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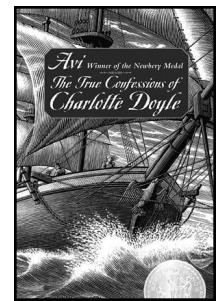
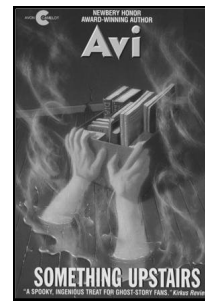
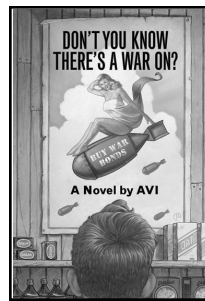
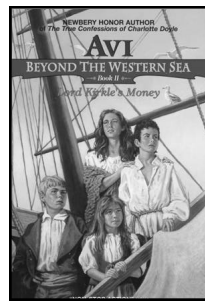
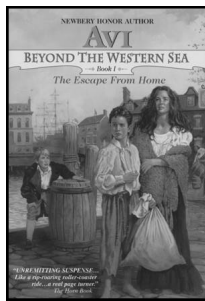
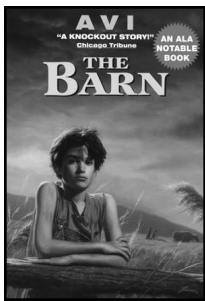
Reading Across Genres

About This Guide

This teacher's guide is designed to provide a spectrum of curricular activities and connections among selected Avi titles. The books in this guide are grouped by historical fiction, contemporary fiction, and animal fantasy genres; and the activities are organized by subject matter.

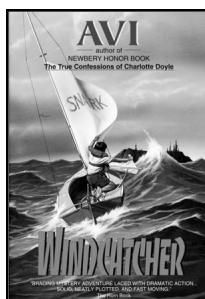
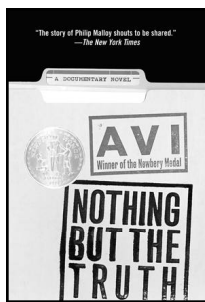
Historical Fiction

Featuring *The Barn*; *Beyond the Western Sea, Book 1*; *Beyond the Western Sea, Book 2*; *Don't You Know There's a War On?*; *Something Upstairs*; and *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*



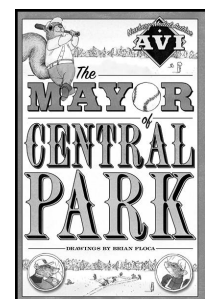
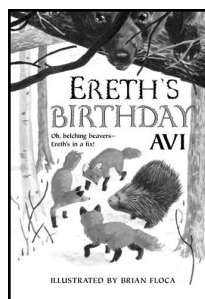
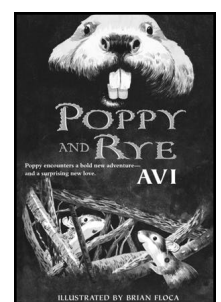
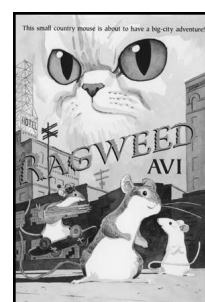
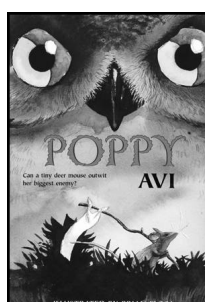
Contemporary Fiction

Featuring *Nothing But the Truth* and *Windcatcher*



Animal Fantasy

Featuring *Poppy*, *Ragweed*, *Poppy and Rye*, *Ereth's Birthday*, and *The Mayor of Central Park*



About the Author

Avi was born and raised in New York City. His twin sister gave him the name Avi when he was about a year old, and it stuck. To this day, Avi is the only name the author uses. As a kid, Avi says, he was "shy, not into sports, but someone who loved to read and play games of imagination." What made him want to become a writer? "Since writing was important to my family, friends, and school, it was important to me. I wanted to prove that I could write. But it took years before I had a book published." Avi began working as a playwright and as a librarian, and started writing books for young people when he had his own children.

