

# Educator Discussion Guide

## WORD OF MOUSE

by James Patterson and Chris Grabenstein

Illustrations by Joe Sutphin

**Louisiana Young Readers' Choice Nominee 2018-2019**

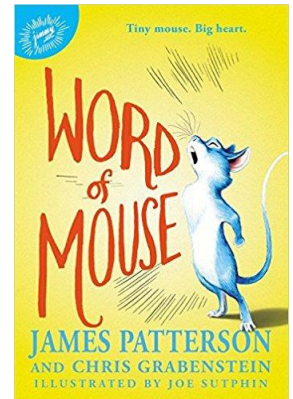
**Grade 3-5**

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### ABOUT THE BOOK

Isaiah is a super intelligent, blue, talking mouse living with his 96 brothers and sisters at the, “Horrible Place,” Lamina Labs. One day, they make a monumental decision: they are going to escape. On the day of the big escape, Isaiah escapes the building, but all of his siblings are recaptured. He is frightened and lonely as he has never been on his own before. What is a mouse to do? Eventually, he finds his way to Suburbia where he meets a lovely songstress mouse named Mikayla, who introduces him to her mischievous ways. Together, they live in the home of the Brophy’s, a human family in Suburbia. Isaiah is welcomed into the family, but he misses his 96 siblings that are back at Lamina Labs. Imagine Isaiah’s surprise when he discovers that Mr. Brophy is the janitor at the, “Horrible Place.” With the help of Mikayla and many of the mischiefs of Suburbia, they create a mouse army of 5000 strong. Will it be enough to rescue his family from the “Horrible Place?”



### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

James Patterson grew up in Newburgh, New York and began writing at 19. He is the first author to simultaneously have both children’s and adult books on the New York Times bestseller list. He has collected multiple awards, including the Children’s Choice Award for Author of the Year and the National Book Foundation’s 2015 Literarian Award for Outstanding Service to the American Literacy Community. In 2015, James Patterson launched JIMMY Patterson Books and founded Readkiddoread.com. He currently lives in Palm Beach with his wife, Sue, and his son, Jack.

Biographical information taken from the author’s website at

<http://www.jamespatterson.com/biography>

Accessed 22 September 2017.

Chris Grabenstein was born in Buffalo, New York and studied communications and theater at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. He wrote for Jim Henson’s Muppets and a television movie for CBS called *The Christmas Gift*. He wrote radio and television advertisements for

Burger King, Seven Up, Dr. Pepper, and more. Chris Grabenstein currently lives with his wife, J.J. in New York City.

Biographical information taken from the author's website at

<http://chrisgrabenstein.com/kids/chris.php>

Accessed 22 September 2017

### **ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR**

Joe Sutphin began drawing at an early age and made his first publication in 2012. He is a contributor for The Rabbit Room and Story Warren. He has many projects in the works.

Biographical information taken from the illustrator's website at

<https://www.joesutphin.com/about/>

Accessed 25 September 2017

### **BOOK AWARDS**

2017 Parents' Choice Award

Barnes and Noble's Best Book of the Month for Young Readers

### **PREREADING ACTIVITIES**

#### **Get to Know Mice**

Have the students explore facts about mice to become familiar with their diet, habitat, habits, and traits. Create a KWL graphic organizer based on what they know, what they want to know, and what they learned. These websites have information about mice:

1. [http://www.biokids.umich.edu/critters/Mus\\_musculus/](http://www.biokids.umich.edu/critters/Mus_musculus/)
2. <http://www.sciencekids.co.nz/sciencefacts/animals/mouse.html>
3. <http://pestworldforkids.org/pest-guide/mice/>
4. <https://www.livescience.com/28028-mice.html>

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. How was Isaiah able to escape while his siblings were not?
2. What did Mikayla mean when she said Isaiah needs to pull his own weight to be a part of her mischief?
3. Based on what you have read so far, why do you think the Brophy's clothes smell familiar to Isaiah?
4. What were Isaiah's reactions to frequently being asked about the color of his fur? How do you think Isaiah feels when being judged by the color of his fur? Use evidence from the book to support your answer.
5. Why was Mikayla not allowed to sing? Do you think it is right that someone should not be allowed to do something based on their gender? Can you think of a time you were told that you could not do something because you are a boy or a girl?
6. Why has no mouse in history ever named their child Victor?
7. Why did Melissa bully Hailey? What negative reactions did Hailey have to being bullied? What positive reactions did she have?
8. Why did Isaiah decide to rescue the baby birds from Lucifer? What would you do in a similar situation?
9. What types of research were Isaiah and his siblings being used for at Lamina Labs? What are some positive and negative reasons for using mice in scientific research? Was the research being done at Lamina Labs positive or negative?

