

## TIPS FOR DISCUSSION LEADERS

### Location:

- Select a comfort table setting with no distractions
  - home, school, library
  - comfortable chairs, refreshments
- Ideal number of participants is 8 to 14.
- Arrange the seating in a circle if possible.

### Preparation:

- Read the book, provide the author & illustrator biographies, and have discussion question available.
- Prepare discussion questions:
  - Factual- specific information about the book
  - Personal- ask for personal viewpoint
  - Interpretive- delve into book for understanding
- Prepare an ice-breaker question or activity- such as “what did you like most about the story?”

### Publicize:

- Invitation- mail, phone, email
- Flyers and posters
- Community Reads link on HFLCSD web site

### Discussion:

- Welcome and introductions
- Ice-breaker question or activity
- Facilitate dialog while encouraging its progress by asking people to elaborate using discussion questions for guidance
- Involve everyone but do not take sides while balancing reflection with personal reactions
- Use the group dynamic to expose new ways of thinking about themes presented by the author
- Be flexible but stick to the time allotted
- Allow for a few minutes at the end of the discussion to wrap up

**Good discussion leaders are good listeners.**

Prepared by

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With help from the publisher @ [www.candlewick.com](http://www.candlewick.com)

## HF-L Community Reads



## A BOOK DISCUSSION GUIDE for



*The Tale of Despereaux:*  
*Being the Story of a Mouse, a Princess, Some Soup, and a Spool of Thread*

by  
**Kate DiCamillo**  
Illustrated by **Tim Ering**

## THEMES

intolerance – conformity – differences  
heroism and character  
societal rules – peer pressure - hierarchy  
wanting – forgiveness – goodness of heart  
good & evil – light & dark  
courtly love – chivalry – courage - bravery

Candlewick Press Teacher's Guide for  
*The Tale of Despereaux* can be found at:

[www.candlewick.com](http://www.candlewick.com)

## MAJOR CHARACTERS

Despereaux Tilling  
Princess Pea  
Miggery Sow (Mig)  
Roscuro  
Furlough  
Botticelli Remorso  
Cook  
Gregory (the jailer)  
the Threadmaster  
Prince Phillip

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR and ILLUSTRATOR



### Author Kate DeCamillo

was born in Philadelphia but now lives in Minneapolis. She is the author of the award winning story *Because of Winn-Dixie* which has been made into a major motion picture. She is also the author of the *Merry Watson* books and her newest book is entitled *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*. She faithfully writes 2 pages each day, five days a week and is drawn to ‘unlikely heroes.’



### Illustrator Timothy Basil Ering

lives in Somerville, Massachusetts but has sailed all over the world visiting Japan, Philippines, Australia and Africa. He attended art school in Pasadena, California. He approaches his work by becoming his characters and claims “my mother may have been a mouse in her past life.”

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

“The world is dark, and light is precious.  
Come closer, dear reader. You must trust me.

I am telling you a story.”

- *The Tale of Despereaux* by Kate DiCamillo

1. What is the meaning of the little mouse’s name- Despereaux?
2. What happens when Despereaux’s sister Merlot tries to teach him to nibble paper? How does this affect the rest of the story?
3. Why does the King tell the Princess not to speak with Despereaux?
4. What are the consequences when Despereaux breaks the mouse rules?
5. How do you react when people tell you to dislike someone who is different? What does it mean to conform?
6. Analyze the author use of the images of light? What does light represent? What does dark represent? (give examples from the story)
7. Why are some people’s hearts very dark while other people’s are full of light?
8. Think of a situation where you’ve been hurt or offended and really wanted to forgive? Relate this to the story.
9. What does it mean to be a hero? Think about your own heroes- what are the character traits that you try to emulate?
10. Relate the qualities of character; trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship to the characters in this story.
11. What does the author hope the reader will find in the story?
12. Does the story have a happy ending for everyone?

*stimulate thought, discover human truths, explore difficult choices*