When asked about writing, Avi says, "I think you become a writer when you stop writing for yourself or your teachers and start thinking about readers." Avi's advice for people who want to write: "I believe reading is the key to writing. The more you read, the better your writing can be." He adds, "Listen, and watch the world around you. Don't be satisfied with answers others give you. Don't assume, because everyone believes a thing, that it is right or wrong. Reason things out for yourself. Work to get answers on your own. Understand why you believe things. Finally, write what you honestly feel, then learn from the criticism that will always come your way." Avi also admits that writing is hard and that, for each book, he must write and then rewrite again and again. On the average, it takes Avi one year to complete a book.

How does someone become a writer?

"When I was small, I was read to continually. My grandparents were always telling stories. Our house was filled with books. I saw adults read. Hardly a wonder, then, that I became an early reader of all sorts of things—books for children, comic books, science magazines, history books—anything in which I could find a story. Even so, writing didn't interest me.

"It was in my junior year of high school that a great crisis took place: My English teacher informed my parents that I was the *worst* student he had ever had. That summer I was required to spend a lot of time with a family friend, a teacher, who tutored me in writing basics. She gave me something even more important: a reason for writing.

"Writing, she taught me, was not just for myself or for some teacher. It was a way of sharing ideas and stories with many. With that notion in mind, I set out after that summer to be a writer, though it wasn't until I had children of my own that I began to write for young people.



Photo by Lorie K. Stover

What kinds of stories does Avi like?

"Stories with strong plots and strong characters, full of emotion and ideas.

"I believe that, as a writer for kids, I have three basic missions. The first is to write as well as I can. The second is to be honest. The third is to create a vision of possibility. It doesn't matter if that vision is happy or tragic, funny or serious. What does matter is that I show that life is worth living, that we must at least try to fulfill the promise of ourselves. As one of my characters once said, 'A good children's book is a book of promises. And promises are meant to be kept.'

"I really enjoy meeting my readers. Each year I visit schools and classrooms and talk to young readers, teachers, and librarians all over the country. We talk about books, the writing and reading of them, and how books affect—even change—their readers. It's a good life."

Historical Fiction— Reading Our Past to Understand Our Present

Through challenges, conflict, and issues of home and family, historical fiction ties us inextricably to characters living in different time periods; historical fiction also reveals people's inhumanity to their fellow citizens as a result of corruption and greed. Avi's characters bear proof of this as they live on the pages of his historical fiction. Avi also allows his readers to see the depravity in human nature by introducing us to characters like Captain Jaggery, Dr. Lomister, Mr. Clemspool, and Mr. Jenkins. Jump into these novels and experience human nature at its best and worst.

About the Books

The Barn

Pb 0-380-72562-2

Ages 8-12 • Grades 3-7

Taken from his private school when his father becomes ill and to fulfill his father's dying wish, nine-year-old Ben, along with his brother and sister, constructs a barn on their land in Oregon Territory.

Beyond the Western Sea, Book 1:

The Escape from Home

Pb 0-380-72875-3

Ages 8-12 • Grades 3-7

- *ALA Best Book for Young Adults*
- *ALA Booklist Editors' Choice*
- *IRA/CBC Young Adult Choice*
- *Notable Children's Trade Book in the Field of Social Studies (NCSS/CBC)*

Leaving their mother in their impoverished village in Ireland, fifteen-year-old Maura and her younger brother, Patrick, go to America to find their father, but on the way meet Laurence, their landlord's runaway son, in Liverpool.

Beyond the Western Sea, Book 2:

Lord Kirkle's Money

Pb 0-380-72876-1

Ages 8-12 • Grades 3-7

- *ALA Booklist Editors' Choice*

Maura, Patrick, and Laurence sail from England to the New World in 1851 and are hunted down by some not-so-nice characters who are after Laurence's father's money.

Don't You Know There's a War On?

Tr 0-380-97863-6

Lb 0-06-029214-8

Pb 0-380-81544-3

Ages 8-12 • Grades 3-7

In the Brooklyn of 1943, when Howie learns his favorite teacher is going to be fired, he has all the students sign a petition, and they fight to help her keep her job.

Something Upstairs

Pb 0-380-79086-6

Pb (rack) 0-380-70853-1

Ages 10 up • Grades 5 up

After moving to Providence, Rhode Island, Kenny discovers his house is haunted by a black slave boy, who asks Kenny to return with him to the early nineteenth century and prevent his murder by slave traders.

The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle

Pb 0-380-72885-0

Pb (rack) 0-380-71475-2

Ages 10 up • Grades 5 up

- *Newbery Honor Book*
- *ALA Notable Children's Book*
- *ALA Best Book for Young Adults*
- *Boston Globe-Horn Book Award*

When thirteen-year-old Charlotte finds herself the only female on a voyage from England to America in 1832, she learns the captain is planning murder and must overcome her genteel upbringing to save her life as well as those of others.

