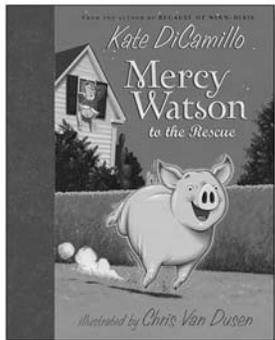


# Mercy Watson to the Rescue

## Teacher's Guide



### About the Book

Mercy Watson, a food-obsessed pig with a fixation on toast, snuggles in bed with her owners. When the bed begins to fall through the floor, Mercy leaps out. The Watsons think she is getting help, but in fact she's gone next door in search of a snack. Mercy frightens her neighbors, the elderly Lincoln Sisters, and they call the fire

department, which arrives in time to save the Watsons. Mercy is hailed as the hero.

### In the Classroom

Students and teachers will fall in love with Mercy Watson and this humorous early chapter book. Newbery Medal winner Kate DiCamillo has delivered the first of an engaging new series—complete with quality writing, lively art, and a witty plot—that will have beginning readers coming back for more. This book is perfect for integrating reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, poetry, and communication skills—making it a complete language arts tool.

### Prereading

Show the class the cover of *Mercy Watson to the Rescue*, but conceal the title. Ask students to look at the picture and guess what they think the book might be about. Why is the pig running? Does she look happy? Where do you think she is going? Look at the people in the window. What expression do they have on their faces? Why do you think they look like that?

### A Toasty Tale

Mercy loves to eat—her favorite food is buttered toast. In honor of Mercy, create a class book in the shape of toast. Draw an outline of a piece of bread with the sentence starter *My favorite food is \_\_\_\_\_* and distribute to students. Have students complete and illustrate the book. Glue each page onto a piece of oak tag or beige construction paper to look like layers of bread or toast. Once the book is assembled, the class will have its very own toasty tale to share during story time. Keep the class book in the reading corner or displayed in the classroom.

### You Said It: An Exercise in Figurative Language

Teach children the concept of figurative language by reading aloud the sentence on page 50: *The Watsons' bed sighed loudly and crashed all the way through the floor.* Ask students if a bed can really sigh. Ask, *If a bed could talk, why do you think it would sigh?* Then explain that authors can write a more exciting sentence by giving inanimate objects human traits. Have children practice using figurative language by replacing *sighed* in the sentence above. First, ask the class for suggestions that would keep the meaning of the sentence (such as *cried*, *screamed*, or *yelled*). Then ask them for words that might change the meaning (such as *sang*, *whistled*, or *laughed*). As an extension activity, request that students include one sentence containing figurative language during an assigned writing exercise (such as journal writing).

### Papier-Mercy Piggy Bank

Have students create their own cute Mercy piggy bank with this fun art activity. The following items are needed: balloons, old newspapers, flour-water glue,\* egg cartons, masking tape, pink tempera paint, pink pipe cleaners, googly eyes, and markers. Let each student blow up a balloon for the pig's body and then tear 1-inch strips of newspaper. Then have them dip the strips of newspaper in the flour glue and wrap them around the balloon. Keep wrapping until the balloon is completely covered. Have at least two to three layers surrounding the balloon, letting it dry overnight after each layer. When all the layers are dry, pop the balloon, which can remain in the bank. Then separate five egg carton sections (one for each leg and one for the snout). Use masking tape to attach them to the body, and then paint the pig. Make a small hole at the tail end of the pig and insert a pipe cleaner into the hole. Then shape the pipe cleaner into a spiral. Glue on the googly eyes, and make two nostrils on the snout with a marker. Along the top of the pig's body, carefully cut a slot large enough to fit any coin. If the class decides they would like to remove the coins, the Mercy piggy bank can be broken open like a piñata. (\*Flour-water glue recipe: Mix 1 cup of flour with 1 cup of water until the mixture is thin and runny. Stir into 4 cups of boiling water. Simmer for about 3 minutes, then cool.)



