



Poppy

by Avi

Teacher's Guide

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Synopsis

Chapter 1

Mr. Ocax is a great horned owl who rules over Dimwood Forest and the surrounding area, enjoying both terrifying his subjects and eating them.

One night, hungry, he spies two little mice on top of Bannock Hill. They have broken the rule and gone up there without Mr. Ocax's permission; he will enjoy catching and killing them.

Now the point of view shifts to the mice on Bannock Hill. Poppy is a timid deer mouse who has gone up the hill with her cocky, jive-talking, earring-sporting boyfriend, the golden mouse Ragweed. She has come to dance and to hear Ragweed's marriage proposal, but now she begs Ragweed to come in from out in the open, where he is easy prey for Ocax. Ragweed doubts that Ocax can see him and thinks it's stupid to ask an old owl's permission to go somewhere. Stung by Ragweed's taunts about her cowardice, Poppy begins to creep out from under the rotten bark that is sheltering her. Like a thunderbolt, out of nowhere, Ocax hurtles down, killing Ragweed instantly. Poppy barely throws herself back under cover in time. Ocax settles down, waiting for her to emerge.

Chapter 2

Poppy comes to and flashes back to her father's warnings about Mr. Ocax. Poppy's pompous father, Lungwort, has taught all the young mice that Mr. Ocax rules Dimwood and the territory around it, protecting the mice from the vicious porcupines that would otherwise torture and horribly kill them. In return, the mice must ask Mr. Ocax for permission to go anywhere beyond the immediate area of abandoned Gray House where

Poppy's family lives. Ocax eats any mouse who disobeys the rules—and any other careless mice he can catch. Ragweed questioned the reason for Ocax's rules, whether Ocax was really a protector, and the truth about porcupines, especially since none of the mice has ever seen one of these quilled creatures.

Chapter 3

Back on Bannock Hill, a terrified Poppy races in short bursts from one protected spot to another, pursued by the vengeful Ocax. The chase shifts rapidly from Poppy's point of view to Ocax's. Poppy narrowly escapes and arrives home safely, only to find that her father has called the clan together for an emergency meeting.

Chapter 4

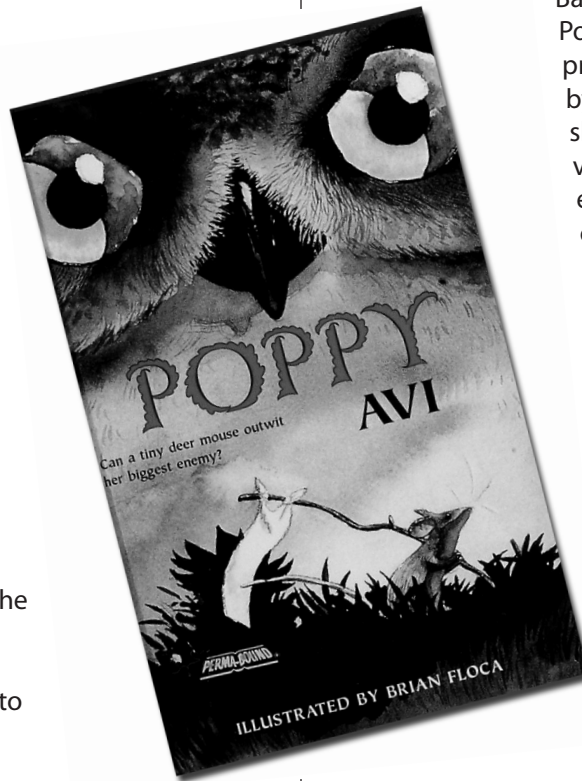
Lungwort tells the assembled mice that the family has grown so large that there is no longer enough food in the neighborhood to feed everyone. The family faces starvation unless at least half of them relocate. The best place appears to be New House, a new farm on the other side of Dimwood Forest, an entire half day's trek from Gray House.

Lungwort further announces

that he will go to Mr. Ocax to ask permission for the move, and Poppy will accompany him. Poppy is horrified, and explains that Ocax has just killed Ragweed and chased her. Lungwort is adamant: Poppy must explain to the entire family that Ragweed was killed because they went to Bannock Hill without Ocax's permission, and she must go with Lungwort to see Ocax to show the owl that she is very sorry for her disobedience.

Chapter 5

Poppy accompanies her father on a scary nighttime march along Tar Road across the Bridge to the charred tree where Mr. Ocax perches each night surveying his realm for prey. Poppy struggles to hold up the white flag in the heavy rain while Ocax taunts them with scary owl-calls.



Chapter 6

Lungwort makes a bombastic speech to Mr. Ocax requesting permission for the family to move to New House. Ocax denies permission, then gives as his reason for the denial Poppy's lack of permission to go to the hill—Ocax has recognized Poppy as the mouse that got away. Although terrified, Poppy does manage to notice that Ocax seems uneasy about the mice going to the particular destination of New House. Also, she retreats from Ocax's tree clutching something she has pried from one of Ocax's spit-up pellets piled up around his tree: Ragweed's earring.

Chapter 7

Back at Gray House, a despondent Lungwort retreats to his study and the family blames Poppy for Mr. Ocax's denial of permission for them to move. The family will perish. A confused Poppy tries to ask questions about the situation, as Ragweed would have done. She figures out that Mr. Ocax wants to keep the mice away from New House for some unknown reason. She will have to go there and discover the reason for herself. This will prove to her family that she and Ragweed are not really the cause of Mr. Ocax's refusal.

Chapter 8

Poppy announces her decision to her disapproving father. Her route, she decides, must be through the fearful Dimwood Forest. Her cousin Basil sees her off and affixes Ragweed's earring to Poppy's ear, "For courage."

Chapter 9

Mr. Ocax uneasily patrols his domain, worried about why the mice really want to move to New House and hoping to catch Poppy. Meanwhile, Poppy shakes off her fears and crosses a rain-swollen Glitter Creek. Swept away, she almost drowns, but this also saves her from Ocax, who was about to swoop down on her. Ocax flies on to New House, where he sees the thing that alarms him, still on the new barn where it was before.

Chapter 10

Poppy enters Dimwood Forest for the first time in her life and finds it impressive. Again, the point of view shifts frequently from Poppy to Ocax as each creature heads north into the Forest, Poppy moving toward New House and Ocax returning to his nest in a large dead tree next to a very large hollow log. Then Poppy is forced to leap into this very log to escape a fox. Inside the log she hears heavy breathing. She is trapped.

Chapter 11

Poppy meets the inhabitant of the log, a waddling, smelly, grumpy, quill-filled creature named Ereth who orders the fox to leave. Poppy is terrified when Ereth tells her he is a porcupine.