Interdisciplinary Connections

SOCIAL STUDIES

In *Don't You Know There's a War On?* Howie and Denny collect items to help the war effort. How are today's recycling programs similar? Call the Sanitation Department in your city to find out how recycled items contribute to the betterment of society. Share what you learn with your classmates by writing a public service announcement to present to the class.

In the *Beyond the Western Sea* books, immigrants from many countries build America, not just the Irish. When Patrick and Maura come to America, there are no specific laws restricting immigration. Research the current immigration laws and find out what a person needs to do to move to the United States. How do our immigration laws compare to those of other countries? Report your findings to the class.

In *Something Upstairs*, Moses Brown is a descendant of one of the first merchants to engage in the African slave trade. It was only after he became a Quaker that he became a leader of the movement to outlaw the trade and worked to pass the Federal Slave Trade Act of 1794. Investigate the African slave trade in the 1700s and the events leading up to the passage of the law. Report to your classmates the information you discover.

SOCIAL STUDIES continued

Create a classroom time line for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As students complete *Don't You Know There's a War On?*, *Beyond the Western Sea, Book 1* and *Book 2*, and *Something Upstairs*, invite them to fill in the time line with historical events from these books. As an extension activity, have students research other major world events (i.e. scientific discoveries, political movements) from each time period to record on the time line.

LANGUAGE ARTS

In *Don't You Know There's A War On?* Avi conveys the idea that, although times and situations change, people don't. Read the description of the lunchroom in the 1940s on pp. 48–49, and write a similar description of the cafeteria and students in your school.

In *Beyond the Western Sea, Book 2*, Mr. Jenkins pays a speechwriter to write a speech for him about the evil of Irish immigrants taking American jobs. Choose one of the other major characters in the book and write a speech voicing his or her views on Irish immigrants in the workforce.

Thematic Connections

HOPES AND DREAMS

The theme of hope weaves itself through Avi's historical novels. Many of the characters are in situations that seem hopeless, yet without hope they would never be able to face the obstacles they must surmount. Ben hopes his father will live; Laurence, Maura, and Patrick dream of a better life in America. How are the characters' hopes and dreams fulfilled? How is the situation resolved in a way that satisfies the character and the reader? Share with your classmates the outcome of a time in your life when you hoped for a specific result.

FRIENDSHIP

Avi shows how the bond between friends makes their lives easier because they rely on each other for help and encouragement. For example, Howie and Denny, Patrick and Laurence, Caleb and Kenny: how do these friends exhibit to each other that they can be trusted and counted on? How did these people come to be friends? Do you think the events that brought them together strengthened their relationship?

FAMILY

Not everyone has a supportive family, one that exhibits love and care. Think about the characters in Avi's historical novels and discuss the role their families play in their lives. The results will show that families can be a detriment as well as a benefit. Speculate on the difference a supportive family can make in one's life. What attributes must a person without a supportive family possess in order to compensate?

CHALLENGES AND STRUGGLES

Oftentimes, life deals us a heavy blow and our plans are threatened or thwarted. Depending on how we handle these trials, we can become stronger or allow the challenge to beat us, making our life less than what it should have been. Find examples in Avi's historical fiction of characters that become stronger as a result of a trial and those that allow it to beat them. Discuss the lessons learned by the characters that choose to overcome the challenge and move on to a better life.

TRUST

Trust is a key theme that runs throughout the book *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*. The crew members trust one another and eventually come to trust Charlotte, but when Hollybrass is killed, they are willing to let Charlotte hang for the murder. How does she regain their trust sufficiently to rejoin them?

Contemporary Fiction— The Story of What Is Happening Now

In contemporary fiction, readers connect with characters dealing with situations and problems that are relevant to their personal lives. Because they come to a new understanding of their own lives, readers often find the stories become a part of them. The contemporary books by Avi are no exception.

About the Books

Nothing but the Truth

Pb 0-380-71907-X

Ages 12 up • Grades 7 up

• *Newbery Honor Book*

• *Notable Children's Trade Book in the Field of Social Studies (NCSS/CBC)*

• *School Library Journal Best Book*

• *Boston Globe-Horn Book Award Honor Book*

When Philip is sent to the principal's office for humming the national anthem, no one knows the situation will result in national scrutiny and be a life-changing experience for students, teachers, parents, and community members.

