



Chrysanthemum

by Kevin Henkes

Teacher's Guide

Written By Kathy Sammis



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CLASSROOM
FAVORITES

by
Kevin
Henkes

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Synopsis

Kevin Henkes (pronounced HENK-us) uses lively, cartoon-like watercolor-and-black-ink illustrations to tell the story of Chrysanthemum, a mouse-child whose classmates ridicule her name when she starts school. When their baby girl mouse is born, the doting parents declare her "absolutely perfect" and give her an "absolutely perfect" name, Chrysanthemum. When Chrysanthemum gets to be old enough to appreciate her name, she too thinks it is absolutely perfect. She loves the way it sounds when she or her parents speak it, and she loves the way it looks when it is written in any way.

Happily secure with herself and her name, a bouncy Chrysanthemum sets off for her first day of school. Now every- thing changes. When the teacher takes roll call, all the mice students giggle when they hear Chrysanthemum's name. Jo and Rita say the name is long, so long that it scarcely fits on the name tag. Self-satisfied Victoria says that while she herself is named after her grandmother, Chrysanthemum is named after a flower—and furthermore, the name has thirteen letters, "exactly half as many letters as there are in the *entire* alphabet." Chrysanthemum's expression has gone from blissfully happy to utterly crushed.

At home that afternoon, Chrysanthemum's parents reassure their unhappy daughter that she and her name are still "absolutely perfect." Feeling better after her favorite dinner, Chrysanthemum happily dreams that her name is Jane. But as soon as she enters the school playground, Victoria, Rita, and Jo start in again, saying Chrysanthemum looks like a flower and that they will pick her and smell her. Once again, Chrysanthemum is crushingly convinced that her name is absolutely dreadful. At home, her parents again reassure her with hugs

and kisses and her favorite dessert, but that night she has a nightmare about really being a chrysanthemum and being plucked by Victoria.

The next day at school, the students meet the glamorous, spellbinding music teacher, Mrs. Twinkle, who they all think is "an indescribable wonder." Victoria, Jo, and Rita go into another bout of mean-spirited teasing when Mrs. Twinkle assigns Chrysanthemum the role of a daisy in the upcoming class musicale. When Mrs. Twinkle asks the mouse-girls why they are teasing, they repeat their objections to Chrysanthemum's name: it's too long, and it's the name of a flower. Mrs. Twinkle has an astonishing response: her name is also long, and she is also named after a flower. Her name is Delphinium! Furthermore, the pregnant teacher says, she thinks Chrysanthemum would be an "absolutely perfect" name for her baby if it is a girl. The crushed look on Chrysanthemum's face is now replaced by a look of utter disbelief, followed by beaming and blooming expressions. Jo, Rita, and Victoria now look at Chrysanthemum

longingly and make up flower names for themselves. Chrysanthemum skips home exuberantly, *knowing* now that her name is "absolutely perfect."

An epilogue reveals that Chrysanthemum is a perfect daisy in the musicale, but Victoria forgets all her lines. And Mrs. Twinkle does indeed name her baby girl Chrysanthemum.

Timeline

ca. 5 years ago

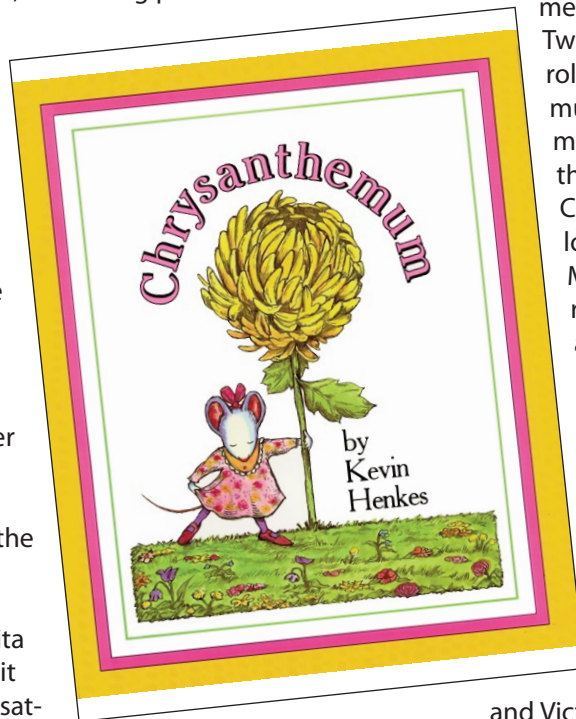
Chrysanthemum is born; her parents give her an "absolutely perfect" name.

ca. 2 years ago

Chrysanthemum becomes old enough to love her name.

Day 1 of school

Chrysanthemum's classmates



make fun of her name; Chrysanthemum begins to think her name is “absolutely dreadful.”

Later, at home Chrysanthemum feels much better thanks to her parents’ reassurances and love.

Day 2 of school Chrysanthemum’s classmates ridicule her name again; Chrysanthemum is again convinced that her name is “absolutely dreadful.”

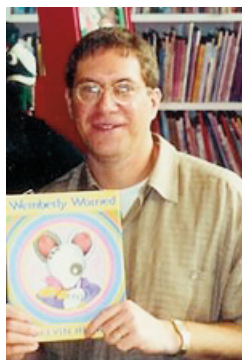
Later, at home Chrysanthemum feels a bit better after another evening of hugs and kisses and comfort from her parents.

