

Alexander and the Wind-Up Mouse

BY LEO LIONNI

*Time-Saving
Tools
for Reading
Success*

* Book Summary and Author Information

* Vocabulary Builders

* Comprehension/Discussion Questions

* Graphic Organizers and Writing Activities

* Effective Management Ideas



SCHOLASTIC

BOOK GUIDES

Alexander and the Wind-Up Mouse

BY LEO LIONNI

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Alexander and the Wind-Up Mouse

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Overview Chart

Comprehension Skills and Strategies

Analyzing Cause and Effect
Comparing and Contrasting
Drawing Conclusions
Interpreting Character Actions
Making Judgments
Stating Personal Reactions

Literary Concepts

Characterization
Fantasy
Mood
Plot
Problem/Solution
Setting

Management System

Alexander and the Wind-Up Mouse and the accompanying guide may be used in the following manner.

Whole Class: Have the whole class read the book together. The class then responds to the literature through discussions and activities. For this system, each child has a copy of the book.

Small Group: Divide the class into reading groups. The groups can be set up by interest level, topic, or ability. (Remember to have some fluent readers in each group, to share their reading with less-fluent readers.) Each group responds to the literature through discussions and activities. For this system, each child in the group has a copy of the book.

Read Aloud: Read the book aloud to the whole class or small group. This will help less-fluent readers and allow children to hear the language and appreciate the author's technique. For this system, only the person reading aloud has a copy of the book.

Story Overview

As the story opens, we meet Alexander, a little house mouse. In his efforts to gather just a few crumbs, he is met with screams and brooms—rough treatment, he thinks, for a harmless mouse with modest needs.

One day, Alexander hears a squeak in the bedroom of Annie, the little girl in the house. It's the squeak of another mouse, a mechanical mouse with rollers for legs, and a key on its back. This new mouse is named Willy, and is Annie's favorite toy. Willy sleeps on a soft pillow on Annie's bed and is loved by everyone.

Alexander and Willy become friends. When Alexander is alone, though, he is envious and longs for the love and affection Willy experiences. One day, Willy tells Alexander about a magic lizard who could change Alexander into a wind-up mouse. Alexander seeks out the lizard and makes his request. The lizard informs him that he must find and bring a purple pebble on the night of a full moon.

After days of searching, a tired and hungry Alexander returns without a purple pebble, only to find Willy in a box of discarded toys. Almost in tears, Alexander happens to spot a purple pebble which he quickly takes to the lizard under a full moon. When the lizard asks him what he wants to be, Alexander changes his request. He asks the lizard to change Willy into a real mouse, which is exactly what happens. The friends are reunited and celebrate until dawn.

About the Genre

Fantasy

Alexander and the Wind-Up Mouse is a charming fantasy set in an imaginary world of talking animals. Like all fantasies, this story departs from our commonly accepted view of reality, in which mice don't speak. A sense of make-believe is the defining characteristic of all stories of fantasy.

Readers of fantasy are quickly aware that the rules of real life don't apply; they accept a reordered world once they are drawn into the story's magic. A fantasy is complex, made up of many details woven together in a tightly constructed story. For even though the world of fantasy departs from reality, it has its own consistent system of logic. When reading *Alexander and the Wind-Up Mouse*, children will have no difficulty accepting the unusual ability of a mouse to express his feelings.

Fantasy is a broad genre that includes stories as rich and varied as the writer's imagination. The characters in fantasies can include ordinary people interacting with imaginary creatures, people or creatures with magical powers, and animals that talk and act like humans. The setting of the stories may move from the real world to an imaginary world or may take place in an entirely fantastic place. Other elements of fantasy include: the use of magical objects, a struggle between good and evil, and a happy resolution to problems.

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About the Author/Illustrator

Leo Lionni was born May 5, 1910, in Amsterdam, Holland. He came to the United States in 1939. Lionni attended schools in Holland, Belgium, the United States, Italy and Switzerland.

Lionni's successful career has included many one-man shows of his painting and sculpture in galleries, museums, and universities in the U.S. and Europe, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Lionni wrote and illustrated many books for children—including *Inch by Inch*, *Swimmy*, and *Frederick*, all Caldecott Award finalists.

"When I have a story in mind I am not conscious of the average age of my potential readers. I believe, in fact, that a good children's book should appeal to all people who have not completely lost their original joy and wonder in life. When I am asked the embarrassing question of what do I know about children, their psychology, and their needs, I must confess my total ignorance. I know no more about children than the average parent or grandparent. I like to watch them, and when they are exceptionally sweet I like to hold them on my knee. But often I have not much patience for them. This is childish of me, perhaps, since children have very little patience with other children. The fact is that I really don't make books for children at all. I make them for that part of us, of myself and of my friends, which has never changed, which is still a child."

