

The Boy and the Rat

by Hilton Ayrey

The sign in the pet shop window said "Rat Sale - Only Five Dollars". The boy had always wanted a pet rat. His mother had told him many times that it was never going to happen. But today he just happened to have five dollars in his pocket and he felt as if the planets had aligned. It was something he had to do. Before he knew it he was inside the shop checking out the rat cage. If he was going to buy a rat it had to be something special. He rattled his fingers across the bars on the cage and all the rats shuffled to the back looking frightened. All but one ... a small white rat with big black patches around its eyes like enormous sunglasses. He stood up on his hind legs twitching his nose as if to say, "This looks like a bit of fun. Bring it on..."

Ten minutes later the boy was out of the shop with his new friend tucked away inside his jacket. The rat was calm and quiet, sensing that life was looking up. Upstairs in his bedroom the boy used his Lego to make a cool rat house. It was three stories high with lots of interesting cubbyholes and stairwells. The rat took to it like a duck to water. A long time ago the boy had convinced his mother that any attempt to clean his room was a waste of time so the rat would be safe as long as it stayed in the bedroom. But the boy had far bigger plans than that. The rat was going to school.

This required some training but the rat learned quickly. The food supply was in the right-hand inside pocket. The left-hand inside pocket was for sleeping. When the rat needed to stretch his legs he could race back and forward in the arms of the jacket. Nestling inside the collar or peeking out of the sleeves allowed a view of what was going on in the outside world.

It was on the third day that things went wrong. Miss Wilmot, the boy's teacher, was a very highly strung piece of work. She was a neatness freak of the highest degree, with an intense dislike of insects and small creepy animals. The rat had been lurking in the boy's sleeve during handwriting. Miss Wilmot stopped at his desk to mark his work. The rat scurried across the desk and into her pocket. She felt something and reached into her pocket. As her hand touched on the furry object, the rat ran up inside the sleeve of her jacket, emerging from the collar, swung on her hair and scrambled up to sit perched on her head. Miss Wilmot had a meltdown. As she ran shrieking from the classroom, the rat leapt from her head to the classroom curtain and the boy quickly scooped him up and returned him to his pocket. There would need to be some more training.

Notes on Story Structure

Characters

Setting

Problem

Feelings

Action

Outcome

Theme(s)

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ACTIVITIES

REMEMBERING - What are the facts

1. Make a list (or draw pictures with labels) of the characters in the story. Write down words from the story that tell you something about them.

UNDERSTANDING - Show that you understand the story

2. Why did the boy choose that particular rat?
3. Draw pictures with labels to show you understand what happened in the classroom.

APPLYING - Using what you know from the story

4. Make a poster with lots of tips for kids who want to keep secret pets.
Remember a poster should have an eye-catching title, information, and drawings.
5. Write a short poem or rap song about the Boy and the Rat.

ANALYSING - Breaking down the story to show how it works

6.  You are looking through a window at the most important event in this story. Draw what you see. Explain what is happening. Give a reason why you think this is the most important event.

7. Make a **STORY WEB** showing all the following:
CHARACTERS, SETTING, PROBLEM, FEELINGS, ACTION, OUTCOME

CREATING - Coming up with new ideas

8. Design a piece of clothing so that you could take your pet with you everywhere you go. (It doesn't have to be a rat!)
Label your drawings or write descriptions to explain your interesting ideas.

EVALUATING - Sorting out the good from the bad

9. Make a list of the good things (Yellow Hat thinking) and the bad things (Black Hat thinking) about having a pet.

Yellow Hat Thinking (Good)	Black Hat Thinking (Bad)
_____	_____

10. Give this story a rating out of 10 depending on how much you enjoyed it. Write down a reason for giving the rating you did.

10-----5-----1
This was a great story This story was OK I didn't like this story