

English

Key Stage 2

Set B

Reading Booklet

This booklet contains:
All About Mice
An Amsterdam Adventure
Tales from Outer Space





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All About Mice

The thought of a mouse and its long, swishing tail makes some people want to scream. However, mice can make great, loving pets. Before deciding if a pet mouse is the right choice for you, you should get to know the facts.



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Average lifespan: 1.5 – 3 years

Diet: Omnivores (Eat both meat and plants)

Awake mainly in early evening and through the night.

Housing

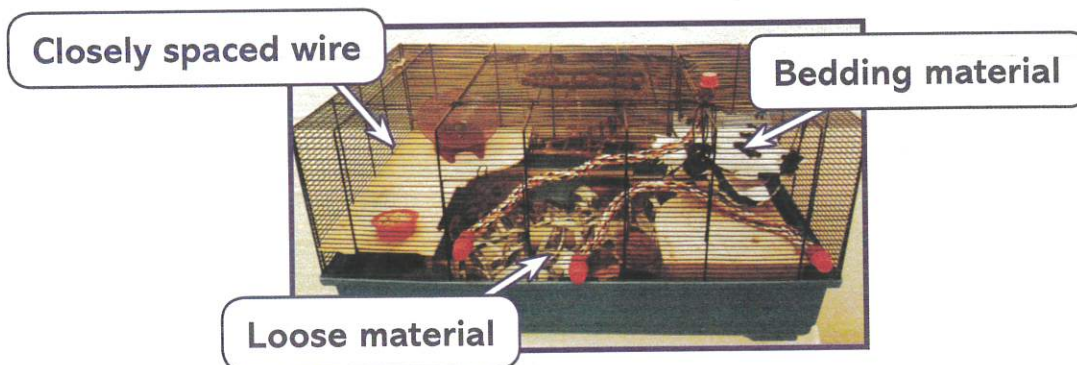
What sort of cage do mice need?

Every mouse needs somewhere to live. Its cage will be where your mouse spends most of its time, so it needs to be large and secure. It must also let in lots of air as mice have sensitive lungs and easily develop breathing problems. The best option is a wire cage with a solid base, but a glass or plastic tank with a mesh top can also be used. Make sure it is placed somewhere quiet as mice sleep through the day and are easily frightened by loud noises.

What should go inside a mouse cage?

Mice love to dig and tunnel. Their cages should be filled with a few centimetres of loose material so they can burrow to their heart's content. One of the easiest and safest options is shredded newspaper, but check that the ink is non-toxic. Avoid using wood shavings as they are usually dusty and can hurt a mouse's lungs.

You also need to provide warm and dry bedding material for your mouse to sleep in. Avoid thick bedding like cotton wool as it can get caught around your mouse's legs and may cause injury. Ripped-up kitchen roll is ideal.



Feeding

What should mice eat?

Mice should be fed a 'complete food' (a food which has all the nourishment they need) and fresh drinking water should always be available. Complete food can be bought in blocks, each of which has the same texture, flavour and nourishment. This means that you don't have to worry about your mouse only eating its favourite parts of its food. However, food made up of lots of different parts like seeds and nuts is more interesting for your mouse, as mice in the wild spend lots of time searching for different types of food.

Can I give my mouse treats?

Treats can sometimes be given, but they should make up less than a tenth of your mouse's diet. Chocolate, crisps and some other human treats can be poisonous to mice, so be careful. Mice love a range of fruit and vegetables, which can be given in small amounts daily. Remember to wash any food before you put it in the cage and remove any uneaten food the next day to stop it rotting.



	Foods mice like	Foods mice can't eat
Vegetables	carrots, peas, broccoli	garlic, onions, rhubarb
Fruits	bananas, apples, blueberries	citrus fruits, grapes, raisins, apple seeds
Other	wholemeal bread, boiled egg, mealworms, cooked brown rice	chocolate, crisps, fried food, anything processed or very high in sugar

When introducing a new type of food, start by only giving tiny amounts (smaller than the size of your mouse's ear) in case your mouse is allergic to it.

Toys and Exercise

What toys do mice like?

Mice spend lots of time in their cage, so they need a variety of different toys to keep them busy.

