31–32
Sardines	36, 53–54, 56, 155–156

You could select a group of students and tell them that you are going to focus on Darktan. You could read page 33 to see if you can find any details about Darktan's physical appearance. You might like to read the page to the group. If necessary, help the students to find the physical description of Darktan. (On this page the reader is told that Darktan 'was big, and lean, and tough'.) Afterwards, you could ask the students to read pages 34–35 and ask them to find more information about Darktan's appearance. (On these pages the reader is provided with information about Darktan's 'network of wide belts'.)

1 Research

Introduction

Before Terry Pratchett wrote *The Amazing Maurice and his Educated Rodents* he carried out a great deal of research into rats and the way they behave. However, when you read about the rats in the novel you are not always sure how far their behaviour is realistic. For example, we know that rats can't speak, but are they brave enough to fight against a dog, as Darktan did on page 127?

Your task is to produce a booklet about rats and the way they behave.

Planning

Your booklet will be read by children of your own age. In your booklet try to answer the following questions:

- 1 What do rats eat?
- 2 Do communities of rats have a leader?
- 3 How intelligent are rats?
- 4 Do rats 'widdle' on food? If they do, why?
- 5 Can rats climb along a rope?
- 6 If you put lots of rats in a pit, would they just panic?
- 7 Are rats brave enough to bite a dog?

Notes

Think about the presentation of your booklet.

- What chapters or sections will you have?
- Will you use illustrations?
- Will you use headings and sub-headings?
- Would bullet points be appropriate?
- Above all, will your writing style be appropriate for readers of your own age?

2 Tourist Brochure

Introduction

When Maurice, Keith and all of the rats arrived in Bad Blintz conditions were bad. There was so little food that it had to be rationed. However, at the end of the novel, once the crooked rat catchers had been defeated, the people of Bad Blintz decided to advertise their town as a tourist attraction. Imagine that you have been asked by the Mayor of Bad Blintz to produce a colourful and informative brochure to persuade people to visit the town.

Your task is to produce a colourful and informative brochure to advertise the attractions of Bad Blintz.

Planning

The Mayor of Bad Blintz has asked you to include the following information in your brochure:

- 1 a brief summary of the problems that the town suffered under the control of the crooked rat catchers
- 2 a description of the town's architecture
- 3 a description of the town's clock
- 4 tourist attractions
- 5 an explanation of how humans and rats live together in harmony.

The table below provides page references to help you find the necessary information.

Brochure information	Page references
The town's past problems	22, 46–47
Bad Blintz's architecture	20–21, 47, 188
The town clock	208
Tourist attractions	208–209, 221–222
Harmony	204–208, 219

Style

Your writing should persuade people to visit Bad Blintz:

- use superlatives (such as '*the best*', and '*the most exciting*')
- use imperatives (such as '*you must*', and '*it is essential*')
- use adjectives (such as '*the beautiful* town hall')
- use adverbs (such as '*an exciting* drive to Bad Blintz').

2 Tourist Brochure

Presentation

Your brochure needs to be attractive. Think about using the following presentational features:

- bright colours
- different fonts
- bullet points
- headings and sub-headings
- illustrations.

3 Character Notes

Introduction

The Amazing Maurice and his Educated Rodents can become a little difficult to follow because there are so many characters. Imagine that an editor is planning to publish a new edition of the novel. In this new edition she would like to include four or five pages at the front of the book, which will provide character details for the most important characters in the novel.

Your task is to produce the character details for the eight most important characters in *The Amazing Maurice and his Educated Rodents*.

Planning

The editor would like, if possible, the following details about each of the eight characters: a physical description; their personality; their abilities. You have been asked to decide how the information will be presented, remembering that you can only use up to a maximum of five pages.

The table below suggests that the most important characters in the novel are Maurice, Keith, Malicia, Hamnpork, Darktan, Peaches, Dangerous Beans, and Sardines. However, the editor will be happy if you identified different characters as more important.

To help your planning a number of page references are suggested in the table below. Re-read these page references and make any notes that you think will be helpful. Try to organise your notes under the following headings: physical description; personality; abilities.

Character	Page references
Maurice	2–7, 91–92, 114–115
Keith	22–23, 24–27, 46, 49–50, 54
Malicia	28–29, 67
Hamnpork	14–16, 31–32, 80–81, 100
Darktan	33, 34–35, 60–62, 72, 80–81, 125–128
Peaches	6, 12, 14, 30, 31–33, 41
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