Windcatcher

Pb 0-380-71805-7

Ages 8-12 • Grades 3-7

• *Golden Kite Award*

After buying a small sailboat and taking a few lessons, Tony searches for a treasure buried at sea and finds an adventure that almost costs him his life.

Interdisciplinary Connections

SCIENCE

Tony's sailing lessons include the effects of wind and tides on his boat as well as techniques for handling his boat in rough weather. Investigate tides and how they affect sailing.

GEOGRAPHY

Avi placed a map of the Long Island Sound area in the front of the book. Find a current map of the area and compare the islands' locations and their names to determine if they exist or are fictional. Draw your own map of the area and indicate Tony's sailing routes on it.

SOCIAL STUDIES

When Philip is sent from Ms. Narwin's room to Dr. Palleni, he tells Philip, "Rules are rules" (p. 62). Do you think the rule of silence during the national anthem is right or wrong? Why? Research freedom of speech and determine if Philip's rights were violated. Divide the class into two sides—yes and no. Have students research the Constitution as well as similar incidents to support their argument, and have the sides debate for and against the rule of silence.

SOCIAL STUDIES continued

Research the phrase "nothing but the truth." Where did it originate, and how is it used in our society today? How does the background of the phrase shed light on the significance of the title?

LANGUAGE ARTS

In *Windcatcher* (p. 22), Tony's grandmother shares with him the Portuguese sailors' saying, "May you catch the wind you want," and on the last page the reader discovers Tony wants to stay with his grandmother, so he can "catch the wind." With a partner, brainstorm things that could have happened to Tony and discoveries he could have made for the remainder of the summer. Write a final chapter to the book, bringing it to a satisfying conclusion.

In *Nothing but the Truth*, the newspaper reporters and radio announcers play a role in confusing the situation and possibly making it worse than it really is. None of them has the privilege of knowing the "whole story." Write a newspaper article clarifying the facts and events as you understand them.

Thematic Connections

CHALLENGES

Both Philip and Tony are faced with a difficult challenge, but they handle their situations differently. Tony is honest and forthright, and Philip practices half-truths and deception. Discuss the choices they make and the results those choices have on their lives.

FRIENDSHIP

Friends wield a major influence in our lives, and oftentimes their input will alter what we do and say. How do Philip's and Tony's friends affect the decisions they make? Share a time you allowed a friend to sway you in making a decision. What was the result of that decision?

Animal Fantasy

Avi personifies animals in the Tales from Dimwood Forest series, and not only do they talk, but they also feel and think like humans. Emotions run high between brothers and sisters, friends and enemies, parents and children; jealousy, love, anger, fear, loneliness, and feelings of inadequacy all play a role in the lives of the characters in this series.

About the Books

Poppy

Pb 0-380-72769-2 • Ages 8-12 • Grades 3-7
• Boston Globe-Horn Book Award

Poppy, a deer mouse, and her family have always lived in Dimwood Forest under the care of Mr. Ocax, a terrifying owl, but the family is growing and wants to move to a cornfield big enough to feed everyone.

Ragweed

Tr 0-380-97690-0 • Pb 0-380-80167-1
Ages 8-12 • Grades 3-7

Feeling the need for adventure, Ragweed, a young country mouse, leaves his family and travels on a train to the big city.

Poppy and Rye

Tr 0-380-97638-2 • Pb 0-380-79717-8
Ages 8-12 • Grades 3-7

Poppy and her grumpy porcupine friend Ereth try to help Rye and his family of Golden Mice reclaim their home from a destructive family of beavers.

Ereth's Birthday

Tr 0-380-97734-6 • Pb 0-380-80490-5
Ages 8-12 • Grades 3-7

Feeling neglected by Poppy and Rye, the cantankerous old porcupine sets out looking for his favorite treat.

Interdisciplinary Connections

SOCIAL STUDIES

Putting others first, making personal sacrifices for the good of many, and helping those in need are predominant themes in all of the Dimwood Forest books. With a partner, choose one of the books in the series and write a paragraph showing how these themes are conveyed. Or choose one of the above themes and write a thank-you letter to someone you know who best exemplifies this theme; include the reasons for your choice.

SCIENCE

Although the animal characters are personified, each animal demonstrates his natural abilities. For example, Mr. Ocax (the owl) sees best at night and eats mice, and Ereth (the porcupine) protects himself with his quills and does not eat meat. Research one of the characters in Tales from Dimwood Forest and compare their natural characteristics to their portrayal in the book. Using a poster board, draw a chart showing the natural characteristic on one side and how it is conveyed in the book on the other. Display everyone's poster.