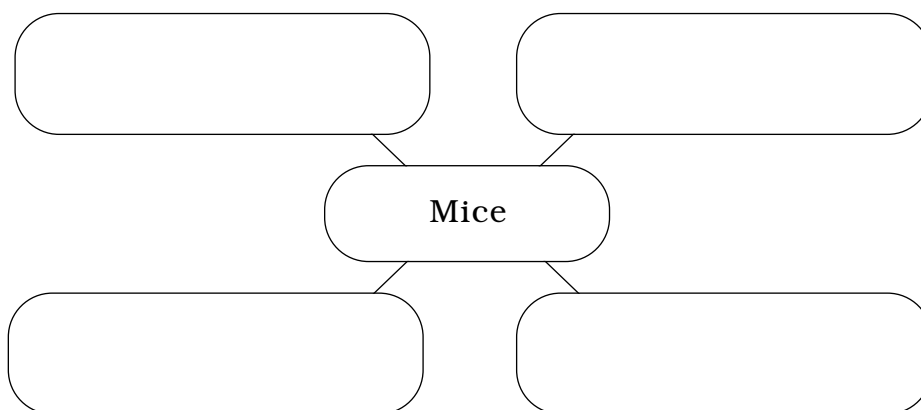
Alexander and the Wind-Up Mouse

Lesson 1

Before Reading

Children will bring to this story a knowledge of mice as familiar little creatures, as well as a love for the magic of fantasy.

As a warm-up activity, ask students to recite “Hickory Dickory Dock” with you. Write the words on the board for students who don’t know them. Then, using the diagram below, ask students what they know about mice. Possible answers include: *run fast; have long, thin tails; have gray or white fur; and make squeaking noises*. You might wish to expand this activity by asking, “Why do we like stories about mice?”



Tell students that the story they will read is about a friendship between a real mouse and a toy mouse, and that magic plays a part in the story.

Ask students how a real mouse is different from a toy mouse. Record their responses on a chart like the one below:

Real Mouse	Toy Mouse

Possible answers include: *Real Mouse—soft body, runs by itself; Toy Mouse—hard body, has to be wound up.*

Distribute copies of the book, and call attention to the cover illustration. Tell students that the title of the book is *Alexander and the Wind-Up Mouse*. Ask them to identify Alexander and the wind-up mouse in the illustration.

Ask students how the two mice are different and what they think the mice will do in the story. You may wish to model the process of making predictions about the story from the illustration. You may begin by saying, “When I look at the picture I see two mice. One looks like a toy mouse. I wonder if the other mouse is real or a toy. I wonder what these mice will do.” You may also wish to point out the picture of the Caldecott Honor Book Medal on the cover and explain that this award is given to outstanding picture books.

Alexander and the Wind-Up Mouse

Lesson 2

Read Aloud

In this lesson, read the story aloud to students. As you read, you may wish to have students follow along in their books, looking at the illustrations. Or you may wish to have them listen as you read, showing them an illustration in your book from time to time.

Note: The following suggestions are for setting a purpose for reading, understanding characterization, and understanding how the setting affects the plot. You may use them at your discretion before or during the reading, or return to the suggestions when rereading the story in Lesson 3.

Before beginning to read, ask students to look at the illustration that shows Alexander running from the falling cups and saucers. Tell them to study the picture carefully. Ask:

- How do you think Alexander feels?
- Where do you think Alexander is running?
- What do you think his problem in the house might be?

After reading the third page of text, on which Alexander meets the wind-up mouse, stop and ask:

- What do you think will happen next?
- What clues do you have from what happened before in the story?
- What clues do you have from looking at the book's cover?

After reading the tenth page of text, on which Alexander finds a little purple pebble, stop and ask:

- What do you think will happen to Willy the next day?
- What do you think Alexander will do next? Do you think Alexander will ask the lizard to change him to a wind-up mouse? Why do you think so?

When you have finished reading the book, ask students to compare the predictions they made before and during the reading with what actually happened. Ask:

- How did you make your guesses, or predictions, about what was going to happen in the story?
- Which of your guesses were correct? Which were not?
- Did you change any of your predictions as you listened to the story? Which predictions did you change?

If you wish, conclude the lesson by having students play a game of shared responses with a partner: One student should say to the other, “My name is Alexander, and I’m a house mouse. Let me tell you what has happened in my life, and how I feel about it.” The listening student would then be Willy and follow the modeled procedure. This exercise is appropriate for less-able students, or second language students heterogeneously grouped.