Chapter 12

Poppy is amazed when Ereth tells her that porcupines are plant eaters who think eating meat (including mice) is disgusting, and also that Ocax is afraid of him, Ereth the porcupine.

Chapter 13

Ereth tells Poppy that Ocax is by no means the ruler of Dimwood Forest, and then Ereth steps out of the log and taunts Ocax for saying such things, revealing that Poppy is there with him. Poppy gets Ereth to take her to New House safely, guarding her from Ocax, by promising to get the salt lick on the high steel pole on the New House lawn that Ereth yearns for.

Chapter 14

Safely at New House, Poppy discovers a field full of corn and an old barn—a perfect place for her family's new home. But sitting on an overhang of the New House farm's new barn is a huge owl, twice the size of Mr. Ocax.

Chapter 15

Ereth leaves and Poppy makes one of his discarded quills into a weapon for herself.

Chapter 16

Poppy discovers that the huge barn owl is a fake, put there by the New House humans to protect their chickens—the fake owl scares Ocax away. Suddenly Poppy realizes that Ocax is full of fears and has never really been protecting the mice, only controlling them to make them more convenient meals for himself.

Chapter 17

Poppy, hidden in the New House corn field, sees Mr. Ocax watching the fake owl and clearly feeling miserable and nervous. She cannot resist taunting Ocax, telling him she knows something about this owl that he does not. Ocax cunningly calls Poppy a smart mouse and offers to talk to her reasonably, as equals. He lures Poppy out onto the dirt road, then attacks.

Chapter 18

Poppy and Ocax fight one-on-one, to the death, Poppy protecting herself with the porcupine-quill spear. When Ocax is about to pounce on the exhausted mouse, Poppy plunges the quill into Ocax's claw. The owl, enraged by pain, flails about wildly in the air, carrying Poppy with him as she convulsively clutches the quill.

Finally, she drops her hold just before the maddened Ocax hurtles headlong into the salt lick. The salt lick shatters onto the ground, where Ocax lies dead.

Chapter 19

Poppy goes back to Ereth's log home and tells him the salt is now available to him. She sleeps deeply, then runs home and announces to the assembled mice that Mr. Ocax is dead (displaying one of his feathers) and that they can all move to New House and its field of corn "that has enough to feed us forever and ever."

Chapter 20

This chapter is an epilogue; it takes place "almost thirteen full moons to the night since Mr. Ocax killed Ragweed." Poppy and her husband Rye stand on Bannock Hill with their litter of eleven young mice. This, Poppy says, will be their dancing place—the place where she and Ragweed had not been able to dance, the place where Ocax killed Ragweed. "As long as you are free to dance in the open air by the light of the moon, all will be well," Poppy tells her offspring. And they all dance.

Timeline of the Action

Long ago	Mr. Ocax establishes himself as ruler over the mice of the Dimwood Forest area.
a while ago	Lungwort tells Poppy and her siblings about the dangers of porcupines and to always obey Mr. Ocax.
one night	Poppy and Ragweed go to Bannock Hill without Ocax's permission; Ocax kills Ragweed.
the next morning	Lungwort announces that the family must find a new home or starve.
two nights later	Ocax refuses to give the mice permission to move.
the next day	Poppy meets Ereth and learns the truth about Ocax.
the day after that	Ereth takes Poppy to New House, where she discovers the fake owl and Ocax's fears; Ocax and Poppy fight to the death; Ocax dies.
that night	Poppy sends Ereth back to New House for the salt; she sleeps in Ereth's lair.
the next day	Poppy returns home and tells the mice that Ocax is dead.
13 months later	Poppy and her husband Rye take their family up to Bannock Hill to dance in the moonlight.

Author Sketch

Avi is a very popular author with both readers and critics, and he writes in a wide variety of genres, a mix of historical fiction, fantasy, ghost stories, science fiction, mystery, humor, animal stories, and contemporary coming-of-age tales. He is equally successful in all these genres.



Avi's full name is Avi Wortis. He was born in New York City in 1937, the son of a psychiatrist and a social worker. He grew up in Brooklyn amidst an artistic and politically aware extended family. Reading was a big part of his childhood, which was fortunate, since he suffered from dysgraphia and consequently did poorly in school. By his senior year in high school, Avi had decided to make a career of writing. As he told *Something About the Author*, "Perhaps it was stubbornness. It was generally agreed that was one thing I could not possibly do."

In college (Antioch University and the University of Wisconsin), Avi worked on his writing skills by taking playwriting courses; one of his plays was published. After receiving his B.A. in 1959, he worked a number of different jobs, then became a librarian, working in the theater collection of the New York Public Library. He married in 1963 (he later divorced and remarried). After his two sons were born, he began making up stories for them, which led to his first children's book, *Things That Sometimes Happen*, published in 1970. With *No More Magic* (1975), Avi discovered he loved writing young people's novels, and he went on to write many different types. He is especially well known for his vivid historical novels, such as *The Fighting Ground*, *Encounter at Easton*, and *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*. He is also a deft humorist, as in his comic contemporary novel *S.O.R. Losers*, and also pleases readers and critics with his contemporary coming-of-age novels, such as *Nothing but the Truth*, a 1992 Newbery honor book. In addition to his writing, Avi travels to schools throughout the United States, meeting with students as a visiting writer.

Critic's Corner

Avi's novels are fast-paced and tell a good story; they are also complex, ironic, and thought-provoking. Avi himself describes his writing in these terms: "I try to write about complex issues—young people in an adult world—full of irony and contradiction, in a narrative style that relies heavily on suspense with a texture rich in emotion and imagery." He aims to pull readers in and hold them with a well-plotted, suspenseful story that's a good read," as he describes it. With the "good read," Avi draws his readers into thinking about the issues each of his novels addresses, being sure the issues never overshadow the story and action.

True to form, Avi tells a riveting, suspenseful story in *Poppy*, while also unfolding a coming-of-age tale as Poppy throws aside the tyranny of Ocax and the unthinking conformity promoted by her father and finds her own way by thinking and acting for herself. *Booklist* called *Poppy* "a good old-fashioned story with an exciting plot, well-drawn characters, and a satisfying ending...will please readers on many levels." *Horn Book* praised the novel as a "splendid read-aloud, and a tribute to the inquiring mind and the stout heart." *Publishers Weekly* found the book to be "well-nigh irresistible" and *School Library Journal* called it an "exciting story...richly visual, subtly humorous, and skillfully laden with natural-history lessons...the characters are memorable."

