

Reading Guide to *Emmy and the Incredible Shrinking Rat* by Lynne Jonell

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Emmy is a very lonely girl that is until a talking rat grudgingly befriends her. Emmy's parents travel most of the time and she is left in the care of the nanny Miss Barmy. Why is Miss Barmy so cold and often cruel to Emmy? Why does she constantly feed her special medicines and foods? Why are Emmy's parents always traveling? Emmy's friendship with the Rat sets off a chain of events that finally bring some answers.

ABOUT THIS AUTHOR

Lynne Jonell is a picture and middle-grade book author who was born in Little Falls, Minnesota and grew up in a suburb of Minneapolis. She teaches writing at the Loft Literary Center and lives in Plymouth. Lynne has a husband, two grown sons, and a slightly battered sailboat. While she does not particularly care for rodents and hasn't managed to shrink for a good ten years, Lynne still holds out hope for future change.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are the book's themes?
2. Do you relate more to Emmy or the Rat, and why?
3. Have you had experiences where you felt unacknowledged by the people around you? Have you ever had the sensation of shrinking?
4. Emmy was always doing her best work and never getting recognized for it. Why was she never noticed at school? How would it feel to never be noticed? What would you do if you were Emmy?
5. What is the story saying about good versus bad? Think about the ways in which the following characters are good and/or bad: Emmy, the Rat, Joe, Miss Barmy, Professor Vole, and Emmy's parents.
6. Is it possible to be "too good?"
7. Does the development of Emmy and the Rat's relationship remind you of any of your own relationships?

8. What did you find most intriguing about the Antique Rat and Rodent City? Do these locations remind you of other real or imaginary places?
9. The rodents in Antique Rat all have different abilities. Which do you think is the most useful and why?
10. Which of Emmy's relationships is most alarming? Who are her true friends?
11. What are the biggest surprises in the plot?
12. Do you think writing dialogue for animals such as rodents is more difficult than writing dialogue for humans, and if so, why?
13. Being able to talk to animals is a common theme in books. What would you like to talk to animals about?
14. Why do you think the author choose to call the rat "the Rat" rather than name him something else?
15. The author has written the sequel to *Emmy and the Incredible Shrinking Rat*. What are your predictions for developments and resolutions in the sequel?