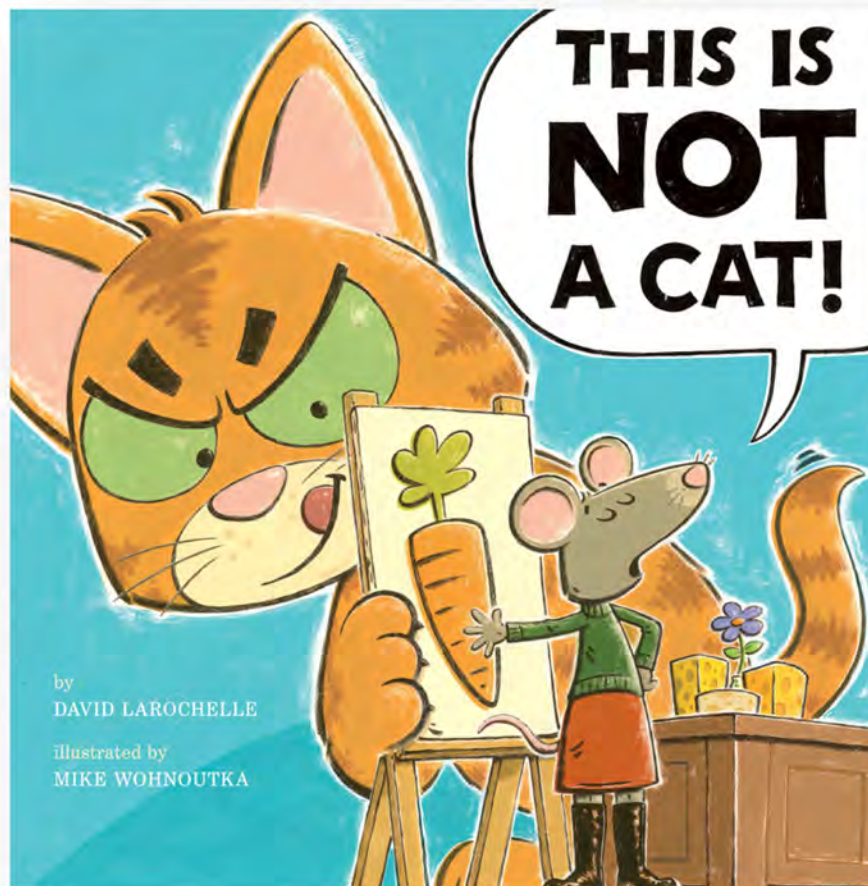


Teaching Guide for **THIS IS NOT A CAT!**

By David LaRochele and illustrated by Mike Wohnoutka
Sterling Children's Books ISBN 978-1-4549-1574-4



Summary

It's time to learn about danger at Sunny Hills Mouse School, but as Miss Mouse instructs her students on what is (and is *not*) a cat, a suspicious-looking feline creeps in through the window. When the teacher and students scatter, the sneaky intruder is revealed to be a rat, but the thief's plans are foiled when a real cat enters the scene.

Sharing the book with your students

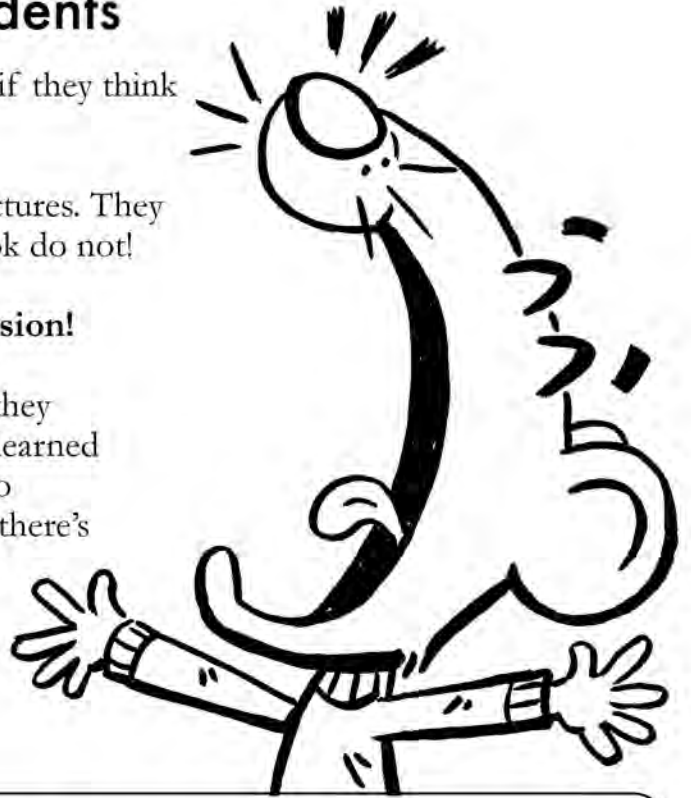
Show the book and read the title. Ask the children if they think there's a cat on the cover.

Encourage the children to look closely at all the pictures. They might notice some things that the mice in the book do not!

As you read the story, use PLENTY of expression!

After showing the last page, ask the children what they think will happen next. Do they think the rat has learned his lesson? If so, what might he do to apologize to Miss Mouse and her students? Do they still think there's a picture of a cat on the cover? Why or why not?

If you haven't done so, point out the front pages with the rows of cheeses and compare them to the end pages that show only crumbs.