Avi's Published Works

Things That Sometimes Happened, 1970
Snail Tale, 1972
Performing Arts Resources, 1974
No More Magic, 1975
Captain Grey, 1977
Emily Upham's Revenge, 1978
Night Journeys, 1979
Encounter at Easton, 1980
The History of Helpless Harry, 1980
The Man from the Sky, 1980
A Place Called Ugly, 1981
Who Stole the Wizard of Oz?, 1981
Sometimes I Think I Hear My Name, 1982
Shadrach's Crossing, 1983
The Fighting Ground, 1984
Devil's Race, 1984
S. O. R. Losers, 1984
Bright Shadow, 1985

Wolf Rider: A Tale of Terror, 1986
Romeo and Juliet—Together (and Alive!)—at Last, 1987
Something Upstairs: A Tale of Ghosts, 1988
The Man Who Was Poe, 1989
Seahawk, 1990
The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle, 1990
Nothing but the Truth: A Documentary Novel, 1991
Blue Heron, 1992
Who Was That Masked Man, Anyway?, 1992
Windcatcher, 1992
Punch with Judy, 1993
City of Light, City of Dark: A Comic Book Novel, 1993
The Barn, 1994
Shadrach's Crossing (Smuggler's Island), 1994
The Bird, the Frog, and the Light: A Fable, 1994
Tom, Babette, and Simon: Three Tales of Transformation, 1995
Beyond the Western Sea, 1996
What Do Fish Have to Do with Anything?: Short Stories, 1997
Finding Providence: The Story of Roger Williams, 1997
Poppy and Rye, 1998
Perloo the Bold, 1998
Beyond the Western Sea, Book II: Lord Kirkle's Money, 1998
Amanda Joins the Circus, 1998
Ragweed, 1999
Midnight Magic, 1999
Ereth's Birthday, 2000
Christmas Rat, 2000
Secret School, 2001
Prarie School, 2001
Good Dog, 2001
Don't You Know There's a War On?, 2001
Things That Sometimes Happen, 2002
Crispin: The Cross of Lead, 2002
Silent Movie, 2003
Never Mind! A Twin Novel, 2004
End of the Beginning: Being the Adventures of a Small Snail (And an Even Smaller Ant), 2004
Book Without Words: A Fable of Medieval Magic, 2005
Poppy's Return, 2005
Best Shorts: Favorite Short Stories for Sharing, 2006
Crispin: At the Edge of the World, 2006
Strange Happenings: Five Tales of Transformation, 2006
The Traitor's Gate, 2007

Related Reading

Richard Adams, *Watership Down*
 Alan Arkin, *The Lemming Condition*
 John Balaban, *The Hawk's Tale*
 Russ Chenowith, *Shadow Walkers*
 Beverly Cleary, *The Mouse and the Motorcycle*, *Ralph S. Mouse*, and
Runaway Ralph
 Jane L. Conly, *Racso and the Rats of N.I.M.H.*
 Roald Dahl, *Fantastic Mr. Fox*
 Meindert DeJong, *Along Came a Dog*
 Allan W. Eckert, *Incident at Hawk's Hill*
 Dan Elish, *The Great Squirrel Uprising*
 John and Jean George, *Bubo, the Great Horned Owl and Vulpes,*
the Red Fox
 Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*
 Russell C. Hoban, *The Mouse and His Child*
 Brian Jacques, *The Redwall series*
 Randall Jarrell, *The Animal Family* and *The Bat—Poet*
 Annabel Johnson, *I Am Leaper*
 Ken Kesey, *Little Tricker the Squirrel Meets Big Double the Bear*
 Richard King-Smith, *The Fox—Busters*, *Magnus Power—Mouse,*
Martin's Mice, and *The School Mouse*
 Rudyard Kipling, *The Jungle Book*
 Robert Lawson, *Ben and Me*, *Rabbit Hill*, and *The Tough Winter*
 Lillian Moore, *I'll Meet You at the Cucumbers*
 Farley Mowat, *Owls in the Family*
 Drew Nelson, *Wild Voices*
 Sterling North, *Little Rascal* and/or *Rascal*
 Robert O'Brien, *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of N.I.M.H.*
 Ethel Porchocki, *The Attic Mice*
 Beatrix Potter, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* and others in the
 series (for reading aloud to younger children)
 Tor Seidler, *A Rat's Tale*
 George Selden, *The Cricket in Times Square* and *Tucker's*
Countryside
 Ernest Seton, *Lives of the Hunted*
 Margery Sharp, *The Miss Bianca series*
 William Steig, *Abel's Island* and *Dominic*
 Mary S. Stolz, *Cat Walk*
 Eve Titus, *Basil of Baker Street*
 Janwillem Van de Wetering, *Hugh Pine* and *Something Else*
 E.B. White, *Charlotte's Web*

Cross-Curricular Sources

Sources for students about natural history:
 Barbara J. Esbensen, *Tiger with Wings: The Great Horned Owl*
 Jean Craighead George, *The Moon of the Owls*
 Bernd Heinrich *An Owl in the House: A Naturalist's Diary*
 Jaediker E. Norsgaard, *Nature's Great Balancing Act: In Our Own*
Backyard

Victoria Sherrow, *The Porcupine*
 Barbara Taylor, *Forest Life*
 Jerome Wexler, *Pet Mice*

Sources for teachers about fantasy literature for children:

Margaret Blount, *Animal Land: The Creatures of Children's Fiction*
 Sheila Egoff, *Worlds Within: Children's Fantasy from the Middle Ages*
to Today
 Egoff, Sheila, G.T. Stubbs, and L.F. Ashley, eds. *Only Connect:*
Readings on Children's Literature. Part 2, "Fairy Tales, Fantasy,
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 Pfleiger, Pat, and Helen M. Hill, eds. *A Reference Guide to*
Modern Fantasy for Children
 Tymn, Marshall B., Kenneth J. Zahorski, and Robert H.
 Boyer. *Fantasy Literature: A Core Collection and Reference Guide*

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School Library Journal, December 1995, p. 102.
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Something About the Author, Vols. 14 & 71. Detroit: Gale, 1978,
 1993.
 VOYA, June 1996, p. 104.