Alexander and the Wind-Up Mouse

Lesson 3

During Reading

Tell students that they will be rereading the story by themselves. Remind them that each time they read a story, they can learn something new. Ask students to read the words and look at the illustrations carefully to find something that they hadn't noticed before.

Choose the approach that works best for your class.

- Each student reads silently and independently.
- Individual students read the pages aloud while the rest of the class follows in their books.
- Partners share reading the book to each other.

Literary Concepts

Discuss setting; Tell students that the setting of a story means when and where the story takes place. Explain that without an understanding of the story's setting (time and place), much of the story's meaning may be lost.

Ask the following questions, and record the students' responses:

- Where does the story take place?
- What is the place like?
- Could there really be a place like this?
- When does the story take place? (past, present, future)
- Which part of the story describes the setting?

Discuss mood: Tell students that the mood of a story is the feeling it creates in the reader.

Ask students to respond to the following questions in a class discussion:

- How did you feel while reading the book? What made you feel that way?
- What was the saddest and what was the happiest thing that happened?
- What was the most unusual thing that happened?
- What do you remember most about the story?
- Does the mood of the story change? How?

Discuss characterization: Tell students that characterization is the way the author shows the personality of the characters in the story. Explain that authors use four ways to help readers know a character:

- what the character says
- what the character does
- what the character thinks
- what others say about the character

Ask students: “What do we know about Alexander? About Willy?” Put the following chart on the board to help students define these characters. Ask students to use these scales to chart what they think about the characteristics of Alexander and Willy.

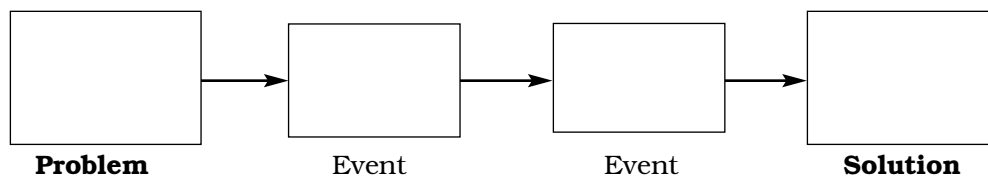
Alexander

Never		Friendly		Always
Never		Noisy		Always
Never		Troublemaker		Always
Never		Brave		Always
Never		Has Magical Powers		Always
Never		Lonely and Sad		Always

Willy

Never		Friendly		Always
Never		Noisy		Always
Never		Troublemaker		Always
Never		Brave		Always
Never		Has Magical Powers		Always
Never		Lonely and Sad		Always

Discuss plot and problem/solution: Tell students that the plot is everything that happens in the story. Explain that the events in the story lead to solving the problem that Alexander and Willy have about staying together. Help students understand that events and problems make the story move along and lead to a solution at the end. Create a chart like the one below on the board to encourage discussion about some events in the story, the problem that Alexander and Willy had, and the solution.



Conclude this part of the lesson by asking students to clearly identify the problem in the story and its solution.

Problem:

Solution:

Points to Ponder

1. What are some of the differences between being a real mouse and a toy mouse? *(Comparing and Contrasting?)*
2. Do you agree that Willy's life as a wind-up mouse was as wonderful as Alexander thought it was? *(Stating Personal Reactions)*
3. Did Alexander believe in magic? How do you know? Why do you think he worked so hard to find the purple pebble? *(Interpreting Character Actions)*
4. How do you think Alexander felt when he learned that Willy would be thrown out with the trash the day after the birthday party? *(Making Judgments)*
5. How would the story have changed if Alexander had found the pebble earlier, and been changed into a wind-up mouse? *(Analyzing Cause and Effect)*

Alexander and the Wind-Up Mouse

Lesson 4

After Reading

Choose from the following activities:

1. Pretend you are Alexander. Keep a "Picture Diary" of the events in your life, starting with your discovery of Willy, the wind-up mouse. Using simple pictures, show the events in your life, right up to the moment Willy shares the mouse hole.
2. Make a poster with the title "Mice Have Rights." Use words and pictures to show mice live on tiny crumbs that fall to the floor, and they take up very little space. Show how the life of a mouse can be hard because people scream at them and chase them with brooms.
3. Put together a collection of mice poetry and songs. Ask your teacher and librarian to help. Share these poems and songs with the class, and write one of your own.
4. With a partner, act out the scene where Alexander finds Willy in the box of toys to be thrown out. Be sure to show how Alexander and Willy feel as they are faced with this sad situation.