## All in the Word Family

Use the words *pig* and *toast* in this delightful story to springboard into various spelling and phonics lessons. Begin with the word family *-ig*. Write *ig* several times on different pieces of small sentence strips and insert them into a pocket chart. (If a pocket chart is unavailable, use chart paper or a chalkboard.) Ask students for words that rhyme with *pig* and have them volunteer to write the beginning consonant on the sentence strip to complete the word (such as *big*, *fig*, or *wig*). Then let children create their own *-ig* family booklets. In marker, write *ig* on a small piece of oak tag, measuring approximately 5½ x 8½ inches (one for each child). Cut out small pieces of white paper, about 4 x 2 inches. Stack eight pieces onto each piece of oak tag, staple at the top, and distribute to each student. Have students write the beginning consonants on each piece of white paper. When each piece of paper is flipped, it makes a different *-ig* word. This is a wonderful phonetic awareness activity as it incorporates oral segmentation and oral blending. It is also a great introduction to spelling and handwriting. Students can also learn the sound *oa* in the CVVC (consonant – vowel – vowel – consonant) pattern of *toas* in the word *toast* by repeating the same activity, for example *coat*, *boat*, *oat*, *roast*, and *boast*.

## Fact vs. Opinion

Eugenia Lincoln has a lot of opinions. Hold a class discussion about the difference between fact (truths) and opinion (beliefs). On chart paper, draw a T-table and write the heading FACT on the left and OPINION on the right. Then read the following sentences to the class (feel free to create additional sentences) to determine if they are fact or opinion. *Pigs like to eat. Pigs do not sweat. Pigs are clean animals. Pigs should not live in houses. Pigs shouldn't be kept as pets. Pigs ought to be on leashes.* Hang the table in the classroom and have children do some research on pigs to see if they put the statements in the proper category. Children should use the library and Internet to conduct their research. For younger students, this activity is a good introduction to searching for information.

## The Great Pig Debate

Children are masters at debating, so here's an activity to foster such skills. Pose the following question to the class: Which makes a better pet—a pig or a dog? (Feel free to substitute any animal besides dog.) Model the art of debating by having a whole-class debate. Then divide the class into groups of four to five students and assign one side of the dispute to each group. Different groups could debate different topics related to pigs, depending on ability level, or all the groups could present arguments for the same issue. To help each group arrange their thoughts, have them write at least five reasons defending their

position. Then have two groups go head to head in front of the rest of the class. Continue until all groups have had their turn. This activity promotes both social and writing skills.

## Help Is on the Way

Eugenia Lincoln calls the fire department to report “a crisis of an uncertain nature” and states her address. Ask students if they'd know what to do in a crisis and if they know their address and phone number. Hold a class discussion about when to call and when *not* to call the fire department. Perhaps invite a local firefighter to come speak to the children about the role of the fire department in the community. Then have students work with their caregivers to complete a personal summary sheet in the event of their own crisis. Information should include address, phone number, etc. Call the homework assignment: “In Case of an Emergency!”

## Sing-Along

Every night, Mr. and Mrs. Watson sing to Mercy:

*Bright, bright is the morning sun,  
but brighter still is our darling one.  
Dark, dark is the coming night,  
but oh, our Mercy shines so bright.”*

