



YOU DIRTY RAT!

1 Many people think of rats as pests. They can destroy crops. Some carry diseases. Some of these diseases have caused millions of deaths. The biggest killer was the plague or Black Death. Such events have made rats very unpopular.

It doesn't really matter if they are good or bad. Rats are still interesting animals.

2 Rats are very good swimmers. They have no trouble swimming across creeks or small rivers. They can also laugh. Humans can't hear it because it is too high pitched.

We need a special machine to hear it. Rats are ticklish too.

Some people keep domestic rats as pets. They say they are very clean and don't eat too much. Their owners also claim they are smart and friendly. They seem like the perfect pet.

3 The Chinese calendar includes a Year of the Rat. People born in a Year of the Rat are said to be honest, kind and creative. Does this sound like any rats you know?

In some parts of India, rats are holy. In one Hindu temple they feed the rats. The priests believe that food touched by rats is blessed.

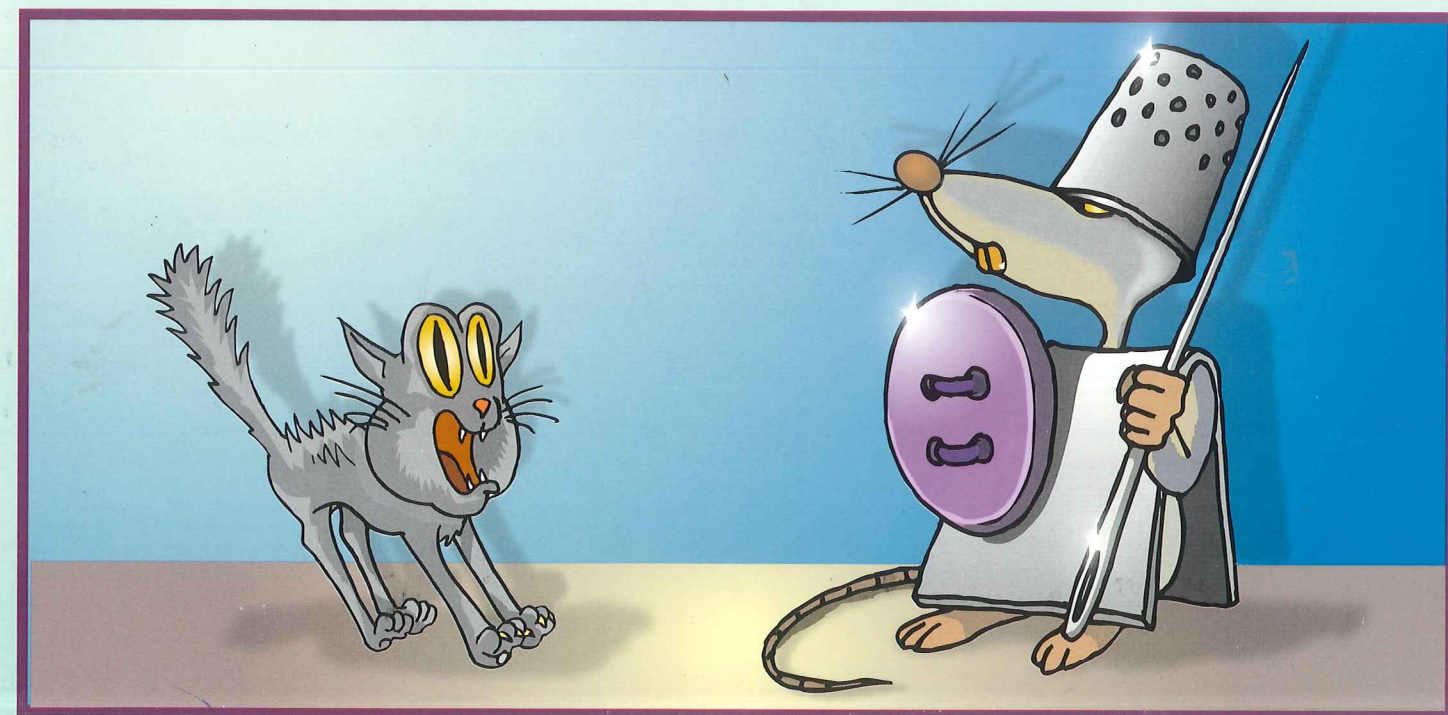
4 Rats can grow up to 40 centimetres long from tip of nose to tip of tail. Some can weigh as much as half a kilogram. A house cat might think twice before chasing something that

size. Rats can live up to five years, but for most, three years is a good life.

5 Rats have weak eyesight and like to hunt at night. They have a great sense of smell and very strong teeth. If you give them enough time they can gnaw through steel. Rats bite thousands of people every year.

6 Rat families can grow very quickly. A female rat can have up to twelve litters a year. Each litter has more than ten pups. This can make a rat's nest very busy. Rats like to collect soft rubbish to line their nests and make them more comfortable. These underground nests are connected to the surface by holes dug by the rats.

So, what do you think of rats now? Are you ready to make one your pet? If you are, make sure it's a domestic rat!





Questions

- 1 Why are rats so unpopular?
 - a They have strong teeth.
 - b They carried the plague.
 - c They eat through steel.
- 2 Most rats live about
 - a 3 years.
 - b 5 years.
 - c 10 years.
- 3 Humans don't usually hear rats laugh. Why?
 - a They only laugh at night.
 - b Their laugh is too high pitched.
 - c They only laugh when they are tickled.
- 4 Rats are considered holy in some parts of
 - a India.
 - b Hindu.
 - c China.
- 5 Domestic rats are popular pets because
 - a they are ticklish.
 - b they are kind and creative.
 - c they are clean, smart and friendly.
- 6 We know rats are fairly smart because
 - a the priests feed them.
 - b they have lots of pups in a litter.
 - c they use soft rubbish to make their nest comfortable.

Vocabulary

Match the words from the text to the clues.
The brackets show the text sections ().

creative comfortable plague
gnaw laugh

- 7 A fast spreading fatal disease (1)
- 8 A sound you make when smiling (2)
- 9 To be artistic and original (3)
- 10 To chew on (5)
- 11 The opposite of uncomfortable (6)

Grammar

Words that sound the same but have different meanings are called **Homophones**. E.g. *to, too* and *two*. Write the correct **Homophone** in these sentences from the text.

- 12 **Some/Sum** rats carry diseases.
- 13 Rats are ticklish **too/two**.
- 14 Does this sound like any rats you **know/no**?
- 15 Rats have **week/weak** eyesight.

Back To The Text...

- 16 Rats hold swimming races.
 - a true
 - b false
- 17 In which part of the library would you find this text?
 - a fiction
 - b non-fiction
- 18 Rats have litters of pups. So do
 - a cats.
 - b dogs.

Think About This

- 19 Look at the illustration on the front of the card. Which of the following sections describe this scene?
 - a one
 - b two
 - c three
 - d four
- 20 Look at the illustration on page 2. This image is probably from
 - a a rat's nightmare.
 - b a rat's dream.
- 21 What do you think a rat does first? Choose **a** or **b**.
 - a Has a litter of pups.
 - b Builds a soft nest.
- 22 The word *temple* in section 3 is best replaced with
 - a house.
 - b church.
 - c tower.
 - d site.
- 23 The purpose of this text is
 - a to recount a story.
 - b to inform the reader.
 - c to give instructions.

Challenge Option

Research: List the items you would need if you wanted to keep mice as pets.