General Objectives

1. To learn about forms and traditions of the animal tale genre and elements of fantasy within it
2. To understand the elements of the coming-of-age novel
3. To discuss the factors that could motivate a person to go on, and continue on, a quest
4. To examine the nature of tyranny and of tyrants
5. To analyze the sources and expression of courage and the nature of heroism
6. To consider the importance of family and the ways in which family considerations can motivate actions
7. To evaluate the worth of questioning accepted wisdom and thinking for yourself

Specific Objectives

1. To understand the reasons why Poppy goes on her quest
2. To identify the ways in which Poppy grows and changes in the course of the novel
3. To understand the true nature and motivations of Mr. Ocax
4. To learn details about the characteristics of the various types of creatures featured in the novel
5. To contrast Mr. Ocax's description of porcupines with the actual facts about porcupines that Poppy discovers from Ereth
6. To note the ways in which Ocax, Lungwort, and Ragweed dominate Poppy before she develops self-assertiveness
7. To analyze the ways in which the author uses suspense to keep the readers' attention
8. To identify the changing points of view in the novel and understand why the author uses this device

Literary Terms and Applications

To enhance students' appreciation and understanding of the novel, present them with these terms.

animal story: a fictional account of events in the lives of animals. In an animal story, the animals may act like animals, they may act like animals but are able to talk to each other, or they may behave and talk like human beings. This novel is the second type, with Poppy and the other mice acting very mouselike, Ereth being very

much a porcupine, and Ocax very much an owl, while at the same time all these creatures can talk to one another. At the same time, the creatures have some human characteristics, as with Poppy's love of dancing and use of Ereth's quill as a sword and Lungwort's bombastic nature. You could share with students that this technique of ascribing human characteristics to nonhuman things is called **anthropomorphism**.

coming-of-age novel: a work of fiction in which the main character moves into and/or through adolescence and develops at least the beginnings of maturity. In this novel, timid Poppy faces her fears and finds the courage to move beyond tyranny and blind obedience to act on her own beliefs and convictions.

fantasy: a fictional work that departs radically from a realistic depiction of the world as we know it. In a fantasy, readers are expected to accept the seemingly impossible (for example, animals who talk to one another, and a mouse who fights with a sword), although the tale presents logical and meaningful characterizations (a mouse who conquers her fears to save her family). Animal tales that use talking animals and animals with human characteristics are part of the fantasy genre.

flashback: a scene inserted into a film, play, or work of fiction showing events that happened earlier, also known as **analepsis**. The flashback device allows an author to fill in background information about characters and events, explaining things that happened before the time when the work opens. In this novel, the author opens with the dramatic and horrifying scene on Bannock Hill when Ocax attacks Poppy and kills Ragweed. Immediately after this scene, the author goes to a flashback that explains who Ocax is, how he controls the family of mice, and what Ragweed questioned about this situation.

point of view: the perspective from which a story is told. This novel is told mostly from Poppy's point of view, so we know her thoughts and fears and plans; we learn the true situation as Poppy begins to understand it. But the author adds to the drama and suspense of the novel by shifting points of view back and forth in some chapters from Poppy to Ocax, as Poppy tries to evade Ocax and reach her goal and Ocax tries to stop Poppy by killing and eating her.

The Importance of Setting

The novel is set in the countryside in and around Dimwood Forest. Readers are provided with a map at the novel's beginning to orient themselves. The novel opens on Bannock Hill, an open hillside just across from Mr. Ocax's watching tree on the edge of Dimwood Forest. The mice live nearby in the abandoned farmhouse called Gray House, with its surrounding fields and orchard. Past the orchard to the north is Glitter Creek, which borders Dimwood Forest itself. The mice have always feared Dimwood as the home of Ocax and vicious porcupines and as a dark, forbidding place, but when Poppy enters Dimwood for the first time in her life, she finds it fascinating and beautiful, full of wonderful sights and smells and sounds. Within Dimwood is Ocax's nest in a dead tree, and next to that is Ereth's home in the hollow log. Bordering Dimwood on the north is a dirt road where Poppy and Ocax fight to the death. On the other side of this road is a new barn that will be the mouse family's new home, and a corn field that will provide the mice with all the food they will ever need. Bordering the corn field is New House, the farm recently occupied by a new family, and its lawn with the salt lick that Ereth craves and that becomes the instrument for Ocax's death.

Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in this novel should include the following:

Themes

- courage
- quest
- questioning
- family
- curiosity
- tyranny
- coming of age
- heroism

Motifs

- relying on logic
- comic relief
- suspense
- persistence
- overcoming fears
- natural history
- dancing
- developing independence

Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, or sentences that have a particular meaning in the novel. Explain each as it relates to the book. Use the page numbers given in parentheses to reread the term in context if you wish.

1. A thin crescent moon (Chap. 1, p. 1)
(This is the moon just before or just after the new moon. It is very thin, so it sheds little light on earth. The point is that even in such minimal light, Mr. Ocax the owl has excellent vision and has no trouble spotting the two tiny mice up on Bannock Hill.)
2. a great horned owl (Chap. 1, p. 1)
*(This is a very large North American owl, *Bubo virginianus*, with large ear tufts that resemble horns. Like other owls, the great horned owl hunts at night, preying entirely on live animals; it has large eyes and swivels its head to look sideways. Mr. Ocax is a great horned owl who delights in preying on the creatures in his domain, especially the fearful mice.)*
3. his sharp—as—needles talons, four to each large claw (Chap. 1, p. 3)
(A talon is the sharp, slender, and curved end of a claw on a bird of prey. Ocax the owl has four of these on each of the two large claws that form his feet. He uses the talons and claws to grip and rip his prey. In a few minutes he will use them to kill Ragweed and almost kill Poppy.)
4. thrust his claws forward and wide like grappling hooks (Chap. 1, p. 6)
(Ocax uses his claws and talons like two grappling hooks, which are irons that end in a cluster of hooks, or claws, used to fasten ships together or recover sunken objects. Ocax uses his "grappling hooks" to grasp his prey, in this case, Ragweed.)
5. their litter (Chap. 1, p. 10)
(A litter is a group of baby animals born at one time to a single mother. Many animals commonly give birth to litters, including cats, dogs, and mice. Poppy is one of a litter of twelve; at the end of the novel, in the epilogue chapter, Poppy and her husband Rye have had a litter of eleven.)
6. Mr. Ocax belched, bringing up a pellet of Ragweed's bones and fur as well as the earring. (Chap. 3, p. 17)
(Owls cannot digest some parts of their prey, such as bones, hair, and feathers. These indigestible parts are compressed in the owl's digestive system and spit back out as compact pellets. Mr. Ocax belches up Ragweed's earring in one pellet. Poppy later retrieves the earring during her father's interview with Ocax,

and the earring helps Poppy keep her resolve and even warns her with its vibration when Mr. Ocax is about to pounce on her on the dirt road.)

