Unit 5 Lesson 5: Mouse Mess

Focus Areas: Pest Control – Mechanical, Cultural; Science, Language Arts
Focus Skills: critical thinking, observing, listening comprehension

Objective

To determine safe ways to control mice and other “pests” that invade places where food is served and stored.

Essential Questions

- Why is it important to store food properly?
- Why is it necessary to keep kitchen counters clear of food and other leftovers?

Essential Understandings

- People can control pests such as mice by storing food in containers.
- Kitchens that are cleared up of all food have less chance of attracting mice and other pests such as cockroaches.

Background

Mice live anywhere on the earth: in forests, fields, mountains, deserts - even marshes. Some mice are excellent swimmers, and others make their nests in trees. In North America alone, there are hundreds of kinds of mice that live in specific geographic areas.

Mice are rodents, and as such, they are relatives of squirrels, chipmunks, beavers, and porcupines. All rodents have sharp front teeth that grow continuously.

Mice are active from dawn to dusk, but it is difficult to see them because they are timid creatures who flee quickly if they sense any danger. In addition, mice camouflage with their surroundings. Mice come in all sizes. The tiniest full-grown North American mouse is only 5 inches (12 cm) long!
Background (continued)

Mice always appear to be in a hurry - dashing, scurrying, and scampering about on their sharply clawed feet. Many are excellent climbers, good swimmers, and expert jumpers. Many mice spend their entire lives in an area not much bigger than a backyard. Few mice ever leave their home territory and usually do not mind sharing it with other mice. They create a network of paths, tunnels, and bridges that connect all the places that are used for food supplies. These highways help mice find their way quickly back to their nests, especially in times of danger.

Mice have many predators. They play an important role in the food chain in which they are a meal for creatures such as foxes, skunks, bears, snakes, turtles, fish, and birds of prey. If mice didn't have lots of enemies, they would overpopulate. Many would starve.

Mice spend lots of time looking for food. They are not fussy eaters and will eat anything. They prefer seeds and tender green leaves, but when they can't find these, human food is convenient and will suffice. They store food for the winter, but will look for human food when their supply runs out.

Mice live for about a year and a half. They reproduce quickly and are able to fend for themselves by the time they are a few weeks old. They start their own families when they are three to four months old. Because there can be large populations, mice can become a real nuisance pest in your home.

Vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mouse</td>
<td>a small animal that is a relative of the squirrel</td>
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<tr>
<td>mice</td>
<td>more than one mouse</td>
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<tr>
<td>rodents</td>
<td>the group of animals such as beavers, porcupines, and squirrels that the mouse belongs to</td>
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<tr>
<td>poison</td>
<td>a substance used to kill pests</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-Con</td>
<td>a rat and mouse poison that can kill or harm other animals such as cats and dogs</td>
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</tbody>
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Logistics

**Time:** 30 minutes  
**Group Size:** 5 to 30  
**Space:** a classroom

Materials

* * Mouse Mess by Linnea Riley *  
* a mousetrap  
* picture of a “Havahart” trap *  
* single copy provided *

Preparation

Obtain the book *Mouse Mess* by Linnea Riley.

Activity

Introduction

Read the book *Mouse Mess* by Linnea Riley.

Involvement

After reading the book, have Izzy ask the children:

What are some of the things in this story that the mouse does that don’t seem real?

- He opens jars and boxes
- He makes a castle out of brown sugar
- He makes a pile of cornflakes and plays in it
- He makes a peanut butter and jelly sandwich
- He pops the tops off of bottles
- He takes a bath
- He sleeps in a bed (sardine can)

What does the mouse in the story do that is real?

- He gets into food and eats it
Why can mice be pests?
- They spread germs
- They ruin the food they eat

How do people get rid of mice?
- Poison
- Traps
- “Havahart” traps

Why is it dangerous to use poison?
- Other creatures, perhaps pets, can eat the poison

What is a safe way to get rid of mice?
- Use a trapping device

Even though mice are pests, why are they important animals?
- Food for birds such as owls
- Food for snakes
- Clean up the environment by eating seeds and other fallen debris
- Used in scientific research to help discover what causes disease
- Used to test drugs

Follow Up

Make a Mouse Mask.

You will need:
- paper cups (one per child)
- buttons or small craft pom poms (one per child)
- grey construction paper 8” x 12”
- pink construction paper 4” x 6” (1/2 sheet)
- pipe cleaners
- yarn or ribbon or elastic
- craft glue
- scissors
To create the mask:

**THE NOSE:**

1. Give each child a paper cup.

2. Give each child a button or pompom “nose”.

3. Give each child 3 pipe cleaners.

4. Have children create their nose by gluing the button/pom pom to the bottom of the cup and sticking the pipe cleaners through the sides of the cup by pushing through from left to right. **Note:** A pencil may be used to make a small hole in the cup to make this step easier.

**THE EARS:**

5. Have the children draw as large a circle as possible on the grey construction paper, cut out their circle, and cut it in half.

6. Have the children draw as large a circle as possible on the pink construction paper, cut out their circle, and cut it in half.

7. Have the children glue the pink semi-circle on the grey semi-circle.

**ASSEMBLY:**

8. A ribbon, yarn or elastic strand is attached to each side of the cup.

9. An “ear” is attached to each strand by folding the semi-circular ear in half length wise, and passing the ribbon (etc.) through it. **Note:** A pencil may be used to make a small hole in the folded ear to make this step easier.

10. The ribbons (etc.) are tied behind the child’s head to secure the “mask” in place.
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Activity:

1. Using their mouse disguises, the volunteers take turns renacting parts of the story *Mouse Mess* as the teacher rereads them.

2. Have the children discuss how the mouse mess could have been avoided. (crumbs cleaned up, food put away in mouse-proof containers)