Day 3 of school The children meet and are entranced by Mrs. Twinkle, who then reveals that her name is Delphinium; now the other mouse-students think a flower name is wonderful and Chrysanthemum knows that her name is “absolutely perfect.”

Later The class musicale is a hit; Chrysanthemum shines, Victoria flops. Mrs. Twinkle names her baby girl Chrysanthemum.

Author Sketch

Kevin Henkes was born in 1960 in Racine, Wisconsin, the fourth of five children. His parents and siblings encouraged his artistic talent from an early age, and his early love of books was satisfied with frequent trips to the local library. By the time he was a teenager, Henkes had decided to fulfill his love of writing, drawing, and painting by creating children’s picture books. Henkes enrolled at the University of Wisconsin in Madison in 1979 to study art. The summer after his freshman year, at the age of 19, Henkes flew to New York City with portfolios of his work, intent on finding a publisher. Within days he had a contract with Greenwillow Books, which published Henkes’s *All Alone* in 1981, as well as all of Henkes’s books since then, which have included a steady stream of both picture books and novels for mid-



dle-grade readers.

Henkes married artist Laura Dronzek in 1985; she critiques his work and illustrated Henkes’s picture book *Oh!* They each have a studio-bedroom in their Madison, Wisconsin, home, where they alternate child care shifts with their artistic work. Henkes has said he considers himself a “very lucky person,” because making a living as an artist and a writer is exactly what he always wanted to do.

Critic’s Corner

Author/illustrator Henkes is best known for his picture books, which often feature exceptionally appealing mouse-children who successfully deal with common childhood problems. Critics praise Henkes for his genuine sense of children’s emotions and the gentle warmth and humor his books convey—which come, Henkes says, from his own memories of a secure childhood. To explore more serious topics in more depth, Henkes turned to novels, which critics also admire for their humor, wisdom, and respect for children’s thoughts and feelings. Henkes has won numerous awards, including a Newbery Honor for *Olive’s Ocean* in 2004 and a Caldecott Medal for *Kitten’s First Full Moon* in 2005.

Henkes explains that he turned to mice rather than people in his artwork because he can get much more humor out of animal characters. Critics also often note the deft way in which Henkes can express his characters’ emotions with simple facial expressions and body language. Among Henkes’s mouse-character picture books, *Owen* was a Caldecott Honor Book, and three titles feature Henkes’s most popular creation, Lilly: *Chester’s Way*, *Julius*, *the Baby of the World*, and *Lilly’s Purple Plastic Purse*.

Chrysanthemum (1991), another mouse-child book, stemmed from Henkes’s remembered childhood feeling of encountering meanness on the first day of kindergarten, followed by a feeling of security and comfort back at home. *The Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books* praised *Chrysanthemum* as “a story that is nicely structured, wittily told, and universal in its appeal to any child who’s been taunted for any reason.” *Horn Book* called the book “perfectly executed in words and illustration,” adding, “Few illustrators write as well as they draw; Kevin Henkes demonstrates once again that he belongs to that select company.” *Chrysanthemum* was

on the "best books of the year" lists of the American Library Association, *School Library Journal*, *Horn Book*, and the Library of Congress.

Selected Other Books by Kevin Henkes

Self-Illustrated

All Alone (1981)
Chester's Way (1988)
Clean Enough (1982)
Bailey Goes Camping (1985)
Grandpa and Bo (1986)
Jessica (1989)
Julius, the Baby of the World (1990)
Lilly Purple Plastic Purse (1996)
Margaret and Taylor (1983)
Owen (1993)
Sheila Rae, the Brave (1987)
Sheila Rae Peppermint Stick (2001)
Shhh (1989)
A Weekend with Wendell (1987)
Wemberly Warned (2000)
Bird Lake Moon (2008)

Illustrated by Others

The Biggest Boy, illustrated by Nancy Tafuri (1995)
The Circle Dogs, illustrated by Dan Yaccarino (1998)
Good-bye Curtis, illustrated by Marisabina Russo (1995)
Oh! illustrated by Laura Dronzek (1999)
Once Around the Block, illustrated by Victoria Chess (1987)

Novels

The Birthday Room (1999)
Protecting Marie (1995)
Return to Sender (1984)
Sun and Spoon (1997)
Two Under Par (1987)
Words of Stone (1992)
The Zebra Wall (1988)

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Booklist, August 1991, p. 56.
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The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books, October 1991, p. 38.
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Contemporary Authors, Vol. 114, and New Revision Series, Vol. 38. Detroit: Gale, 1993.
 Cooper, Ilene, "The Booklist Interview: Kevin Henkes," *Booklist*, Jan. 15, 1997, p. 868.
 Elliot, Ian, "Meet Kevin Henkes: Young Man on a Roll," *Teaching PreK-8*, January 1989, pp. 43-45.
 Henkes, Kevin, "Again," *Horn Book*, March/April 1997, p. 170 (also available <www.hbook.com/snapshot_henkes.shtml>).
 _____, "The Artist at Work: Being an Illustrator and Author of Children's Books," *Horn Book*, January/February 1992, pp. 38-47.
 Holtze, Sally Homes, ed. *Sixth Book of Junior Authors & Illustrators*. NY: H.W. Wilson, 1989. *Horn Book*, September/October 1991, pp. 583-84.
 Lewis, Valerie, "Meet the Author: Kevin Henkes," *Instructor* September 1 994, p. 106.
 Op de Beeck, Nathalie, "A Talk with Kevin Henkes," *Publishers Weekly*, Aug. 12, 1996, p. 26.
School Library Journal, September 1991, p. 234.
 Silvey, Anita, ed. *Children Books and Their Creators*. Boston/NY: Houghton Mifflin, 1995.
Something About the Author Vols. 43, 76, & 108. Detroit: Gale Research, 1986, 1994, 2000.
 Stan, Susan, "Conversations: Kevin Henkes," *The Five Owls*, November/December 1991, pp. 30-31 (also available at <www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc/wisauthlhenkes/main.htm#bio>).