7. Would some of them have to forage in distant places, in the open? That meant they'd be at the mercy of Mr. Ocax, a complete calamity. (Chap. 7, p. 57)
(To forage is to wander in search of food. If the mice have to stay living at Gray House, they will have to forage far afield to find food, which will put them in the open where Mr. Ocax can easily catch them. That would be a calamity for the mouse family—a disaster, a catastrophe, because it would spell doom for the family's survival.)
8. The grass was high...providing good camouflage. (Chap. 9, p. 72)
(This is the grass in Old Orchard. Mr. Ocax allows mice in Old Orchard without asking him for specific permission to be there. But it's always dangerous to be out in the open, where Ocax can catch you. So Poppy is pleased that the grass provides good camouflage—cover that conceals her from Ocax's sharp eyes.)
9. What she found was the slimy root of a water lily. (Chap. 9, pp. 78–79)
(A water lily is an aquatic plant with floating leaves and showy flowers; its slippery stem and root dangle below the water's surface. A water lily stem and root give Poppy something to grab onto when she is being swept downstream in Glitter Creek. Fortunately, the stem breaks and throws Poppy back into the water just as she was about to climb onto a rock. If she had made it to the rock, Ocax would have swooped down and grabbed her.)
10. the salt lick (Chap. 13, p. 115)
(A salt lick is a place with a salt deposit that animals regularly visit in order to lick the salt. It is also a large block of salt put out by people for animals such as deer to lick. Ereth has a great desire for the salt lick he has discovered on the lawn at New House, but he cannot get at it because it's at the top of a high steel pole. He agrees to escort Poppy from his log home in Dimwood Forest to New House, protecting her from Ocax, in return for her promise that she will get the salt for him. Poppy accidentally fulfills her promise when Mr. Ocax runs head-on into the salt lick, killing himself and shattering the lick and scattering the pieces across the lawn where Ereth can reach it all.)

Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important, and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

Questions 1-4 (Literal Level)

1. Why does Poppy feel that she has to go on her quest to New House?
(First, her family urgently needs a new place to live. The family has grown to have too many members, and there is not enough food for them at the abandoned farm where they now live. No one else in the family has the courage or initiative to go on such a quest to find a suitable new family home. Second, Ocax has said the reason he will not let the family move to a new home is because Poppy disobeyed him and went to Bannock Hill without his permission. The rest of the mice accept what Ocax says, but Poppy does not. She suspects there is something at New House that is the real reason for Ocax's refusal to allow the mice to move. She feels she has to go to New House to find out what this thing is in order to clear her name with her family.)
2. What hazards does Poppy face and overcome on her journey to New House?
(The biggest danger is Ocax, who is trailing Poppy and trying to kill her, out of anger for her disobedience and also to prevent her from finding out what is at New House. On her way to New House, Poppy must cross Glitter Creek which is turbulent because of the storm, and she nearly drowns in the process. Then she must elude a fox and cope with the terror of finding herself in a porcupine's den. She has to face the huge owl at the New House barn and figure out that it's a fake, even approach a cat to get the truth about the owl. The climax of these hazards is the fight to the death between Poppy and Ocax on the grounds of the New House farm.)
3. In what ways is Ereth the porcupine a big surprise to Poppy?
(Ocax has always told the mice that porcupines are vicious meat-eating creatures that torture their prey, especially mice, their favorites. A porcupine, Ocax has explained, shoots his victims with his quills, then stabs the victim, skewers her, and finally cuts her up into tiny pieces and eats her. Naturally, all the mice are terrified of porcupines, although none of them have actually ever seen a porcupine. So Poppy is astonished when she meets Ereth and learns that porcupines are gentle vegetarians who cannot stand the thought of eating meat. Also, a porcupine does not shoot his victims with his quills—all he does is hit a threatening animal (or owl) with his tail, which embeds some quills into the enemy, sending the enemy howling or screeching away.)

Astonishingly, Poppy discovers, Ocax is afraid of porcupines, whereas mice have nothing at all to fear from these quilled creatures. Ereth even helps Poppy get to New House in return for her promise to get the salt for him.)

4. What happens to Poppy when she reaches New House?
(First, she discovers a field full of corn, with more than enough fallen corn kernels to feed a family twice the size of hers. Then Ereth shows her the salt lick in the middle of the lawn, which will be difficult for Poppy to get down for him. Next, she spies the huge owl sitting on the barn overhang and watches a boy go into the barn and turn the owl around to face in a new direction. Poppy confirms from the farm family's old cat what she suspects: the huge owl is a fake, set there to keep Ocax away. Finally, Poppy taunts Ocax and finds herself drawn into a fight to the death with him, using one of Ereth's quills as a sword in her defense. When she spears Ocax's claw with the quill, he flies frantically around trying to dislodge the quill and flies headlong into the salt lick, killing himself. Poppy is able to go back to tell Ereth about the broken salt lying on the ground, and then go home to tell her family they can move to New House.)

Questions 5-8 (Interpretive Level)

5. How do Ragweed, Lungwort, and Mr. Ocax dominate Poppy before she learns to assert herself?
(Ragweed taunts and teases Poppy [even though he loves her] about her timidity, telling her, "You let your tail lead the way." Poppy is hurt, and begins to crawl out into the open even though she knows she should not do this because it exposes her to Mr. Ocax. Lungwort completely accepts being ruled by Mr. Ocax and his rules, and he expects Poppy and the other mice to do so too. He keeps Poppy and the others in line by telling them of the horrors of porcupines, which he says Mr. Ocax protects them from. He also uses his parental authority to keep Poppy obedient and unquestioning. Mr. Ocax dominates by setting the rules and demanding total acceptance of them. Poppy and the others cannot even move beyond certain borders without asking for and receiving Ocax's permission. Ocax also controls through extreme fear—disobedience, or even carelessness, means being caught and eaten by the owl. After the incident on Bannock Hill when Ocax kills Ragweed, Poppy is particularly terrified because Ocax now seeks revenge on her for her disobedience in going to the hill without permission.)
6. How does Poppy grow and change in the course of the novel?
(At the beginning of the novel, Poppy is a very timid and cautious mouse. The only reason she breaks the rule about going to Bannock Hill without permission is because she yields to Ragweed's insistence on doing this, because he wants to propose to her in a romantic way. Ragweed's death and Mr. Ocax's refusal

to allow the mice to move to a new home, though, get Poppy thinking. What about New House makes Ocax nervous? Does Ocax really protect the mice? Would going to New House save her family? Poppy has begun to be an independent thinker. In spite of her fears, she acts on her ideas and undertakes the perilous quest through Dimwood Forest to the New House farm. By the time she has completed her quest, she has faced her fears and held to her mission, being brave in spite of those fears. She has learned to base her actions on logical questioning and reasoning rather than blind obedience. She has changed from a timid, fearful child to a self-confident, accomplished, and strong young adult mouse.)

