THE LION AND THE MICE
by Rebecca Emberley and Ed Emberley

About the Book
In this interpretation of Aesop's fable, a mouse finds herself trapped by a caged lion in a city zoo. The mouse begs to be released and promises to help the lion one day, and the lion helps her. Later that night, the mouse returns with mouse friends and together they unlock the lion's cage and prove that "little mice can be big friends."

Suggested Classroom Activities

Language Arts
Compare and contrast—The Emberleys’ version of this well-known Aesop’s fable, “The Lion and the Mouse,” takes a somewhat different twist on the traditional story: the lion seems to be already trapped in a cage—possibly in a zoo—and it takes more than one mouse to free him with the help of a ladder and a key. Listed below in “Further Reading” are several other excellent picture book versions of the same fable, which students can use to compare and contrast some of the major elements. In the “Online Resources” section below are links to even more versions of this fable available in school or public libraries.

Morals—Various picture books present many versions of the moral. Here are a few: “Kindness is more important than strength”; “No act of mercy is ever wasted”; “Friends come in all sizes and shapes”; “A good deed should be returned.” Students can discuss these morals to determine whether they all mean the same thing or how they are slightly different from one another. In reading other versions they may find additional statements of the moral of the story.

Writing original fables—Here are some morals from other Aesop’s fables. Students can write their own fables using these morals. Remind them that fables are short, usually have animal characters, and contain one or two incidents leading to the moral.

• “Appearances often are deceiving.”—“The Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing”
• “Familiarity breeds contempt.”—“The Fox and the Lion”
• “Slow and steady wins the race.”—“The Hare and the Tortoise”
• “One person’s meat is another’s poison.”—“The Ass and the Grasshopper”
• “Things are not always what they seem.”—“The Bee-Keeper and the Bees”
• “Never trust a flatterer.”—“The Fox and the Crow”
• “Beware the wolf in sheep’s clothing.”—“The Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing”
• “Little friends may become great friends.”—“The Lion and the Mouse”

Art
The Emberleys provide brightly colored, somewhat abstract illustrations. Students can closely observe the illustrations in the other books and compare them with those of the Emberleys. They can then decide which ones they prefer and why. Some things to notice include: Do the animals wear clothes? What do their houses look like? Do they walk on two feet or are they depicted more like “real” animals? What is the size of the illustration: a whole page, part of the page, or just a small segment of the page? Are the colors realistic or fanciful?

Art/Dramatic representation—Students can create drawings of the lion and the mice and then glue them to tongue depressors to make puppets. They can act out the story using their puppets and create additional dialogue if they wish.
Research
Students may be interested in obtaining more information about Aesop, the supposed creator of hundreds of fables that continue to be a part of our literature. They can use encyclopedias, fable collections, and other print or online resources to read various accounts of Aesop, his world, and his creation of these timeless stories. (See “Online Resources” below.)

Further Reading
Carle, Eric, Aesop’s Fables. Scholastic, 1988. (p. 8)
Chorao, Kay, Baby’s Story Book. Dutton, 1985. (p. 62)
dePaola, Tomie, Favorite Nursery Tales. Putnam’s Sons, 1986. (p. 32)
Hoberman, Mary Ann, You Read to Me, I’ll Read to You. Little Brown, 2010. (p. 30)
Sneed, Brad, Aesop’s Fables. Dial, 2003. (unp. 8th story)

Online Resources
www.aesops-fables.org.uk/
Provides a short explanation and the history of Aesop’s fables and their construction, and includes links to eighty-two of his fables.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Lion_and_the_Mouse
Provides a detailed explanation of the history of this fable, and the “References” section below it provides links to many versions—some in poetry, some quite long—of this fable throughout history.

www.google.com/imghp
Enter “Aesop” + “The lion and the mouse” to access many, many pictures related to this fable (actually 244,000!).

Presents a four-step lesson plan that teachers can use to help students write original fables.

Classroom activities prepared by Sandy Schuckett, school library consultant.

About the Authors/Illustrators
Rebecca Emberley has written and illustrated more than thirty books for children. She lives in Maine. Visit her online at www.rebeccaemberley.com.

Ed Emberley, Rebecca’s father, has created more than eighty books for children, including Drummer Hoff, which won the Caldecott Medal. He lives in Massachusetts. For more about Ed and his books, go to www.edemberley.com.

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A Lion lay asleep in the forest, his great head resting on his paws. A timid little Mouse came upon him unexpectedly, and in her fright and haste to get away, ran across the Lion's nose. Roused from his nap, the Lion laid his huge paw angrily on the tiny creature to kill her. "Spare me!" begged the poor Mouse. "Please let me go and some day I will surely repay you." The Lion was much amused to think that a Mouse could ever help him. But he was generous and finally let the Mouse go. Some days later, while stalking his prey in the forest, the Lion was caught in the toils. The Lion and the Mouse is one of Aesop's Fables, numbered 150 in the Perry Index. There are also Eastern variants of the story, all of which demonstrate mutual dependence regardless of size or status. In the Renaissance the fable was provided with a sequel condemning social ambition. In the oldest versions, a lion threatens a mouse that wakes him from sleep. The mouse begs forgiveness and makes the point that such unworthy prey would bring the lion no honour. The lion then agrees and sets the mouse.