Internet sites for Kevin Henkes

"Kevin Henkes' Official Website," <<http://www.kevin-henkes.com/>>
 "Kevin Henkes Biography," <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kevin_Henkes>
 "Wisconsin Authors and Illustrators: Kevin Henkes," <<http://www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc/authors/henkes/main.asp>>
 "Kevin Henkes Profile, Educational Paperback Association's Top 100 Authors and Illustrators," <<http://www.edupaperback.org/top100.cfm>>
 "Kevin Henkes at HarperCollins Children's Books," <<http://www.harpercollinschildrens.com/HarperChildrens/Teachers/>>
 "Kevin Henkes Teacher Resource File," <<http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/henkes.htm>>
 "Kevin Henkes" (Carol Hurst's Literature Site): <<http://www.carolhurst.com/authors/khenkes.html>>

General Objectives

1. To use discussion questions to recall details, interpret characters and events, read or listen critically, and respond creatively to the story and its illustrations
2. To expand vocabulary through context clues and word study
3. To expand responses to the book by completing a variety of related activities, some in other areas of the curriculum
4. To exercise artistic, craft, and dramatic skills to help interpret reading

Specific Objectives

1. To understand why and how classmates make fun of Chrysanthemum's name, and how this makes Chrysanthemum feel
2. To understand how Mrs. Twinkle resolves the teasing situation
3. To identify the ways in which Chrysanthemum's parents comfort and reassure her
4. To identify various feelings revealed by the mouse characters' facial expressions and body language
5. To recognize rhythms and patterns established by repeated phrases in the book's text
6. To study the ways in which text and artwork reveal Chrysanthemum's feelings on the way to and the way home from her first day of school
7. To discuss the issues of, and examples of, teasing and other forms of meanness at school

The Importance of Setting

The basic settings are Chrysanthemum's home and Chrysanthemum's school. Chrysanthemum lives in an inviting, pleasant house with her doting parents. We see her growing from a baby to the kindergarten-age mouse-child, engaged in the usual childhood activities; she has a nice grassy yard to play in, and an apple tree to climb. (Her parents are apparently aficionados of cubist art, as they have hung a mouse-sized version of Picasso's "Les Femmes d'Alger" on one of their walls.) Chrysanthemum walks along a dirt path, a sidewalk lined with flowers, and grassy, flower-filled areas on her way to and from school.

At school, Chrysanthemum has sixteen classmates in a typical schoolroom, with a green chalkboard and green walls. Here, during the first day's roll call, all the classmates giggle at Chrysanthemum's name, and Rita, Jo, and Victoria make pointed, nasty comments. The

mouse-children nap on the floor on mats; during each day's nap time, Victoria makes a particularly nasty comment about Chrysanthemum's name. Victoria also makes nasty comments to Chrysanthemum each day when they line up to go home. On the playground, the mean trio of Victoria, Rita, and Jo again tease Chrysanthemum. Mrs. Twinkle entrances the class in another part of the schoolroom, with yellow walls and a multi-colored floor. Here, everything changes when Mrs. Twinkle reveals that her first name is Delphinium.

Cross-Curricular Sources

School Stories

Bernard Ashley, *Cleversticks*
Mary Jane Auch, *Hen Lake*
Miriam Cohen, *Best Friends* and *Will I Have a Friend?*
Lucy Cousins, *Maisy Goes to School*
David Gibbs, *The Other Emily*
Patricia Reilly Giff, *Next Year I'll Be Special*
Katharine Holabird, *Angelina* series
Laura McGee Kvasnosky, *See You Later Alligator*
Bonnie L. Nims, *Where Is the Bear at School?*
Sylvia Root Tester, *We Laughed a Lot, My First Day of School*
Rosemary Wells, *Timothy Goes to School*
Taro Yashima, *Crow Boy*

Self-Image Stories

Nancy Carlson, *I Like Me!*
James Howe, *I Wish I Were a Butterfly*
Dakari Hru, *Joshua's Masai Mask*
Jeanne Modesitt, *Mama, If You Had a Wish*
Marlo Thomas, *Free to Be... You and Me*
Bernard Waber, *You Look Ridiculous, Said the Rhinoceros to the Hippopotamus*

Books About Flowers

Karen Bryant-Mole, *Flowers*
Flowers (First Discovery Series)
Allan Fowler, *What's Your Favorite Flower?*

CD-ROM

Blue's Reading Time Activities and *Blue's Treasure Hunt* (Humongous Entertainment)
Jumpstart Artist (Knowledge Adventure)
Learn About Life Science: Plants (Sunburst)
The Magic School Bus in Concert (Microsoft)
Reading Blaster: Ages 4-6 and *Reading Blaster: Ages 5-7* (Knowledge Adventure)