7. What truths does Poppy discover about Mr. Ocax?
(She discovers that Mr. Ocax is not really the ruler of Dimwood Forest, that he does not protect the mice [from porcupines or any other creatures, most of all not from himself], that he has lied to the mice for years about porcupines in order to keep them living where they will be easy prey for him, that in fact Mr. Ocax is afraid of porcupines and of owls larger than himself. Mr. Ocax, Poppy discovers is actually a cowardly bully.)
8. What message does this novel give about tyrants and thinking for yourself?
(The novel demonstrates that blind obedience to the rule of a tyrant is not to the best advantage of the creatures who allow themselves to be ruled in this way. The word of a tyrant is most likely to be self-serving, even when it seems to tell about the advantages of the tyrant's rule for the people ruled. A tyrant is likely to despise the creatures he controls and to enjoy the fear he inspires. A tyrant is also likely to be, beneath it all, a cowardly bully. The way to respond to all this is to think for yourself. Apply logic to what the tyrant tells you. Assess carefully whether in fact you are better off accepting no real control over your life. Question authority and accepted wisdom. Find out for yourself what is best for you and your family and community, and act on those beliefs in a carefully thought-out way that can lead to improvements.)

Questions 9-11 (Critical Level)

9. Explain how the author uses suspense to keep the readers' attention.
(Suspense keeps the reader pulled in to the story; you want to know what happens next. Avi fills his plot with life-and-death situations, constant danger and challenges that Poppy must meet and overcome. Ocax is ever-present, threatening always to catch and kill Poppy. Will she survive? Will her family survive? Chapter endings in particular leave the reader in suspense, unwilling to put the book down at what might seem a logical place to take a break. For example, Chapter 2 ends, "The difficulty was that at that moment she [Poppy] was far from home, frightened, and alone." Immediately, you wonder, will she get

home? will she stay alone? will she get over her fear? will Ocax find and kill her?)

10. How does the author use changing points of view, and why? What signals to you that the point of view is changing?

(The chapters often switch from paragraphs told from Poppy's point of view to paragraphs told from Mr. Ocax's point of view. The switches are signaled by a paragraph that begins with a phrase in small capitals. Without these switches, the story would presumably be told entirely from Poppy's point of view. The switches allow us to get inside the mind of Mr. Ocax, so we can see that he is evil-minded and vengeful, and not just an owl searching for and killing prey as all owls do. Without the switches, we would have to rely on what the mice say and think about Ocax, plus Ocax's actions, which could be interpreted to be simply owl-like.)

11. What role does Ereth play in the novel?
(Ereth serves to reveal to Poppy the true nature of porcupines and therefore that Ocax has been lying to the mice all these years about protecting them from porcupines in order to keep them under his domination. Ereth also serves as refreshing comic relief, with his grumpy nature and his fondness for phrases such as "maggot mush" and "grasshopper gas.")

Questions 12-14 (Creative Level)

12. How did Ocax come to rule the mice? As Lungwort says, "Mr. Ocax's been here longer than any mouse's living memory."
13. Give names (in the mouse tradition) for the eleven young mice of Poppy's and Rye's litter.
14. What do you think Poppy's husband Rye is like? Is he at all like Ragweed?

Across the Curriculum

Language Arts and Literature

1. Read other novels by Avi. Then get together with classmates who have also read more Avi novels. Compare the novels and identify common elements among them.
2. Reread the description of the orchard on page 72 and the description of Dimwood Forest on pages 107–108. Then write a similar descriptive paragraph of a place near where you live.
3. With classmates, make up some more phrases that Ereth might use, along the lines of his "bat bilge" and "frog flip."

4. Read and discuss other animal tales. What common elements do you find among them?
5. Try rewriting some of Ragweed's dialogue as if he spoke like Lungwort. Try rewriting some of Lungwort's dialogue as if he spoke like Ragweed.
6. Read the sequels to *Poppy*.
7. Many animal tales feature mice. Why do you think this is?
8. Poppy and Basil talk about the meaning of irony on page 38 of the novel. Reread this discussion. Then tell what other instances of irony you find in this novel. Have you come across irony in any other novels you have read?

Music

1. Play some ballroom dancing music for the class, especially music that Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire danced to. Demonstrate ballroom dance to this music.

Science & Environmental Studies

1. Create an illustrated field guide to the wild creatures mentioned in the novel.
2. Research and write a report on deer mice.
3. Research and write a report on owls, in particular the great horned owl.
4. Research and write a report on porcupines.
5. Create an illustrated field guide to the flowers and fruits that the mice in the novel are named for.
6. Why is Ereth's full name Erethizon Dorsatum? Based on this, what would be the formal names of other characters in the novel?

Health

1. Give an oral report on the link between deer mice and Lyme disease. Tell how to avoid contracting Lyme disease and how to recognize its symptoms and treat it.
2. Explain how to treat the wound Poppy gets when Ocax attacks her in the beginning of the novel.
3. Find out and report on how to remove a porcupine quill from a person or animal and what to do

after it is removed.

Geography & Mapping

1. Make a copy of the map on pages x–xi of the novel. On the copy, trace the movements of Poppy, Ragweed, Lungwort, Ereth, and Ocax. Use a different color for each creature.
2. Locate areas of the United States and Canada where this story could take place, given the details about the natural habitat and creatures featured in the novel.

Social Studies

1. What examples of tyranny and resistance to it can you find in the human world, today or in the past?
2. Research and report on traditional ways of organizing and running a clan/tribal/family group like the extended mouse family in the novel.

Mathematics

1. Make a chart showing how a mouse family would grow over the course of five or more generations.
2. Calculate the length of each of Poppy's runs as she escapes from Bannock Hill and Ocax, and as she makes her way through Dimwood Forest.

Art

1. Design a heroism medal to be presented to Poppy.
2. Create a decoy owl to guard a garden.
3. Create a replica of Ragweed's earring, or design more earrings for mice.

Student Involvement Activities

1. Act out favorite scenes from the novel, such as Poppy's meeting with Ereth, or the episode on Bannock Hill.
2. Show part of a video of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers dancing. Find a partner and try some of this dancing yourself.
3. Create a "creature area" map of your neighborhood or a local park. Show the different habitats and the creatures found in each.

4. Sit quietly outdoors somewhere where there are no other people or nearby traffic. What sounds do you hear that you were not aware of at first?
5. Visit a nearby nature center to find out about the natural environment and creatures of your area.
6. Invite someone who has pet mice to come to class with their pets and tell you about them. Then create a handbook on caring for pet mice.
7. Which woodland creature would you most like to be, and why?
8. Read an animal story aloud to a group of younger children, such as one of Beatrix Potter's tales (*Peter Rabbit* and many others).
9. Put a decoy owl in your family's garden or the garden of friends or relatives. Does it keep garden enemies away?
10. Plant a hazelnut and see if it grows into a sapling.
11. Explain the meaning of Ereth's saying, "You're the salt of the earth!"
12. Mice sayings in the novel include "Mice should be nice" and "The only live mouse is an alert mouse." An owl saying is "An alert owl is a well-fed owl." Compose more sayings to guide the lives of mice and owls.