LANGUAGE ARTS

The motivating force behind Ragweed is the belief that "A mouse has to do what a mouse has to do" (*Ragweed*, p. 1). What do you think this cliché means, and why did it motivate Ragweed to action? Brainstorm with a friend, and then write a paragraph explaining why you either agree or disagree with Ragweed's philosophy. Use examples from the book to support your opinion. Then brainstorm other animal clichés such as "The early bird gets the worm," "What's good for the goose is good for the gander." Discuss these clichés and others you list in light of the characters and situations in the books.

ART

Select one of the characters and make a shoe-box habitat, showing where that animal would live. For example, Ereth the porcupine lives in the woods in a hollowed-out log (*Poppy*, pp. 91-99), Rye and his family of Golden Mice make their home on the edge of the brook (*Poppy and Rye*, pp. 2-3), Mr. Ocax inhabits the top of a charred oak tree (*Poppy* p. 1 and p. 46), and Nimble, Tumble, and Flip occupy a den (*Ereth's Birthday* p. 50).

Thematic Connections

FRIENDSHIP

Walter Winchell, a widely read journalist, has stated, "A friend is one who walks in when others walk out." What do you think this means, and what examples can you find in the Dimwood Forest books to prove the truth of this quote? Have you ever had a friend who walked in when others walked out? Have you ever been the friend who walked in? Share your experience with the class.

FAMILY

Because family relationships and trials are universal, the animal families share some of the same experiences as human families. Rye is jealous of his older brother Ragweed, Poppy argues with her father, Bounder has business that separates him from his children, and Clover and Valerian mourn the loss of their son Ragweed. What lessons can you learn from the families in Dimwood Forest about handling problems in your family?

FEAR

Many of the characters experience fear, but most overcome it to make their life better. For example, Ereth and Rye fear that no one loves them, Ragweed and his band in the city fear cats, and Poppy fears she will die trying to rescue Rye. With the class, brainstorm other examples of characters showing fear, and then make a list of the positive and negative ways the characters deal with fear.

Other Avi Titles Available from HarperCollins Children's Books!

Abigail Takes the Wheel

Lb 0-06-027663-0
Pb 0-06-444281-0
Ages 8-9 • Grades 3-4
An I Can Read Book

Amanda Joins the Circus

Pb 0-380-80338-0
Ages 7-10 • Grades 2-5

Blue Heron

Pb 0-380-72043-4
Ages 8-12 • Grades 3-7
• *ALA Best Book
for Young Adults*

Captain Grey

Pb 0-380-73244-0
Ages 8-12 • Grades 3-7

Devil's Race

Pb 0-06-440586-9
Ages 12 up • Grades 7 up
• *ALA Popular Paperbacks
for Young Adults*
• *ALA Quick Pick for Reluctant
Young Adult Readers*

Encounter at Easton

Pb 0-380-73241-6
Ages 8-12 • Grades 3-7

The Fighting Ground

Lb 0-397-32074-4
Pb 0-06-440185-5
Ages 8-12 • Grades 3-7
• *ALA Notable Children's Book*
• *ALA Best of the Best Books
for Young Adults*
• *Notable Children's Trade
Book in the Field of Social
Studies (NCSS/CBC)*
• *Library of Congress
Children's Books*
• *Scott O'Dell Award for
Historical Fiction*

Finding Providence

Pb 0-06-444216-0
Ages 8-9 • Grades 3-4
An I Can Read Book

Keep Your Eye on Amanda

Pb 0-380-80337-2
Ages 7-10 • Grades 2-5

Man from the Sky

Pb 0-688-11897-6
Ages 8-12 • Grades 3-7

The Man Who Was Poe

Pb 0-380-73022-7
Pb (rack) 0-380-71192-3
Ages 10 up • Grades 5 up

Night Journeys

Pb 0-380-73242-4
Ages 8-12 • Grades 3-7

A Place Called Ugly

Pb 0-380-72423-5
Ages 12 up • Grades 7 up

Prairie School

Tr 0-06-027664-9
Lb 0-06-027665-7
Pb 0-06-051318-7
Ages 8-9 • Grades 3-4
An I Can Read Book

