



# TEACHING & ACTIVITY GUIDE

## SCURRY

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**Overview:** The humans are gone, the sun is rarely seen, and a cold, dark rain befalls everything it touches. As a group of house mice struggle to survive a long and strange winter, they stubbornly cling to their old ways, looting the abandoned homes nearby for any scraps they can find. And while food is scarce, danger is everywhere. From mouse traps and poison to feral cats roaming The Neighborhood, every day is a struggle for survival... and the colony is becoming desperate. But when the rumors of a wrecked truck filled with food gives the mice newfound hope, the colony's best scouts, including the brave Wix, embark on a perilous journey beyond the fence. For outside the Neighborhood lurks creatures much more dangerous than stray cats, and a world much larger than they know...

### IMPORTANT SETTINGS

- The Colony
- The Forest
- The Refuge
- Beaver Dam
- The Cave

### KEY THEMES

- Survival
- Betrayal & Friendship
- Community
- Power & Corruption
- Change vs Tradition
- Courage & Heroism

### IMPORTANT CHARACTERS

- Wix - Mouse: Scavenger for The Colony
- Umf - Rat: Companion of Wix
- Pict - Mouse: Master Orim's Daughter
- Master Orim - Mouse: Leader of The Colony
- Kessel - Mouse: Member of The Colony
- Resher - Mouse: Member of The Colony
- Titan - Cat: Leader of the House Cats
- Mottle - Mouse: Young Member of The Colony
- Skek - Mouse: Underling of Resher
- Snag - Squirrel: Member of The Camp
- Skoga - Snapper Turtle: Lives in the Forest
- Arken - Beaver: Master Engineer of The Camp
- Atlas - Moose: Traveler of the Forest
- King Shonk - Beaver: King of The Camp
- Nyll - Raven: Advisor to the King and Leader of the Ravens
- Minka - Mouse: Leader of the Forest Mice
- Erebus - Wolf: Leader of the Forest Wolf Pack
- Flik - Flying Squirrel: Companion of Forest Mice
- Akama - Rat: Rat Ambassador to The Colony
- The Witches - Foxes: Three Sisters Who Inhabit the Forest
- Possum - Possum: Friend to the Forest Mice
- The Guardian - Fabled Protector of the Forest



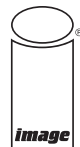
## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When possum speaks of the war that ended human habitation of the environment, he refers to a "Fire Wolf" and "Sky Wolf" that wrought mass destruction. To what is he actually referring? Why does he use the "wolf" metaphor?
2. The Colony must decide whether to continue with traditions or make a radical change that will be the best for their future. Think of a time when you faced making a decision involving a major change and the outcome was uncertain. How did you make that decision?
3. Provide two examples where a character's facial expression enhanced your understanding of what they were saying. Give two examples when the expressions helped you understand the emotions of a panel/the story where there were no words.
4. Give two examples of how individual strength and courage helped characters survive in this world. Give two examples of how working together and collective action aided their survival.
5. What do you think Wix's dreams represent? How do they affect his journey?
6. How did the dreams foreshadow future events in the book?
7. The book utilizes flashbacks to recount information about this fantasy world and the legend of The Guardian. How did the art in these sections differ from depictions of scenes happening in the present? Which panel from a dream/flashback was your favorite, and why?
8. Towards the story's end, The Witches note The Colony member's ability to open cans and read trees and say "We are changing". What do you think they meant by this? How does this fit into the book's setting?
9. Despite the characters speaking and acting in sometimes human ways, they also behave like their animal species. Give three examples where a character personified their species in words or actions.

10. Describe two different action sequences in the book and how the art enhanced those sections. Pick your two favorite panels from these action sequences and explain why you liked them.
11. Near the end of the story Wix and Pict have differing opinions about the prophecies and signs surrounding the fate of the forest. How do their differing views contribute to their actions in the final confrontation?
12. Despite having limited experience away from The Colony, Pict displays a great deal of courage. Pick an example of dialogue that highlights Pict's bravery despite the danger of her travels.