- Mice are prey animals and in the wild they often hide to escape from predators. This means that cardboard tubes and boxes make great toys as mice feel safe in them.
- A mouse's teeth grow constantly. Chew toys help keep them short.
- Most mice love to climb, so hanging toys are always popular.

How much exercise do mice need?

Exercise is very important for keeping your mouse fit and healthy. Running wheels are a crucial item in any cage, but they must be selected carefully. They must be solid, as wheels made from wire bars are painful and can damage your mouse's feet. Choose a wheel large enough that your mouse's back is not too arched when it is running.

Recently, spinning disc or 'flying saucer' wheels have grown in popularity as they allow mice to run in a more natural way.



A 'flying saucer' wheel.

Danger Signs

If you think anything is wrong with your pet, contact a vet **immediately**.

Danger signs to look out for include:

- Weight loss
- Noisy breathing, coughing or wheezing
- Changes in behaviour, e.g. becoming less active
- Rough or spiky fur

Choosing the right pet is really important. Hopefully this information will help you decide whether you are up to the task of looking after a mouse.

An Amsterdam Adventure

Sophie is on her way from England to Amsterdam, a city in the Netherlands, for a short holiday with her mum.

4th March

Day one of the holiday! Unfortunately, it didn't get off to the best start. When our coach pulled up at the port, I was excited as I had never travelled by ferry before. That rapidly changed once we were underway... Whenever I tried to walk anywhere I was thrown sideways as the ship violently lurched, making my stomach churn. I tried simply sitting and looking out of the window, but the constant tilting of the horizon just made me feel even worse. Thankfully, we were soon back on the coach trundling towards Amsterdam.

By the time we arrived at our hotel in central Amsterdam it was mid-afternoon, and Mum was flustered and frustrated. There had been some kind of traffic accident, so we had spent what felt like hours snaking our way slowly towards the hotel. When we eventually arrived, we decided to stroll out into the city and Mum finally began to relax.



We came across the Basilica of St. Nicholas — a magnificent Catholic church. I never imagined it would be so impressive! We were like tiny ants next to its pointed

towers. The windows were beautiful; they were made up of hundreds of vibrant shards of glass. Colours danced on the stone walls as the sunlight streamed through them. I could have gazed at them for hours.

5th March

After breakfast, we hired some bikes and headed to the Vondelpark — a sprawling expanse of parkland towards the south of the city. Lakes were scattered throughout the park, each one surrounded by spindly reeds and skeletal trees still recovering from winter. We stopped beside the largest lake to take some pictures as a family of ducks paddled their way across its rippling surface. The wind began to nip at us so we reluctantly rode off.

Meandering along a side street, we heard the din of the market long before we could see it. We turned a corner and I was taken aback. The whole square was alive: traders laughed and argued, food steamed and filled the air with mouth-watering smells and the cobbles were bustling with people. I had to constantly dive out of the paths of determined shoppers. One stall displayed numerous pieces of delicate jewellery. Mum bought me a thin silver bracelet with round turquoise and lilac gemstones nestled in it. Another sold sweetly fragrant tulips (the Netherlands' most famous flower) in an unbelievable range of colours. A third was



serving a selection of local delicacies. I tried a dish called bitterballen — crisp round shells packed with beef. The first one scalded my tongue, but after they had cooled they were delicious.

Next, we visited a museum dedicated to the painter, Vincent Van Gogh. It was crammed full of people. We spent most of our time waiting behind dawdling groups, craning our necks in a vain attempt to glimpse the art. Whenever we managed to squeeze to the front, we could feel the impatience of the people behind us. We eventually gave up and left because we wanted to fit in a canal boat tour before dusk.

The canal tour was relaxing and so much more enjoyable than the ferry! The ride was smooth and I sank back gratefully into my chair. Headphones were available for listening to facts as we cruised past points of interest, but after a while I stopped listening, preoccupied with taking pictures of the towering, narrow buildings lining the water. The boat dropped us off near a quaint restaurant where we ended the day with a quiet dinner.



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Tomorrow, it's back to the coach and back to England. I've absolutely loved travelling around Amsterdam and I desperately wish we could have stayed longer. Maybe we could visit again next year...