Internet

- "AFRMA Fancy Mice and Rats": <www.afrma.org/fan_cyrm.htm>
- "Just for Kids" at the National Chrysanthemum Society USA site: <www.mums.org/kids/index.htm>
- "Kevin Henkes Activities at National Center for Children's Illustrated Literature," <<http://www.nccil.org/experience/artists/henkesk/index.htm>>"Kevin Henkes' Official Website," <<http://www.kevinhenkes.com/>>
- "Kevin Henkes Biography," <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kevin_Henkes>
- "Wisconsin Authors and Illustrators: Kevin Henkes," <<http://www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc/authors/henkes/main.asp>>
- "Kevin Henkes Profile, Educational Paperback Association's Top 100 Authors and Illustrators," <<http://www.edupaperback.org/top100.cfm>>
- "Kevin Henkes at HarperCollins Children's Books," <<http://www.harpercollinschildrens.com/HarperChildrens/Teachers/>>
- "Kevin Henkes Teacher Resource File," <<http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/henkes.htm>>

Videos/DVDs

- Animal Antics: Summer* (Just for Kids Home Video)
- Arthur's Storybook* and other Arthur videos (WGBH Boston)
- Plant Life for Children* (Stone House Prods./New York Botanical Garden)
- Student Workshop: Learning to Care* (Sunburst)
- Student Workshop: Responsible Me* (Sunburst)
- What If Everybody Was Purple?* (SVE/Churchill Media)
- You're Always Welcome!* (Values Through Music Prods.)

Themes and Motifs

In discussing the book, help students understand that the story deals with these main issues and situations.

Themes

- self-esteem and self-image
- personal names
- ridicule turning to envy
- student-teacher relations
- teasing and meanness at school
- parental love and reassurance
- comfort and safety of home
- music

- flowers

Motifs

- mice
- comfort foods
- dreams and nightmares
- Parcheesi
- name tags
- "absolutely perfect"

Meaning Study

Discuss with students the meaning of the boldfaced words from the story in the following sentences.

1. She was **absolutely perfect**.
(*Chrysanthemum parents think their new baby is completely without any fault of any kind. This phrase, "absolutely perfect," is repeated many times throughout the book.*)
2. She [Chrysanthemum] thought it [her name] was **absolutely dreadful**.
(*The school children's teasing flips the "absolutely perfect" phrase into Chrysanthemum's new feeling that her name is completely awful.*)
3. Mrs. Chud took **roll call**.
(*The teacher starts the day by reading the roll, or the list of the name of each child in Chrysanthemum class. This starts the problem; all the mouse-children giggle when they hear Chrysanthemum's name.*)
4. I wish I could, thought Chrysanthemum **miserably**.
(*Chrysanthemum now feels very unhappy about her name, because of Victoria's, Rita's, and Jo taunts.*)
5. "It [your name] **scarcely** fits on your name tag."
(*Rita points out that the name Chrysanthemum just barely fits on the name tag. Chrysanthemum repeats this phrase later to her parents; Rita repeats it to Mrs. Twinkle; and Mrs. Twinkle repeats it about her own name.*)
6. "Your name is beautiful." "And **precious** and **priceless** and **fascinating** and **winsome**."
(*Readers/listeners probably won't know what these words mean: precious—having great value, beloved; priceless—having a value beyond all price; fascinating—utterly charming; winsome—winning, engaging, charming.*)
7. "They're just **jealous**." "And **envious** and **begrudging** and **discontented** and **jaundiced**."
(*Again, help readers/listeners to understand: envious—feeling or showing envy, being jealous; begrudging—acting out of envy or resentment about another person's good fortune; discontent-*

ed—not happy or satisfied; jaundiced— prejudiced, having a poor opinion of someone for no good reason.)

8. It was an extremely pleasant dream. ... It was the worst nightmare of Chrysanthemum's life.
(A dream is a series of thoughts or feelings, with images, that a person has while asleep. A nightmare is a bad or frightening dream. Chrysanthemum c dream about having the short, plain name Jane is pleasant. Chrysanthemum's dream about actually being a chrysanthemum flower and being plucked by Victoria is a scary nightmare.)
9. Chrysanthemum took the longest route possible to school.
(Chrysanthemum now dreads going to school, because of the teasing about her name. So she finds the longest way to go from her home to her school, delaying her arrival at school for as long as she can.)
10. They thought Mrs. Twinkle was an indescribable wonder.
(The children are entranced with the glamorous, histrionic, beautiful-voiced music teacher. She is so amazing, words cannot describe her; she is a wonder—an unusual, surprising, very impressive being. Because the children feel this way about Mrs. Twinkle, they immediately decide that having a flower name is a highly desirable thing once they learn that Mrs. Twinkle's first name is Delphinium.)
11. They went out of their way to make a nice impression.
(The students, entranced with Mrs. Twinkle, want her to think well of them. So they put on their best behavior wanting the music teacher to judge them positively.)
12. Mrs. Twinkle led the students in scales. Then she assigned roles for the class musicale.
(Scales are a series of musical tones that go up or down in pitch; Mrs. Twinkle begins teaching the children about singing and music by having them sing scales. The roles are characters or parts for students to play in the class musicale, a musical performance to be put on by members of Chrysanthemum's class.)

Comprehension Study

Discuss the following questions with your students. You could ask students in higher grades to write their answers to the questions in their own words.