10. Isaiah mentions special skills that some of his siblings have; for example Delphinia is super strong. Choose a character that Isaiah describes and compare them to your sibling. (Compare them a classmate if you do not have siblings).
11. What are some ways that the 5097 mice used teamwork to escape Lamina Labs? Give examples from the book.
12. What does Isaiah mean when he says, “a true friend is the one who walks in when the rest of the world walks out?” Who could he be referring to? Find examples in the book of when this person was *a true friend*.
13. Draw conclusions about what Isaiah will do to rescue the cats at the other Lamina Lab. Do you think it is a wise decision to rescue the cats? Why or why not?
14. Based on what you read in the book, why did the authors choose the title *Word of Mouse*?
15. At the beginning of each chapter, Isaiah shares one of his quotes. Which quote speaks to you the most and why? Using your chosen quote, find evidence in the chapter that explains why Isaiah used that particular quote.

## **CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS**

### **Math:**

Isaiah’s mother has 97 children in one year. The average mouse lives about one year. A baby mouse is called a pup.

- If all 97 children grow up, find a mate, and have 97 pups each, how many pups are born? The next year those mice grow up; find a mate, and each has 97 pups. How many mice are there now? Keep in mind that the average mouse only lives a year, so the mice from the previous generation are likely dead. Continue with more generations of mice. Consider also teaching estimating, rounding, exponents, and graphing with this data.
- Determine how many years it would take to create a mouse population comparable to the world’s human population.

### **Social Studies:**

Mikayla was not allowed to sing because she was a girl. Each student will research a famous woman who changed the world (examples: Ida B. Wells, Amelia Earhart, Mary Shelley, Marie Curie, and Mae Jemison). Use construction paper or plain copy paper and include a photograph of the woman with 3-5 facts to create a description of the woman’s accomplishments and contributions to society. Students can present their findings to the class. Laminate the papers or use sheet protectors and create a book to place in the class library. Books can be created by using a binder, folder, or book rings.

Websites for students to use:

- <https://www.britannica.com/>
- <https://www.ducksters.com/biography/>

### **Health and Physical Education:**

The Brophys, Isaiah, and the other mice eat a lot of unhealthy foods.

<https://www.choosemyplate.gov/> has resources for students and educators, including videos, games, and activity sheets to teach the students about proper nutrition and making good food choices.

### **Science:**

Isaiah creates a lever to free Gwindell from the mouse trap. Introduce the students to the six simple machines and have the students work in teams or individually to create a lever.

- Websites with fun facts about levers:  
<http://easyscienceforkids.com/levers/>  
<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/physics/machines/Levers.shtml>
- Websites for making levers:  
[www.homesciencetools.com/a/simple-machines-make-a-lever](http://www.homesciencetools.com/a/simple-machines-make-a-lever)  
[http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/education/activities/27ms\\_sl2treb.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/education/activities/27ms_sl2treb.html)

### **English Language Arts:**

As a class or individually, research positive and negative reasons for using animals in scientific research. Students will use this information to write an opinion piece on whether they think animal lab testing should be legal or illegal. The following websites have information on animal lab testing:

- <https://animal-testing.procon.org/>
- <http://www.pro-test.org.uk/2006/03/facts-about-animal-research.html>
- <http://www.allaboutanimals.org.uk/PK-Testing.asp>
- <http://www.aboutanimaltesting.co.uk/facts-about-animal-testing.html>

### **Visual Arts:**

Isaiah and his siblings all had fur of a unique color. Using a color wheel, students can experiment with mixing colors.

- This website has a lesson plan where the students can create their own color wheel.  
<http://www.teachkidsart.net/create-your-own-color-wheel-2/>
- This website has resources for printing color wheels.  
<https://mrprintables.com/printable-color-wheel.html>
- Students can either draw an animal to paint or use the templates in the following link. Have students write the colors they mixed.  
<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/325455510547050997>

### **Vocabulary:**

Urbane	Dawdle	Marauding
Nigging	Dilapidated	Fulcrum
Smorgasbord	Telepathy	Unanimous
Soprano	Cornucopia	Nefarious
Tantalizing	Banshee	Torque
Hackles	Choreography	Pew
Slovenly	Brevity	

## **RELATED WEBSITES**

### **ProCon .org**

<https://animal-testing.procon.org/>

Gives the top 13 pro and con arguments of animal testing.

### **The Guardian**

<https://www.theguardian.com/childrens-books-site/2015/jan/09/james-patterson-world-book-day-award-interview>

A transcript of an interview with James Patterson about reading as a boy and writing children's books.

### **Story Warren**

<https://storywarren.com/about/regular-contributors/joe-sutphin/>

Links to Joe Sutphin's stories in Story Warren.

### **Chris Grabenstein**

<http://chrisgrabenstein.com/kids/school-visits.php>

Information about how you can request a link to a free 32 minute video download where Chris Grabenstein answers the top 10 questions he is usually asked during a virtual visit.