

CURRICULUM GUIDE



About This Text:

Rat Fair is a wordless picture book that compares the experience of a little boy at an art fair, and a community of rats who create a fair of their own. It celebrates the power of art to connect us.

This guide features questions for parents or teachers to use during a read-aloud to prompt children to think about the book's characters, plot, and themes and to build visual literacy.



Common Core Standards

Reading: Literature

Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.1

With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.2

With prompting and support, retell familiar stories, including key details.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.3

With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in a story.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.7

With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the story in which they appear (e.g., what moment in a story an illustration depicts).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.9

With prompting and support, compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in familiar stories.

Speaking and Listening

Comprehension and Collaboration:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.K.2

Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood.

Pre-Reading Questions:

The saying “A picture speaks a thousand words” means that pictures, whether they are photographs, drawings, or paintings, often tell a story. Can you think of a picture that you’ve seen that tells a story? (Note to teachers: You may want to share some pictures with students. Many museums have collections available including the Tate Britain (<https://www.tate.org.uk/>), the MET (<https://www.metmuseum.org/>), and the Art Institute of Chicago (<https://www.artic.edu/>), and the Louvre (<https://www.louvre.fr/en>)

Guided Reading Questions:

Today we are going to be reading a book called Rat Fair which was written by Leah Rose Kessler and illustrated by Cleonique Hilsaca. This book tells its story through pictures.

Page 1: Here’s a sign for an Art Fair. Another word for a fair is a festival. Have you ever been to a fair or a festival? What kinds of things do people do at fairs? What do you think people would do at an art fair?

Page 2-3: What happened to the sign? When the rats find the letters, what do they think the sign said?

Page 4: Let’s look at what these four rats are doing. Can you predict what is going to happen next?

Page 5-6: How do you think the rats are feeling in this picture? Are there any clues in the picture that let you know what sounds you might hear at the rat fair? How can you tell that this fair is happening at night?

Page 7-10: What happens to the rat fair in the daytime? What do you think the person sweeping thinks she is throwing away? Why do you think the little boy notices?

Page 11-12: Why does the little boy take the Ferris wheel out of the trash? What do you think he is planning to do with it?

Pages 12-17: What are the little boy’s parents doing at the art fair? What do the rats see when they visit the art fair? Why do you think they are excited to tell their friends about the art fair?

Pages 18-21: Describe the way the rats prepare for their own art fair. How is the rat art fair similar to the rat fair? How is it different?

Pages 21-24: What can you tell about the little boy’s family based on the inside of their house? What do you think the little boy is imagining when he is playing at home?

Pages 25-26: It looks like the rats learned a lesson when their first fair was thrown away. What are they doing to keep this from happening again?

Pages 27-28: What do you think the little boy realizes when he sees the rats carrying their art? What do you think he is going to do?

Pages 29-32: Was your prediction correct? Why do you think the rats give the little boy a picture?

After You Read:

1. What do you think this book teaches about being kind?
2. What do the rats learn when they try to see the world through the people’s eyes? What does the little boy learn when he looks at the world through the rats’ eyes?

Extension Activities:

1. Words that can be rearranged to form new words are called anagrams. Try to make anagrams by rearranging the letters in the following words: add, bat, cat, dab, arc, tan, gab, how, nap, sag, aft, not, pea, gel (Note to teachers: feel free to expand this list if needed). Choose one or two of the anagrams and write a sentence that uses both the original word and its anagram. Illustrate your sentence with a picture.
2. Work with your class or family to create your own art fair. Decide on what items you will “sell” (you may wish to use pretend money here), any special activities, and food. You can even add music and decorations if you would like.
3. Imagine this story from the point of view of one of the rats. How would they describe what happened?
4. Imagine this story from the point of view of the little boy. How would he describe what happened?