1. Look at the pictures in the book, without reading the story. Write or tell a few sentences about one or more of the pictures. Describe 1) what the mouse (or mice) in the picture is (are) feeling or doing at that moment and 2) what is happening in the picture and 3) what is important in this particular picture. As you read or listen to the story, see if what you wrote or told about the picture(s) was accurate.
2. What is wrong with Chrysanthemum's name, according to classmates?
(It is too long, it scarcely fits on the name tag, and it's the name of a flower. It has half of all the letters of the entire alphabet. A chrysanthemum lives "in a garden with worms and other dirty things.")
3. What things do classmates do to Chrysanthemum that make her miserable?
(They say bad things about her name, as noted above. Victoria ends the day by saying she would change her name if it were Chrysanthemum and by saying she simply "cannot believe your name." Victoria says Chrysanthemum looks like a flower; Rita points and says they should pick her; Jo suggests that they should smell her. The trio taunt her by chanting, "Chrysanthemum c a daisy!" All the children giggle when Mrs. Chud says Chrysanthemum name at roll call.)
4. How do Chrysanthemum's parents help their daughter when she comes home from school unhappy?
(They reassure her that her name really is beautiful and "absolutely perfect." They prepare Chrysanthemum c favorite dinner [macaroni and cheese] and dessert [chocolate cake with buttercream frosting]. They play Chrysanthemum favorite game, Parcheesi, and they shower her with hugs and kisses. [Adult readers will also note that Chrysanthemum v father consults psychology books, The Inner Mouse—Childhood Anxiety and A Rose by Any Other Name...Understanding Identity.]
5. Identify pictures in the book in which one or more mouse characters express these feelings: secure happiness, embarrassment, despair, smug satisfaction, concern for someone else, mean spirits, anxiety, surprise, delight, envy.
(Examples will vary.)
6. In what ways is Mrs. Twinkle's name like hrysanthemum's name?
(It too is long; it too would scarcely fit on a name tag; and it too is the name of a flower)
7. What stops the teasing about Chrysanthemum's name?
(All the students are in awe of Mrs. Twinkle, an "indescribable wonder" So when the wildly admired music teacher says her name, Delphinium, is very much like Chrysanthemum s name, suddenly everyone thinks having a long flower name is the best thing possible.)

8. Identify words and phrases that are repeated often in the book.

(Answers may vary somewhat. Among repeated phrases are: "absolutely perfect," "Chrysanthemum, Chrysanthemum, Chrysanthemum," "she loved the way it/her name sounded/looked," "so long," "scarcely fits on a name tag," "named after a flower," "absolutely dreadful," "Thank you for sharing that with us, Victoria. Now put your head down," "an evening filled with hugs and kisses and Parcheesi," "Welcome home!" "Chrysanthemum wilted," "I'm named after my grandmother," "wildly funny.")

9. How does Chrysanthemum feel as she heads for school on the first day? What words and pictures express this? How does Chrysanthemum feel as she leaves school and arrives home at the end of the first day of school? What words and pictures express this?

(For the first day of school, Chrysanthemum "wore her sunniest dress and her brightest smile." She "ran all the way." She said, "Hooray! School!" These words tell us that Chrysanthemum is eager and happy about going to school. The picture shows her happily running and leaping and smiling on her way. At the end of the school day, Chrysanthemum thinks "miserably" about her name; her expression as Victoria taunts her is embarrassed and full of despair. When Chrysanthemum arrives home, she declares, "School is no place for me." She no longer wants to be at school. And she no longer likes her name; she repeats to her parents all the bad things that Victoria, Rita, and Jo have said about her name: "My name is too long. It scarcely fits on my name tag. And I'm named after a flower." The picture shows us how unhappy Chrysanthemum is: she crying, with her paws over her eyes.)

10. What details show that Mrs. Twinkle is a musical person?

(In the first picture of Mrs. Twinkle, she is singing. Her dress has musical notes on it, and her tail is curled into a clef sign. She has written on the chalkboard, "Music is my life," and added drawings of musical notes.)

Across the Curriculum

Invite students to complete any of these activities that are suitable for their grade and interest level.

Art

1. Draw pictures of flowers you see in gardens or in the wild.

2. Design and make a flower mobile.
3. Design costumes for your "class musicale" or "Dance of the Flowers."
4. Create a "cubist" picture by drawing geometric shapes on a magazine picture with a ruler, cutting out the shapes, and gluing them in rearranged positions on a piece of paper. (Teacher: You could show students Picasso's "Demoiselles d'Avignon" and other cubist paintings.)
5. Draw some Kevin Henkes-style mice figures. Draw a large, almond- or teardrop-shaped head, add ears and a nose, and then add a simple spot or line for the eye(s) and a simple line for the mouth. Experiment with ways to show different expressions on your mice's faces.
6. Create class name tags cut into interesting shapes.

Health

Identify the different stages of baby, toddler, and young child growth and development shown on the page that starts, "Chrysanthemum grew and grew and grew."

History and Social Studies

1. Chrysanthemum receives a letter addressed to her. With classmates, find out about how a letter you mail gets to the person you are sending the letter to.
2. On the page that begins, "If I had a name like yours...." a map is pulled down over the classroom chalkboard. What U.S. state does this map show? (Hint: It is the state where Kevin Henkes lives.) Find this state on a map of the United States. (You could also locate the town/city in that state where Kevin Henkes lives.)

Language Arts

1. Read or listen to other mouse-child stories by Kevin Henkes. What common elements do you notice in the stories and illustrations? What differences do you notice?
2. Compare this book with books by other authors that feature mouse characters. How are the books alike? How are they different?
3. What other stories have you read or listened to about problems at school? Make a list of the books and the problems they tell about. How many of these problems have you faced at school?
4. In one of the books' pictures, the classroom chalkboard has a list of "Words We Know." What other words do you know that might relate to mice?
5. Research Kevin Henkes on the Internet. Then write a paragraph about him.