Tales from Outer Space

An interview with astronaut Madeleine Ryan.

Madeleine Ryan is both a scientist and an astronaut. Originally from Florida in the USA, she has spent the past two months living and working on the World Space Station (WSS), an artificial satellite orbiting the Earth. She communicated with us via videophone.



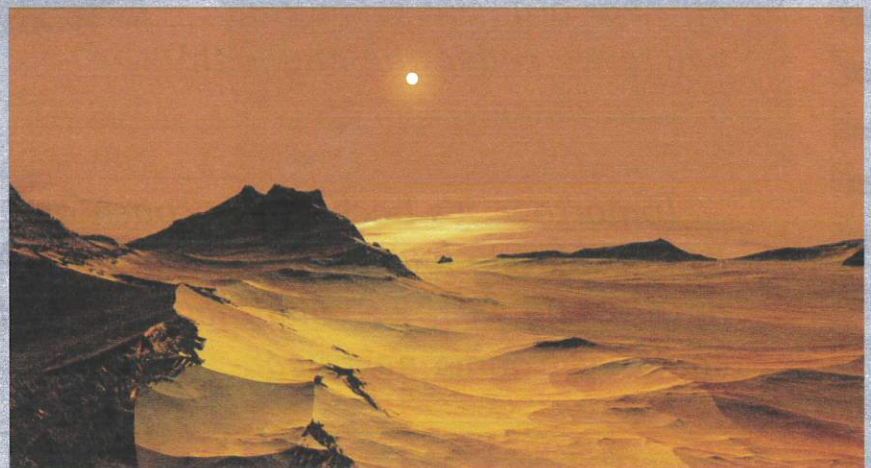
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Madeleine, how did you come to be aboard the WSS?

Astronomy was my original profession. You could say I study the world beyond Earth: the wonders of stars, galaxies, quasars and globular clusters. This fascination with space motivated me to train as an astronaut. When I tell interviewers that, although I have been a qualified astronaut for five years, this is my first time in space, they are puzzled. The majority of an astronaut's work is done on the ground: intense training and mission preparation, alongside conducting research in your area of expertise. My extensive knowledge of our red neighbour, Mars, led to my inclusion on this mission.

Why is a Mars specialist needed on the WSS?

Remote-controlled machines have recently been successfully deployed to explore Mars, so currently there's significant interest in sending a manned craft to orbit the planet — perhaps one day to even land there. As an astronomer, I study conditions on Mars and collaborate with the other scientists on board to determine whether this could be achievable. Views of Mars from the ground are distorted by the gases making up the Earth's atmosphere. Taking readings whilst in orbit greatly increases the accuracy of our results.



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Madeleine is investigating whether man could ever land on Mars.



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Is there a typical day for you on the WSS?

Life aboard the WSS is regimented — meticulously planned by our colleagues back on the ground. Our schedules dictate when we wake, eat, work and sleep. Scientists even plan our menus down to the last morsel to make sure that our bodies receive all the necessary nutrients. Exercise is an important element of our daily routine, as being in space is tough on the human body. The WSS is equipped with a treadmill, with a special harness so we don't float away when we're using it!

What influenced you to follow this career path?

The overwhelming influence came from my grandfather, a keen amateur astronomer who gifted me my first telescope when I was eight. I would spend countless hours at my bedroom window, gazing up at the stars. My mother would regularly complain to my father: "That child has always got her head in the clouds!" Growing up in Florida, the launch site of American space shuttles since 1981, also inspired me. I still get shivers down my spine when I recall hearing the tense countdown to take-off, and then the colossal roar of the rocket boosters.

What would you say to youngsters who dream of being astronauts?

I would say that you should dream about space, but don't be a daydreamer in real life — you have to work hard and be determined. Physical fitness is vital, as going into space is strenuous, and it can put considerable strain on the mind and body. But, with a bit of perseverance, you can certainly succeed. Being up here now, I can see sprawling continents and vast oceans down on Earth, and the never-ending blackness of space. A view like this is worth every painstaking second of effort!



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A shuttle launch at Cape Canaveral, Florida.