

# The Tale of Despereaux

## Study Notes



**Directed by:** Sam Fell and Rob Stevenhagen

**Certificate:** U

**Running time:** 93 mins

### Synopsis

Once upon a time, in the faraway kingdom of Dor, there was magic in the air, laughter aplenty and gallons of mouth-watering soup. But an accident left the King broken-hearted, the Princess filled with longing and the townsfolk without their soup. Sunlight disappeared. The world became grey. All hope was lost in this land...until Despereaux Tilling was born.

## **Before seeing the film**

### **Key questions**

1. In *The Tale of Despereaux*, the king declares rats and the eating of soup 'unlawful' and anyone harbouring a rat or seen eating soup is deemed as a law-breaker. The narrator tells us that making a natural, thing like a rat or eating against the law is the same as making Monday mornings or flies against the law – it's a pointless exercise. Imagine if rats and mice were against the law in our world. How would the police uphold the law and how would it affect our day-to-day lives?
2. Despereaux and his kind live in Mouseworld – a tiny world under the floorboards. Draw an aerial view of what you imagine Mouseworld to look like.
3. The rats in the film live in Ratworld – a world located in the sewers. Draw an aerial view of what you imagine Ratworld to look like. How is it different to Mouseworld?
4. *The Tale of Despereaux* starts off with 'Soup Day', when the first Sunday of every Spring is celebrated with the unveiling of a giant pot of soup for royalty and townspeople to share. Each year, the genius chef creates a new culinary masterpiece. Make up the recipe for your own soup creation – put all of your favourite ingredients into it and give it a name fit for a fairy tale King and Queen.
5. Despereaux is a very brave little mouse and the hero of the tale. What characteristics usually make up a hero? How do you think a mouse can embody all of these characteristics? What kinds of heroic deeds do you think Despereaux will do, judging from his picture?

## **After seeing the film**

### **Task 1**

At the beginning of the film, the narrator says that Despereaux is a 'brave little mouse that believes in honour, justice and always telling the truth'. In what ways do these character traits become apparent as the story in the film progresses? Write about Despereaux's character under the following headings:

- brave
- honourable
- fair
- honest
- loyal
- heroic

### **Task 2**

The look and feel of The Tale of Despereaux fits the fairy tale genre. There are kings and queens, princesses locked in far away castles and magical talking beasts. The buildings, castles and architecture are very similar to that of Eastern European countries, especially the Czech Republic. Research the buildings of the Czech Republic and design your own fairy tale setting for a sequel to The Tale of Despereaux.