6. Practice spelling and writing your name and names of other family members.

Mathematics

1. How many letters are in the names Jo, Rita, Victoria, and Delphinium? How many letters are in your first name? Make a chart of classmates' names according to number of letters in each name.
2. Compare the shapes and sizes of the pictures on pages 2 through 5 of the book (the page that starts with "Her name must be..." through the page that starts "Chrysanthemum loved the way her name looked...").
3. How old is Chrysanthemum in the picture when she is blowing out the candles on her birthday cake?

Music

1. Put on your own "class musicale" or a "Dance of the Flowers" created by classmates and yourself.
2. Invite your school's music teacher to come to class and tell you how she or he learned to sing and play music and how she or he became a music teacher. Does she or he take part in other musical activities beyond teaching?

Science

1. Create a field/growing guide for one of these flowers: Chrysanthemum, Delphinium, or Daisy. Try growing these flowers yourself, with help from family members.
2. Report on how, when, and where real mice live, sleep, and eat. Or draw up a list of instructions for caring for a pet mouse.
3. Victoria says that chrysanthemums live in "a garden with worms." Find out and explain about the important role worms play in soil life.

Student Involvement Activities

1. Bring to class some chrysanthemums, delphiniums, and/or daisies.
2. Talk about a time when you felt different, the way Chrysanthemum feels when her classmates make fun of her name. How did you handle this situation?
3. Talk about teasing that you, a friend, or a sibling have experienced or done. What started the teasing? Why did it go on? How did the person being teased feel? How was the situation handled? What

is your school's policy about teasing?

4. Do you think Chrysanthemum's classroom teacher, Mrs. Chud, should have done something about the teasing? How do you think she could have handled the situation differently?
5. Play a game of Parcheesi with classmates or members of your family.
6. Ask members of your family why they gave you the first name you have. Are you named after anyone? Does your name have any special meaning? Has anyone ever made any comments about your name? How did you feel about this?
7. On the third day of school, Chrysanthemum fills her pockets with "her most prized possessions and her good-luck charms." What are your most prized possessions and good-luck charms?
8. With classmates, make a list of other "flower" names for girls that you have heard or read about.
9. Tell about some dreams you have had. (We all dream a lot, but we usually don't remember many of our dreams.) Why do you think you might have had these dreams?
10. What is your favorite dinner? your favorite dessert? Make a class list. Which dinner and which dessert are the class favorites? You could bring samples of these in for a class "feast."

Alternate Assessment

Depending on student ability level, you could have students write their responses to one of these assessment vehicles or simply discuss their response with you, individually or in a group setting.

1. Explain what the color pictures add to this story, or how the pictures fill out the story's words.
2. Describe Chrysanthemum's family and home life.
3. Describe the way her classmates treat Chrysanthemum, and explain why they act this way. Tell how this makes Chrysanthemum feel, and explain how the problem is solved.

Vocabulary Test

Read each sentence. Below the sentence, find the answer that could be used in place of the word in boldface (dark) type. Write the letter of the answer in the blank in front of the sentence.

_____ 1. She was absolutely perfect.

- (a) not at all
- (b) completely
- (c) a little bit

_____ 2. She loved the way her name sounded when she whispered it.

- (a) spoke very softly
- (b) wrote
- (c) shouted

_____ 3. Everyone giggled upon hearing Chrysanthemum's name.

- (a) drank some water
- (b) wiggled
- (c) laughed in a silly way

_____ 4. "Welcome home!"

- (a) We are glad to have you
- (b) Go away from
- (c) Come if you are well

_____ 5. It was an extremely pleasant dream.

- (a) somewhat
- (b) badly
- (c) very

_____ 6. "Oh, pish. They're just jealous."

- (a) happy
- (b) filled with envy
- (c) hungry

_____ 7. Victoria was chosen as the dainty Fairy Queen.

- (a) very large
- (b) old
- (c) delicate and pretty

_____ 8. "What's so humorous?" asked Mrs. Twinkle.

- (a) funny
- (b) sad
- (c) hurtful

_____ 9. "It scarcely fits on your nametag."

- (a) easily
- (b) nicely
- (c) barely.

_____ 10. Mrs. Twinkle led the students in scales.

- (a) shells on the beach
- (b) musical tones that go up or down
- (c) math problems written in words

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Matching (10 points)

Read each description. Find the name on the right that matches the description. Write the letter of the name in the space in front of the description. Use each name only one time.

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| 1. Mouse-girl who is named after her grandmother. | a. Chrysanthemum |
| 2. Chrysanthemum's daily classroom teacher. | b. Rita |
| 3. Mouse-girl who says Chrysanthemum's name is too long. | c. Victoria |
| 4. Mouse-girl with a flower's name. | d. Mrs. Twinkle |
| 5. Mouse who sings and is having a baby. | e. Mrs. Chud |

Part II: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Choose the best ending for each sentence. Write the letter of the ending you chose in the space in front of each sentence.