Alternate Assessment

1. Write a character sketch of each of these creatures: Poppy, Ragweed, Mr. Ocax, Lungwort, Sweet Cecily, and Ereth.
2. Explain the ways in which this is a quest novel.
3. List the ways in which Poppy and the other creatures in the novel act like animals and the ways in which they act like non-animals and/or human beings.
4. Write a summary of each scene shown in the novel's illustrations (or of selected illustrations assigned to you by your teacher).

Vocabulary

Match each boldfaced word with its meaning listed below. Write the letter of the meaning in the space next to the sentence number. Two sentences have two boldfaced words; write a separate meaning letter for each word in these sentences.

- | | | | | |
|---------------|-----------|----------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| A. great joy | E. burned | I. tasty | M. tricky move | Q. turning freely |
| B. totally | F. black | J. den | N. very cautious | R. bold and defiant |
| C. weakness | G. die | K. think about | O. very seriously | S. make very angry |
| D. dark gloom | H. deeply | L. hard to see | P. dropped sharply | T. terrifyingly horrible |

- _____ 1. Dimwood itself, **veiled** in darkness, lay utterly still.
- _____ 2. At the very edge of this forest stood an old **charred** oak on which sat a great horned owl.
- _____ 3. Mr. Ocax's eyes were round and yellow with large **ebony** pupils that enabled him to see as few other creatures could.
- _____ 4. By **swiveling** his head Mr. Ocax searched the Marsh for a **savory** frog for his next meal.
- _____ 5. **Profoundly** annoyed, Mr. Ocax was beginning to think he would have no dinner that night.
- _____ 6. The golden mouse—the one eating the nut—was still in the open. So **brazen**. So foolish.
- _____ 7. "Mr. Ocax protects us from creatures that eat us," Lungwort answered **gravely**.
- _____ 8. Mr. Ocax had **plummeted** to a spot not far above and behind Poppy.
- _____ 9. Mr. Ocax sailed deep into Dimwood toward his secret **lair**.
- _____ 10. Poppy looked to her father for reassurance, but all she saw was his **frailty**.
- _____ 11. Gradually a **ghastly** realization came over Poppy.
- _____ 12. If Poppy did nothing, she would surely **perish**. What was she to do?
- _____ 13. It was all so painful to **contemplate**!
- _____ 14. **Wary**, Poppy crept forward toward the log.
- _____ 15. In the **obscure murk** of the log's interior, Poppy crouched tensely.
- _____ 16. He's just a frightened bully! Poppy said to herself with **jubilation**.
- _____ 17. Although the blow glanced off Ocax harmlessly, it served to **infuriate** him.
- _____ 18. Ocax made a forward **feint**. Poppy danced nimbly back.

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Matching (10 points)

For each numbered group of words, find the character in the list below who matches that description. Write the letter of the character in the space next to the descriptive words.

A. Poppy B. Ragweed C. Mr. Ocax D. Lungwort E. Ereth

- _____ 1. quills, nasty smell, grumpy character, love of salt
- _____ 2. round yellow eyes, beak, talons, contempt
- _____ 3. gold earring, bold attitude, questions
- _____ 4. pompous talk, leadership, acceptance of old ideas
- _____ 5. quill sword, fear and bravery

Part II: Settings (30 points)

Summarize in a few sentences what happens in the course of the novel in each setting listed below.

- 1. Bannock Hill _____

- 2. the New House barn _____

- 3. Glitter Creek _____

- 4. the New House corn field _____

- 5. by Ocax's nest _____

Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

Part III: Multiple Choice (30 points)

Underline the choice that correctly completes each of these sentences.

1. Poppy is a(n) (**porcupine, golden mouse, deer mouse, owl**).
2. Ereth is a(n) (**porcupine, golden mouse, deer mouse, owl**).
3. Lungwort wears a(n) (**stocking cap, stovepipe hat, crown, ivory thimble**) on his head.
4. Ragweed is forever (**working, asking questions, dancing, running away**).
5. Mr. Ocax sits and watches on a (**barn, high steel pole, tower, charred tree**).
6. A red flag on the mouse house means that there is a(n) (**meal ready, death in the family, happy event, emergency meeting**).
7. Lungwort addresses Mr. Ocax as the (**Protector, Killer, Godfather, Teacher**) of the deer mice.
8. Poppy's mother is named Sweet (**Rye, Basil, Cecily, Leaf**).
9. During the (**late afternoon, night, morning, noon**) Mr. Ocax hunts for his prey.
10. Poppy finds and wears this remembrance of Ragweed: a(n) (**ring, earring, belt, sword**).
11. Mr. Ocax is afraid of a(n) (**old cat, porcupine, person, fake owl**) at the New House barn.
12. Ereth's very powerful weapon is his (**tail, sword, teeth, strong smell**).
13. To get to the new home, Poppy must cross (**Dark, Gray, Dimwood, Glitter**) Forest.
14. Ereth's home is in a(n) (**dead tree, hollow log, old barn, rock cave**).
15. Poppy and Ocax fight their battle to the death mostly on the (**Tar Road, Bridge, Dirt Road, Hill**).

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. How does Poppy's attitude about the Forest change once she enters it?
2. What has Mr. Ocax told the mice about porcupines? How does Ereth show Poppy the truth about porcupines?
3. In what ways does Poppy act un-mouselike? In what ways is she very mouselike?
4. Why is New House a better place for the mouse family to live than Gray House?

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Matching (10 points)

Read each quotation. In the list below, find the character who spoke the words. Write the letter of the character in the space next to the quotation number.

A. Poppy B. Ragweed C. Mr. Ocax D. Lungwort E. Ereth

- ____ 1. "Dude, I'm not going to spend my life asking an old owl's okay every time I want to have fun."
- ____ 2. "Hit the puke switch and duck! Meat disgusts me."
- ____ 3. "This family is committed to keeping up mice values and is opposed to stupid questions."
- ____ 4. "You're not an owl, you're a chicken!"
- ____ 5. "She didn't ask permission to go to the hill. That's why you can't go to New House."

Part II: Settings (30 points)

Summarize in a few sentences what happens in the course of the novel in each setting listed below.

- 1. Gray House _____

- 2. New House grassy lawn area _____

- 3. Dimwood Forest _____

- 4. Dirt Road _____

- 5. Ereth's hollow log home _____

Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

Part III: Multiple Choice (30 points)

Underline the choice that correctly completes each of these sentences.