Practicing Expression and Intonation

Even though many of the sentences in this book are similar, the author and illustrator give the reader clues as to how the sentences should be read differently from each other.

Compare the first and last sentences of the book. Read them aloud. The words are exactly the same, but how do we know that they should be read differently? (size of type, punctuation, expression on the characters' faces)

Choose another page and ask your students how they think that sentence should be read. What clues helped them make their decision?

Write one of these sentences on the board:

I want that.

I see a dog.

We're having beans for dinner.



Have volunteers try saying the sentence with different types of expression (happy, angry, sad, bored, afraid, unsure, etc.). Ask your students if they were the author or illustrator, what sort of clues might they give the reader to show how the sentence should be read?

Step Inside the Character

Introduce the concept of *point of view* by having your students pretend they are one of the characters from the book. Ask them if they were a student in Miss Mouse's class, how would they describe what happened to them at school when they got home? Then ask them to pretend they are the rat. How might he describe his day to a friend?

Creating a Classroom Book

Even the youngest writers can help create a classroom book based on *This is NOT a Cat*. Print out sheets of paper with the following heading:

This is NOT a cat!
It's a _____.

Students can draw their own pictures beneath, then fill in the blank with a word describing their illustration. Punch holes along each page, add a cover, and secure with yarn or metal rings. When you share the book with your class, let each child read the page she created.



Older students might want to use the book as a mentor text to create their own story about a different animal teacher. What sort of danger might a cat teacher warn a class of kittens about? What might a fish teacher warn his students about?

Cat Calculation

After reading the book to your class, have your students estimate the number of times that the word “cat” appears in the story. Reread the story and check your guesses. Can you find other places in the book where the word “cat” appears? This is a good opportunity to point out different parts of a book including the title page, spine, jacket flap summary, and author and illustrator biographies.



Literary Critters

Cats and mice are popular subjects in children’s books. Can your students think of other books which include a cat or mouse character? Ask them to describe their favorites. Borrow from the library a selection of familiar and new titles for your students to look at during independent reading time. Here are a few to get you started:

The Cat in the Hat by *Dr. Seuss*

Pete the Cat by *James Dean and Eric Litwin*

Kitten’s First Full Moon by *Kevin Henkes*

If You Give a Mouse a Cookie by *Laura Numeroff and Felicia Bond*

The Maisy books by *Lucy Cousins*

The Little Mouse, the Red Ripe Strawberry, & the Big Hungry Bear by *Audrey and Don Wood*

Mouse Mess by *Linnea Riley*

Cheesy Mouse Jokes

How did the mouse feel when he got out of the shower?

Squeaky clean!

What is gray and furry and sits on a man's lip?

A mouse-stache!

What's gray, sits in a bowl of milk, and goes "Snap! Crackle! Pop!"?

Mice Krispies.

What did the mouse say when the cat bit its tail?

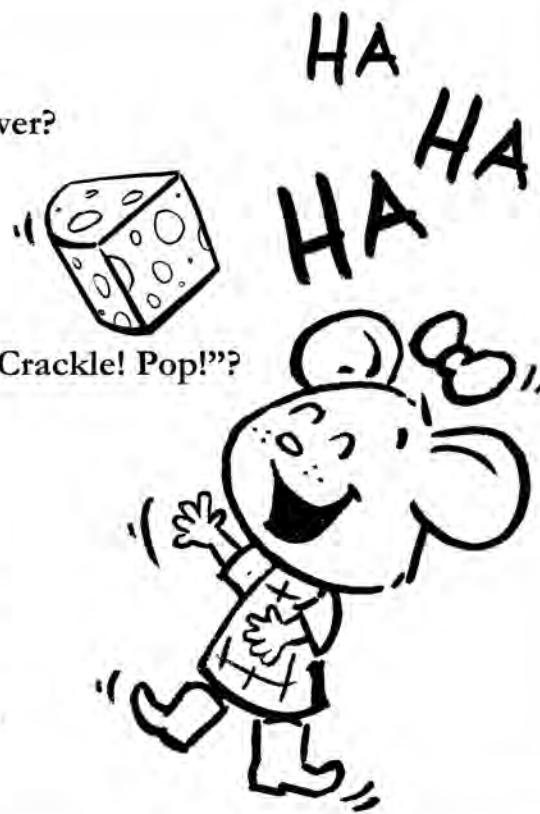
"That's the end of me!"

What kind of cheese do you find outside a castle?

Moat-zarella.

What has whiskers, a long tail, and a tiny eye patch?

A pi-rat.



Thoughts from the Author and Illustrator



David LaRochelle - When I wrote this book, I wanted to tell a story using only the words in the title. I was hoping to be the illustrator, but after I saw Mike's illustrations for our book *Moo!*, I knew that I wanted him to do the artwork for this book, too. Usually the author does not get to choose the illustrator, but I'm glad the editor agreed with my suggestion. I have never had a cat for a pet, but I did have a pet white rat when I was in fourth grade.



Mike Wohnoutka - When illustrating *This Is NOT a Cat!*, I started by developing the look and personalities of the characters. I wanted each mouse student to have a distinct personality – bored student, easily-distracted student, and brainy student. After I create the characters, I start illustrating the story. Once I'm done with all the pencil sketches I create the final art using acryla-gouache paint. I do NOT have a cat because I'm allergic.

Find out more about David and Mike and their other books, including their ALA notable book *Moo!*, at their websites: www.davidlarochelle.com & www.mikewohnoutka.com