- _____ 1. Chrysanthemum's parents think their daughter is
(a) very naughty. (b) a poor student. (c) absolutely perfect.
- _____ 2. Chrysanthemum loves having her name written on a
(a) birthday cake. (b) wall. (c) computer screen.
- _____ 3. Victoria makes mean remarks each day at
(a) story hour. (b) nap time. (c) snack time.
- _____ 4. Chrysanthemum and her parents play the game
(a) Candy Land. (b) Parcheesi. (c) Chutes and Ladders.
- _____ 5. Chrysanthemum's favorite dinner is
(a) creamed tuna. (b) meatloaf. (c) macaroni and cheese.
- _____ 6. Victoria's hair ornament is a
(a) star. (b) purple ribbon. (c) pencil.
- _____ 7. Chrysanthemum's class puts on a
(a) spelling bee. (b) musicale. (c) comedy play.
- _____ 8. Victoria says her new name is
(a) Lily of the Valley. (b) Chrysanthemum. (c) Winsome.
- _____ 9. All the children in Chrysanthemum's class wear
(a) I.D. bracelets. (b) glasses. (c) name tags.
- _____ 10. Mrs. Twinkle teaches
(a) art. (b) English. (c) music.

Part III: True/False (20 points)

Mark each sentence with a T if it is true or an F if any part of it is false.

- _____ 1. The author of this book also painted the book's pictures.
- _____ 2. The day Chrysanthemum was born was the happiest day in her parents' lives.
- _____ 3. Chrysanthemum did not like her name when she was growing up.
- _____ 4. Chrysanthemum is happy to be on her way to her first day of school.
- _____ 5. Chrysanthemum has a nightmare about being named Jane.
- _____ 6. Victoria, Rita, and Pat gang up to tease Chrysanthemum.
- _____ 7. Chrysanthemum's classroom teacher does nothing to stop the teasing.
- _____ 8. Her parents are not able to make Chrysanthemum feel any better.
- _____ 9. Mrs. Twinkle gives Chrysanthemum the lead role in the school play.
- _____ 10. Mrs. Twinkle says she is also named after a flower.

Part IV: Essay (Extra Credit)

Write or tell your answer to one of these questions to get extra points on your test.

1. Compare the way Mrs. Chud and Mrs. Twinkle handle the teasing behavior.
2. How, if at all, do Chrysanthemum's parents help their daughter?

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Matching (10 points)

Read each description. Find the name on the right that matches the description. Write the letter of the name in the space in front of the description. Use each name only one time.

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| _____ 1. Name of Mrs. Twinkle's baby girl. | a. mother |
| _____ 2. Mouse-girl who says Chrysanthemum's name is too long. | b. Victoria |
| _____ 3. The school music teacher. | c. Chrysanthemum |
| _____ 4. Mouse-person who comforts Chrysanthemum. | d. Jo |
| _____ 5. Mouse-girl who makes the most mean remarks about Chrysanthemum. | e. Mrs. Twinkle |

Part II: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Choose the best ending for each sentence. Write the letter of the ending you chose in the space in front of each sentence.

- _____ 1. Chrysanthemum is named after
(a) her grandmother. (b) a jewel. (c) a flower.
- _____ 2. As a baby, Chrysanthemum slept in a
(a) hammock. (b) crib. (c) mouse's nest.
- _____ 3. Chrysanthemum loves having her name written on a(n)
(a) envelope. (b) window. (c) name tag.
- _____ 4. Chrysanthemum's classroom teacher is
(a) Mr. Henkes. (b) Mrs. Twirly. (c) Mrs. Chud.
- _____ 5. Victoria says she was named after
(a) a flower. (b) her grandmother. (c) a famous queen.
- _____ 6. Victoria says that a chrysanthemum lives with
(a) worms. (b) rats. (c) fleas.
- _____ 7. Mrs. Twinkle's first name is
(a) Daisy. (b) Delphinium. (c) Marigold.
- _____ 8. In the school musicale, Chrysanthemum plays the part of a(n)
(a) Fairy Princess. (b) elf. (c) daisy.
- _____ 9. Mrs. Twinkle has
(a) a baby boy. (b) a baby girl. (c) twins.
- _____ 10. This person forgets her lines in the class musicale:
(a) Victoria. (b) Chrysanthemum. (c) Rita.

Part III: True/False (20 points)

Mark each sentence with a T if it is true or an F if any part of it is false.

- _____ 1. Chrysanthemum has a nightmare about being a real chrysanthemum.
- _____ 2. Chrysanthemum's parents wished their baby was a boy.
- _____ 3. Chrysanthemum lives in an apartment building.
- _____ 4. Growing up, Chrysanthemum loves the way her name sounds when it is spoken.
- _____ 5. All of her classmates giggle when they hear Chrysanthemum's name.
- _____ 6. In spite of the teasing, Chrysanthemum still thinks her name is absolutely perfect.
- _____ 7. Rita joins Victoria and Jo in making many mean remarks about Chrysanthemum's name.
- _____ 8. The students don't like Mrs. Twinkle.
- _____ 9. Mrs. Twinkle gives her first name to her new baby.
- _____ 10. The mean teasers say that Chrysanthemum even looks like a flower.

Part IV: Essay (Extra Credit)

Write or tell your answer to one of these questions to get extra points on your test.

1. Why do Victoria and her friends tease Chrysanthemum? How does Chrysanthemum react to this?
2. How do Chrysanthemum's feelings about school change as the story goes on?

