

# FOURTEEN RATS & A RAT CATCHER

## Fourteen Rats & A Rat Catcher

by James Cressey, illustrated by Tamasin Cole (Simon & Schuster)

Themes: Critical Thinking/Animals & Pets

Grade Level: K-2

Running Time: 10 minutes, animated

## SUMMARY

Fourteen Rats & A Rat Catcher begins with an elderly woman who lives in a home with rats in the basement. The woman wants to be rid of the rats, and the rats, who have a wonderful life in the basement of the woman's cottage, want to be rid of the woman.

The woman buys a cat to catch the rats. However, when this plan fails, she decides to hire a rat catcher. The rats send the largest rat to confront the rat catcher. Between the two of them, they devise a plan that will allow all to live happily ever after. The end of the story finds the rat catcher happily married to the woman and the rats keeping their promise to live as quietly as mice so as not to disturb the new couple upstairs.

This story is an intriguing way to introduce students to critical thinking and point of view. The woman finds the rats annoying. The rats find the woman annoying. Which position can be justified?

## Objectives

- Children will learn how to think critically
- Children will investigate ways to solve problems
- Children will learn to respect other points of views

## Before Viewing Activities

Share the book Fourteen Rats & A Rat Catcher with children. Talk with children about arguments they may have

had with friends or family members. Ask: What were the arguments about? Did you understand why the other person felt the way they did? How did you feel when you couldn't make the other person understand how you felt? How did your argument end?

Show children an abstract painting or collage. Ask children to discuss what they see in the painting/collage, or how the artwork makes them feel. As children talk, help them recognize the differences among their responses, stressing the unique way each person sees things.

## After Viewing Activities

Offer children the following story starter: One day as I was walking to school, I passed by the largest rat anyone had ever seen... Have children create their own stories by continuing the idea introduced by the story starter. Later allow children to add illustrations to their stories and display them on a classroom wall or bulletin board.

Give children some experience with some simple opinion polls. For example, have children think about their favorite classroom activities. Have one child be responsible for carrying a list of classroom activities from person to person and checking off the activities they identify as their favorites. (For younger children, you might want to devise a simple picture chart, rather than a list, to illustrate the activities in your classroom.) After the poll is taken, help children analyze the data, determining which activities are preferred most and which are among the least desirable. As you discuss the poll, help children see how each person has an opinion, and that each person's preferences and opinions are important and deserve consideration.

Remind children of the problem that was the focus of Fourteen Rats & A Rat Catcher. Ask children: How did the rat catcher and the large rat solve their problem so that the rats and the woman could live in the same cottage peace-

fully? Present the following hypothetical situations to children. Encourage them to talk together in order to decide how each of these problems might be solved.

A boy, his younger brother, and his dad moved into a new house. The older boy wanted the biggest bedroom. The little boy wanted it, too. What could the brothers do to solve the problem?

Two sisters went to a pet shop with their parents. Their mom and dad said they could choose one pet. One sister wanted a puppy. The other wanted a kitten. How could they solve their problem?

Two friends were watching a video at home. One friend thought the movie was funny and wanted to keep watching it. The other friend thought the movie was scary and wanted it turned off. What could the two friends do to solve their problem?

Other book based films and videos about critical thinking are available from Weston Woods: These include:

BURT DOW: DEEP WATER MAN by Robert McCloskey  
CHANGES, CHANGES by Pat Hutchins  
DOCTOR DE SOTO by William Steig  
ROSIE'S WALK by Pat Hutchins  
THE STONECUTTER by Gerald McDermott  
STREGA NONNA by Tomie de Paola  
THE WIZARD by Jack Kent

**CALL 1-800-243-5020 TO ORDER THESE AND OTHER WESTON WOODS VIDEOS!**

This guide may be photocopied for free distribution without restriction