## ACTIVITY IDEAS

1. The animals in Scurry have varying opinions on how they will survive. Imagine you were a mouse or rat with the group. Write a short story of what you'd do to persuade the group to stay, to go, or introduce and describe a third option.
2. Art is a major component in telling the story of Scurry. Pick a time before the story took place, events that might have happened during the story, a prophecy the Witches have yet to tell, or anything else. Paint, draw, or create an art piece that tells more of the story that hasn't been seen yet or would help the story make more sense.
3. Identify what you think is the biggest theme of the book (use themes from this guide or come up with your own). Pick five panels in Scurry that best represent your chosen theme. You can choose panels for either art or dialogue. Prepare a brief explanation how each panel represents the theme, and prepare to share it in class.
4. You have been hired to create a soundtrack for Scurry. Choose songs to feature in the soundtrack; either write them down or create an actual playlist. Think of at least three specific parts of the book and which song you would want to play as people read those parts. Briefly explain why you chose each song. For example, what song would pair well with the story's finale?



# TEACHER'S KEY

Reading/Interest Level: Ages 12+ /Grades 6+

## Common Core Aligned Pre-Reading

Before reading *Scurry*, look through the book and identify the various animal characters throughout. Pick two animals featured in the story. For each animal, look online to find their overall behavior traits, habitat, diet and other interesting facts. Take notes on these animals.

1. Compare the real life version of the animals to those in the book during reading. What did the art get right?
2. Connect two facts about each to the way their corresponding characters behave in the book.

## ACTIVITY IDEAS

- Engage: While the book has many specific themes, it also has much in common with the hero's journey mythology. How does this story follow the basic structure of the hero's journey:
  - Departure, characterized by The Call to Adventure
  - Initiation, characterized by The Road of Trials
  - Return, characterized by the hero returning changed
- Explore: Have students explore other books, films, or television shows that feature aspects of the hero's journey.
  - Students can identify key elements of the mythology in their favorite media
  - Have students reflect on how these elements are represented or tweaked in their favorite stories.
  - This narrative framework has persisted for centuries, Explore why it is able to relate to different cultures across time.
- Explain: Beyond the hero's journey, broaden discussions and activities as a chance to discuss how character development in stories help connect the audience to works of art.
  - How do students relate to their favorite characters?
  - Do students enjoy when characters change across a book, show, or film? Discuss examples of when they have enjoyed it and when they have not.
- Elaborate: Have students explore how the characters from *Scurry* would continue to develop in the future.
  - Pick two characters from the book and outline what adventures they would like to see the characters experience in future volumes.
  - Explain how they think the characters would develop or change in relation to those experiences/adventures.
  - Create a title and book cover for this story.
- Evaluate: Create an assessment that ties these themes together.
  - Teachers know the value of having students connect material to their lived experience in terms of student engagement. However, it would also be useful to ask students about how connecting readings (like *Scurry* and others) to what they experience is important to learning.
  - Have students frame some of the more specific themes of the book (individualism vs community, tradition vs innovation, survival, etc.) to elements of the hero's journey or the broader discussions of character development.



## **RECOMMENDED TITLES FOR FURTHER READING**

- *The Giver* by Lois Lowry, illustrated by P. Craig Russell. Clarion Books, 2020.
- *Redwall: The Graphic Novel* by Brian Jacques, illustrated by Bret Blevins. Philomel Books, 2007.
- *Cottons: The Secret of the Wind* by Jim Pascoe & Hedi Arnhold, First Second, 2018.
- *Animosity* by Marguerite Bennett & Rafael de Latorre, 2017.
- *Isola* by Brenden Fletcher & Karl Kerschel, Image Comics, 2018.
- *Scooby Apocalypse* By Keith Giffen, J.M. DeMatteis & Howard Porter, 2016.