Answer Key

VOCABULARY TEST

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. b | 6. b |
| 2. a | 7. c |
| 3. c | 8. a |
| 4. a | 9. c |
| 5. c | 10. b |

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Matching (10 points)

- | | |
|------|------|
| 1. c | 4. a |
| 2. e | 5. d |
| 3. b | |

Part II: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. c | 6. a |
| 2. a | 7. b |
| 3. b | 8. a |
| 4. b | 9. c |
| 5. c | 10. c |

Part III: True/False/(20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. F |
| 2. T | 7. T |
| 3. F | 8. F |
| 4. T | 9. F |
| 5. F | 10. T |

Part IV: Essay (Extra Credit)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Matching (10 points)

- | | |
|------|------|
| 1. c | 4. a |
| 2. d | 5. b |
| 3. e | |

Part II: Multiple Choice (20 points)

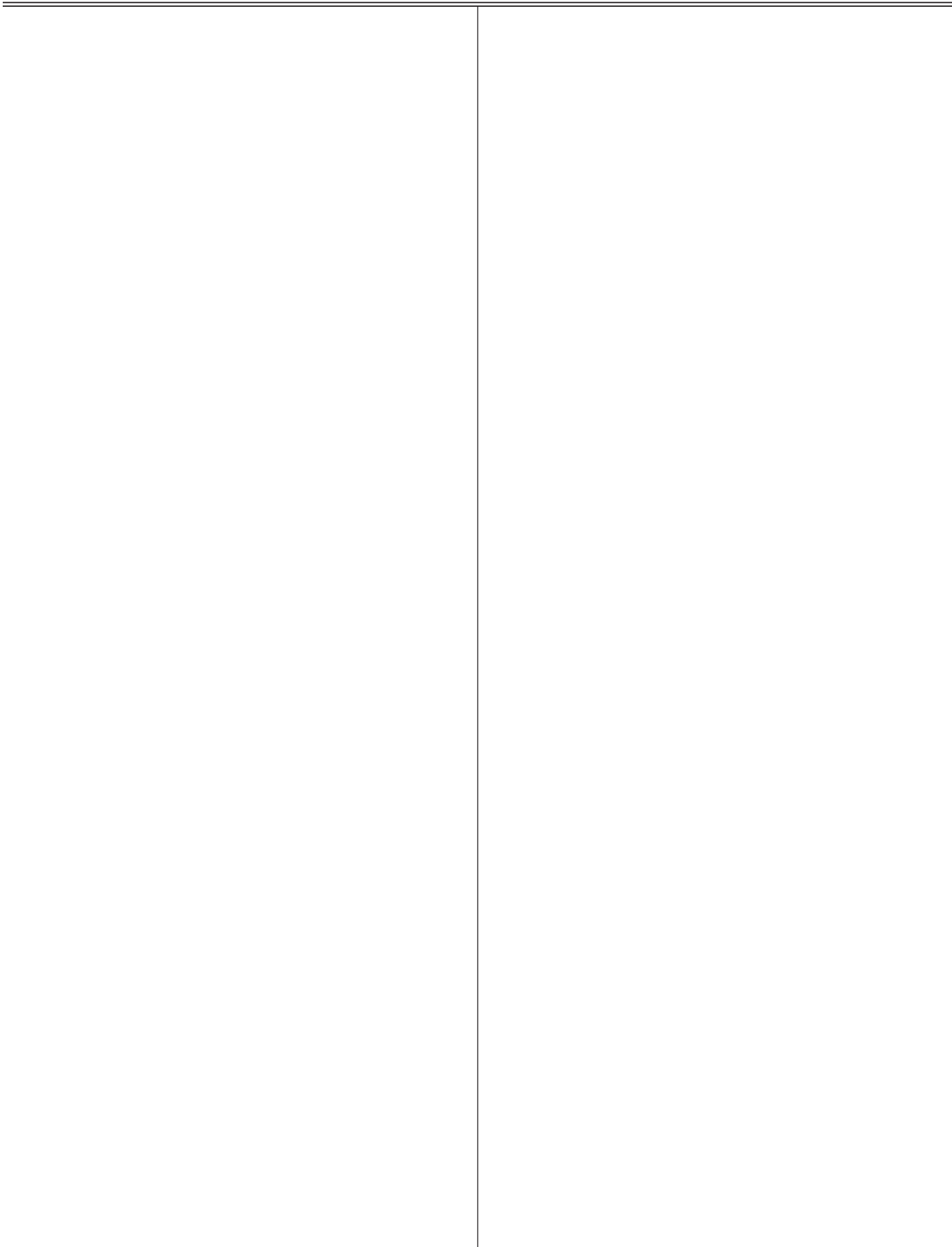
- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. c | 6. a |
| 2. b | 7. b |
| 3. a | 8. c |
| 4. c | 9. b |
| 5. b | 10. a |

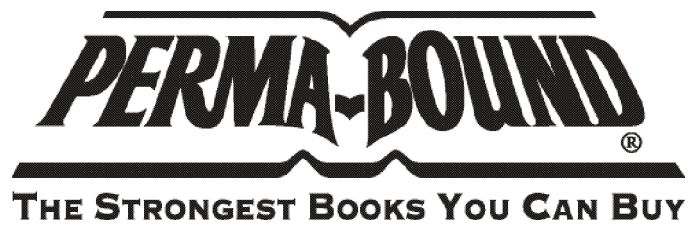
Part III: True/False (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. F |
| 2. F | 7. T |
| 3. F | 8. F |
| 4. T | 9. F |
| 5. T | 10. T |

Part IV: Essay (Extra Credit)

Answers will vary.





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