Punch with Judy

Pb 0-380-72980-6
Ages 10 up • Grades 5 up

Romeo and Juliet—Together (And Alive!) at Last

Pb 0-380-70525-7
Ages 8-12 • Grades 3-7
• *IRA/CBC Children's Choice*

S.O.R. Losers

Pb 0-380-69993-1
Ages 8-12 • Grades 3-7

Smugglers' Island

Pb 0-688-12797-5
Ages 8-12 • Grades 3-7

Sometimes I Think I Hear My Name

Pb 0-380-72424-3
Ages 12 up • Grades 7 up

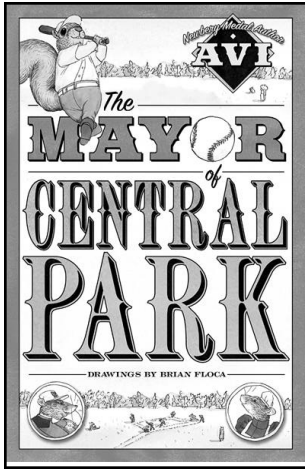
Tales from Dimwood Forest Box Set

Includes paperback titles
*Ragweed, Poppy, Poppy and
Rye, and Ereth's Birthday*
Pb 0-06-441017-X
Ages 8-12 • Grades 3-7

"Who Was That Masked Man, Anyway?"

Pb 0-380-72113-9
Ages 10 up • Grades 5 up
• *ALA Notable Children's Book*





Avi's Newest Animal Fantasy— The Mayor of Central Park

The Mayor of Central Park

Tr 0-06-000682-X • Lb 0-06-051556-2

Ages 8-12 • Grades 3-7

About the Book

Introducing his readers to an eclectic cast of characters that encompasses the small animal world, Avi paints a picture of human nature at its best—and sometimes its worst. When a group of criminally inclined rats takes over Central Park, Mayor Oscar Westerwit forms an army to win back the park for its former law-abiding inhabitants. When the rats are tipped off about the attack, the mayor and his army are soundly beaten, but the war is not over. The mayor challenges the rat boss, Big Daddy Duds, to a game of baseball, winner-takes-all, and Duds accepts the challenge. A surprise pitcher shows up at the game, and the outcome is an unexpected blowout.

Interdisciplinary Connections

LANGUAGE ARTS

Like any other master craftsman, Avi has a toolbox equipped with the tools of his trade. He uses simile: "Oscar was as perky as a pancake" (p. 60); personification: "a monster mansion that looked down on the avenue as if it owned it" (p. 51); and alliteration: "he tootled another trolley trip" (p. 41); and word play: "turned your boudoir into a bridge" (p. 98). These tools help Avi paint wonderful pictures and make the story fun to read. Ask students to find examples of figurative language and make a list on the board. Ask students to write and share a paragraph about a person or place, using the tools in Avi's toolbox.

SCIENCE

Avi uses squirrels, a mole, rats, rabbits, a goat, a possum, and a cat as characters in his story. Investigate these animals to find out if they are natural enemies or if they coexist in nature. On a separate sheet of paper or tagboard, make a list of the characteristics of each animal, including what they eat and their habitats. As a class or in small groups, explore the various ways you can classify these animals, such as predator or prey; herbivore, carnivore, or omnivore; animal kingdom. Then look at the relationships between these characters and determine if they are realistic. For example, Maud is a rat who wants to marry the cat, Arty, and Oscar is a squirrel whose best friend, Sam, is a rabbit.

ART

Brian Floca has illustrated some scenes in the book and drawn pictures of the major characters. Those illustrations help the reader envision the characters and what is happening to them. Choose a scene and illustrate it with original drawings. For example, you could draw Oscar helping the injured Sam into the rock cave (p. 109), or use your imagination and draw a picture of Oscar and Maud's wedding (p. 193).

Ask students in your class to choose their favorite character and make a puppet of that animal. Then group the students according to the character they selected and ask them to perform their favorite part of the story.

Thematic Connections

GOOD VS. EVIL

Shocked by the meanness of the rats and their wicked attempt to take over Central Park, Oscar sets out to make things right. He is convinced his ragtag army will win, and he tells anyone who will listen, "We're going to win because right is on our side. And what's right always rules" (p. 140). Ask students to share experiences from their lives that prove Oscar is right. Can they think of a time that right did not appear to win? Who determines what is right and good?

COURAGE

Duds and his thugs act brave, but Oscar insists they are cowards. Do you think Oscar is right? Why or why not? Use examples from the book to prove your point. Have you ever witnessed or been a part of a situation where someone was being bullied? Did you consider the bully to be a coward? Why or why not?

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