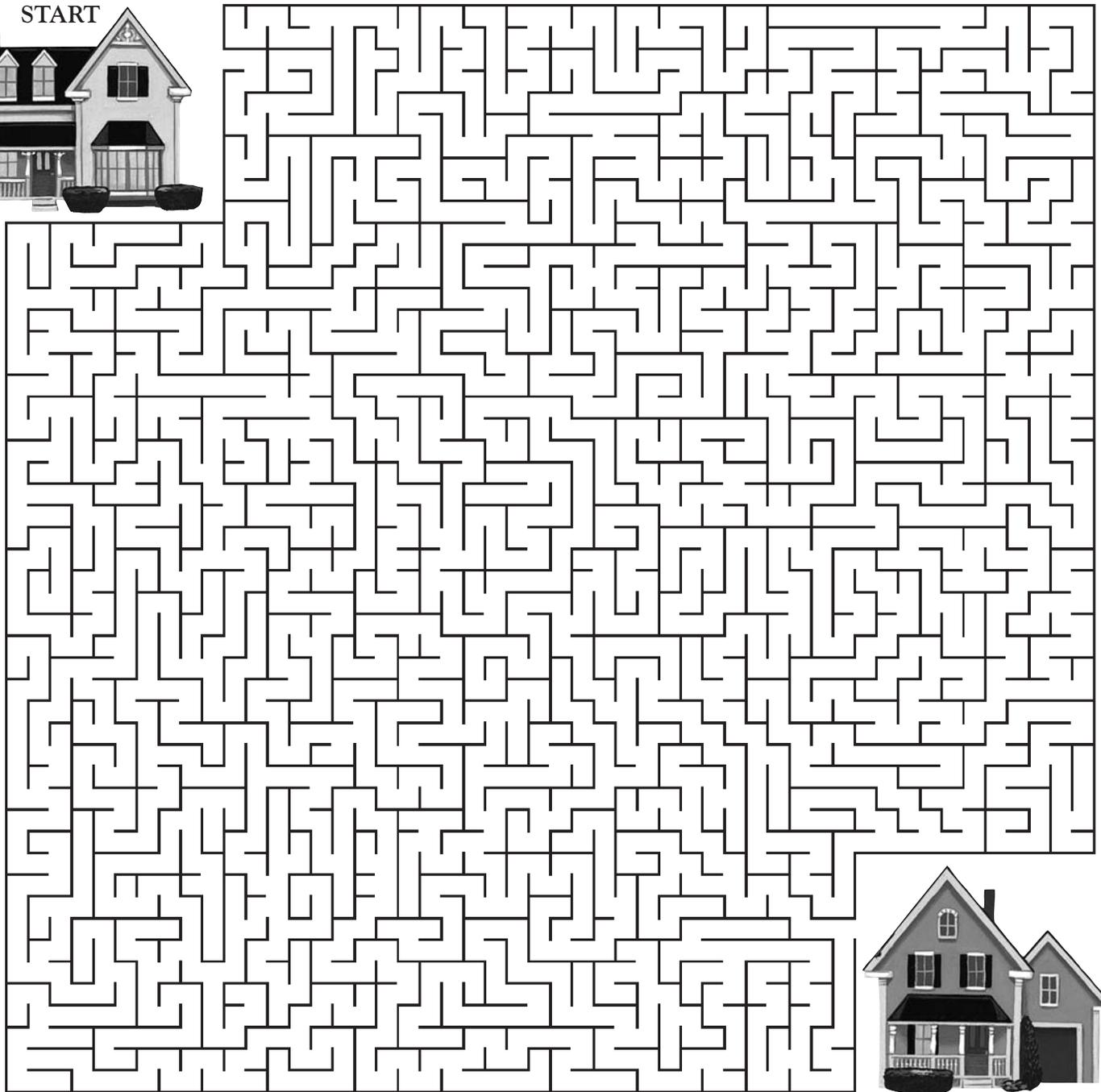
Copy the song onto chart paper and analyze its rhyme and rhythm. Underline the last line of each sentence to show the rhyming words. Discuss why the word *bright* is used in association with the sun and conversely why the word *dark* is used to refer to night. Challenge students to write their own songs to describe Mercy. Share with the rest of the class. Find or draw an outline of a pig, add lines within the body, and have the students write their song in the pig. Each pig song could be displayed around the classroom.

## A Pig by Any Other Name

Mercy gets hailed as a *porcine wonder*. Ask students if they know what *porcine* means. Explain that it is another word for *pig-like*. Have students define the following terms related to the porcine wonder: *swine*, *hog*, *boar*, *sow*, *gilt*, *piglets*. Children can use any reference material they choose (such as a dictionary or library books). Move the discussion to parts of speech, in particular nouns and verbs. *Sow* as a noun refers to a pig, but *sow* as a verb means “to plant.” Ask students to cite a similar example from *Mercy Watson to the Rescue* (such as *toast*). Challenge students to find further examples in their reading. As an extension, introduce homophones, words that sound the same but are spelled differently.

A Reproducible Activity  
*Mercy to the Rescue!*

Help Mercy find some sugar cookies. Draw a route from the Watsons' house to Eugenia and Baby Lincoln's house.



FINISH

A Reproducible Activity  
*What Happened Next?*

Can you remember everything that happened in *Mercy Watson to the Rescue*?  
Summarize the story by putting the following six sentences into proper order.



- \_\_\_\_\_ Baby Lincoln thinks a monster is at her window.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Mercy crawls into bed with the Watsons.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The fire department saves the Watsons.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Everyone has breakfast.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Eugenia Lincoln calls the fire department.