1. Ragweed is a(n) (**deer mouse, porcupine, golden mouse, owl**).
2. Mr. Ocax is a (**horned owl, golden mouse, porcupine, deer mouse**).
3. A(n) (**oak, apple, orange, hazelnut**) tree grows from the nut Ragweed drops when Ocax kills him.
4. Poppy dreams of (**acting, singing, dancing, writing**) like Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire.
5. The name (**Mickey, Acorn, Surf, Barn**) would be appropriate for someone in Poppy's family.
6. Poppy's extended family must move to a new home because they do not have enough (**room, food, mates, babies**) for everyone.
7. When Poppy goes with her father Lungwort to talk to Mr. Ocax, she carries (**a white flag, food, a petition, a sword**).
8. To get to Dimwood Forest, Poppy must first cross (**Dimwood, Bannock, Gray, Glitter**) Creek.
9. Poppy discovers a field of (**rye, poppies, apple trees, corn**) at New House that will feed her entire family for years to come.
10. Poppy jumps into Ereth's den to get away from a(n) (**fox, owl, porcupine, weasel**) that is following her.
11. Poppy uses a sword made out of a(n) (**owl feather, porcupine quill, sharpened twig, ball-point pen**) as a weapon in the fight with Ocax.
12. Ereth very much wants the (**fake owl, chickens, salt lick, corn**) at New House.
13. The people at New House have put up a fake owl to save their (**chickens, garden, old cat, lawn**).
14. Basil is Poppy's (**father, brother, boyfriend, cousin**).
15. During the day, Mr. Ocax (**fights, hunts, bathes, sleeps**).

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Why does Poppy go on her quest to New House?
2. Write a character sketch of Ragweed. How does his character lead to his death?
3. In what ways does Mr. Ocax act unlike an owl?
4. What hidden truths does Poppy learn about Mr. Ocax?

Answer Key

VOCABULARY

- | | | |
|---------|-------|----------|
| 1. B | 7. O | 13. K |
| 2. E | 8. P | 14. N |
| 3. F | 9. J | 15. L, D |
| 4. Q, I | 10. C | 16. A |
| 5. H | 11. T | 17. S |
| 6. R | 12. G | 18. M |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (10 points)

- | | |
|------|------|
| 1. E | 4. D |
| 2. C | 5. A |
| 3. B | |

Part II: Settings (30 points)

- Bannock Hill: Poppy and Ragweed go up here to dance and for Ragweed to propose to Poppy here in a romantic setting; Ocax attacks and kills Ragweed here and chases Poppy as she races to escape; at the novel's end, thirteen months later, Poppy comes here with her husband Rye and their eleven young mice to dance freely in the moonlight.
- the New House barn: Here Poppy discovers the huge owl and finds out it is a fake by watching the human child and talking to the old cat about the decoy; this reveals to Poppy that Ocax is really a cowardly bully.
- Glitter Creek: This is Poppy's first big obstacle to overcome and cross on her quest to get to New House; she almost drowns in the Creek, and Ocax almost catches her as she crosses; the crossing tests Poppy's resolve to go on the quest, and she meets the challenge.
- the New House corn field: Here Poppy discovers a place that has enough to feed a family twice the size of hers, so she sees that this is her family's future home; here she hides and watches Ocax as he watches the decoy owl, which reveals his fear to her; from here she taunts Ocax and then foolishly comes out into the open to talk to him.
- by Ocax's nest: Next to the nest is the hollow log where Ereth lives and where Poppy takes shelter; also, here is where Ereth comes out of the log and yells at Ocax, telling him what Poppy has said and telling Ocax he is a liar.

Part III: Multiple Choice (30 points)

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------|
| 1. deer mouse | 9. night |
| 2. porcupine | 10. earring |
| 3. ivory thimble | 11. fake owl |
| 4. asking questions | 12. tail |
| 5. charred tree | 13. Dimwood |
| 6. emergency meeting | 14. hollow log |
| 7. Protector | 15. Dirt Road |
| 8. Cecily | |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Matching (10 points)

- | | |
|------|------|
| 1. B | 4. A |
| 2. E | 5. C |
| 3. D | |

Part II: Setting (30 points)

- Gray House: This is an abandoned farmhouse where Poppy's extended family lives; Mr. Ocax allows the mice to move around freely only in the area right around Gray House, which makes the mice convenient prey for him; because Gray House and the old abandoned fields and orchard around it no longer provide enough food to feed the extended mouse family, Poppy goes on her quest to New House to find a new family home.
- New House grassy lawn area: On this lawn is a high steel pole with a salt lick; Ereth craves the salt deeply, and agrees to bring Poppy safely to the New House farm in return for Poppy's promise to get the salt for him. When Ocax goes on his crazed flight trying to rid his claw of the embedded quill, he flies headlong into the salt lick, which kills him. Poppy sends Ereth back to the lawn to get his salt, which has shattered all over the lawn from the impact with Ocax.
- Dimwood Forest: This is the site of Ocax's nest and, next to that, Ereth's hollow log home. Ocax's watching tree is on the edge of the Forest. Poppy has to cross Dimwood Forest—a place forbidden to mice by Mr. Ocax—in order to get to New House. In the forest, she meets Ereth and learns the truth about porcupines and Mr. Ocax.
- Dirt Road: This road runs between Dimwood Forest and the corn field and grounds of New House. Here is where Poppy and Ocax fight to the death.

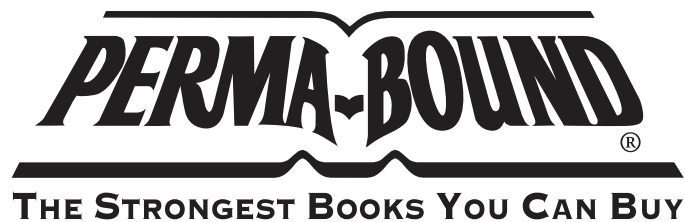
5. Ereth's hollow log home: Poppy jumps in here to escape a fox and meets Ereth, which shatters the things Mr. Ocax has always told mice about the nature of porcupines. Ereth's home becomes a refuge for Poppy, and Ereth becomes the guide she needs to get safely to New House.

Part III: Multiple Choice (30 points)

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1. golden mouse | 9. corn |
| 2. horned owl | 10. fox |
| 3. hazelnut | 11. porcupine quill |
| 4. dancing | 12. salt lick |
| 5. Acorn | 13. chickens |
| 6. food | 14. cousin |
| 7. a white flag | 15. sleeps |
| 8. Glitter | |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.



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