Sign-up Sheet

Name	Activity Number	Date Started	Date Completed

Alexander and the Wind-Up Mouse

A Model for Writing

The Prewriting Stage

The purpose of prewriting is to use strategies and plans that enable students to write. This stage is critical in helping them get their ideas out in the open by talking, brainstorming, drawing, diagramming, or free-writing.

Many writers turn to literature for ideas and inspiration. Explain to your students that they can use *Alexander and the Wind-Up Mouse* as a source of ideas about how to write a story with magic in it.

- Form small groups for peer conferencing. Help children think about the characters, events, and themes in the story.
- Encourage students to talk freely about the book *Alexander and the Wind-Up Mouse* and about the author, Leo Lionni. Ask: "Did Alexander and Willy talk the way you imagine mice would talk? Does this remind you of any other stories you have read? Tell how the stories are the same or how they are different."
- In a fantasy, parts of the plot seem fantastic and magical. Ask: "How did Leo Lionni use magic to make the story interesting and fun?"
- Let students free-write for five to ten minutes without interference, so they can get ideas on paper. Tell them to use any form—a list, diagram, summary, narrative, or picture. Remind them that only ideas are important now; spelling, grammar, and handwriting are not.
- Set aside time for sharing ideas in groups or as a whole class.

The Drafting Stage

Drafting involves getting your ideas down on paper, focusing on content, and considering your audience and purpose. The emphasis should be on putting ideas together without concern for the conventions of spelling or usage.

Model the drafting process by showing students how to choose a topic. List two or three choices of your own, such as “Why Mice Are My Favorite Animals,” or “Alexander and Willy Start a Wind-Up-Toy Business,” etc. Encourage students to record and share their ideas for topics with a partner or small group in order to gather and clarify their thoughts.

Refer back to strategies used by Leo Lionni to keep the story moving, such as dialogue, description, the use of magical events or the development of a friendship between Willy and Alexander.

To help students start their stories, ask them to think about the following questions:

- Who tells the story? (point of view)
- Where and when does your story take place? (setting)
- What magical things happen in the story? (fantasy)







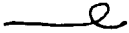




Everyone writes, including the teacher. Let students share their writing. You may want to start with your own. Sharing can be a whole-class activity or a small-group, peer-feedback time. Encourage students to offer positive suggestions that might help during the revising stage.

The Revising Stage

Revising, or taking a second look at what has been written, is at the heart of writing. Students learn strategies and techniques best when they are demonstrated through their own writing. Some strategies (Calkins, 1986; Zinsser, 1980; Murray, 1983) include:

- Take a long piece and make it shorter.
- Take a short piece and make it longer
- Experiment with different leads.
- Reread the draft, listening to how it sounds.
- Decide who is the audience for this piece.
- Try telling the story in a different tense.
- Make sure the piece tells events in order.
- Try telling the story from a different point of view.
- Talk with someone about your draft, then start improvements.

Show students how to “move” material from one place to another. Some useful shortcuts can be made by using the following proofreading marks:

Mark	Meaning	Example
	new paragraph	 Every day, Alexander wanted to be loved and treated well in the house.
	insert, add this	Willy and Alexander are ^{my} new friends! 
	capital letter	“Mr. <u>l</u> izard, can you help me change?” 
	delete, take out	“Willy is my name,” he said softly.
	transpose, move	Why do they ^{me} chase with a broom? 
	stet, let it stay	“Willy, just think, you’re a real mouse now .” 

Materials for revising and editing should be kept at the Writing Center: scissors, tape, stapler, marking pens, pencils, and crayons.

Allow the students time to revise their stories.

The Editing Stage

Students begin to edit when they are satisfied with the content of their pieces. During editing, students reread and correct their writing for spelling, grammar, usage, and punctuation.

Students may proofread alone or with a partner, either on paper or a word-processor screen. Some editing techniques (Calkins, 1989) include:

- Rereading through the final draft quickly to be sure it says what you want
- Checking the spelling and mechanics
- Using an editing checklist

Editing materials include: dictionary, thesaurus, spelling guides, grammar and usage charts, editor's blue pencils, and reference books.

Editing makes the most sense to students when it leads to publishing their writing.

The Publishing Stage

Students enjoy and learn from publishing and sharing their writing. Some ways tried by teachers are:

- a class magazine, newsletter, or newspaper
- hand-bound books for the library
- displays of student writing, excerpts, drafts, illustrations, books
- recordings made by students of their writing
- sending students' work to outside publications or publishers
- class anthologies

Let students help decide the audience(s) with whom they will share their work.

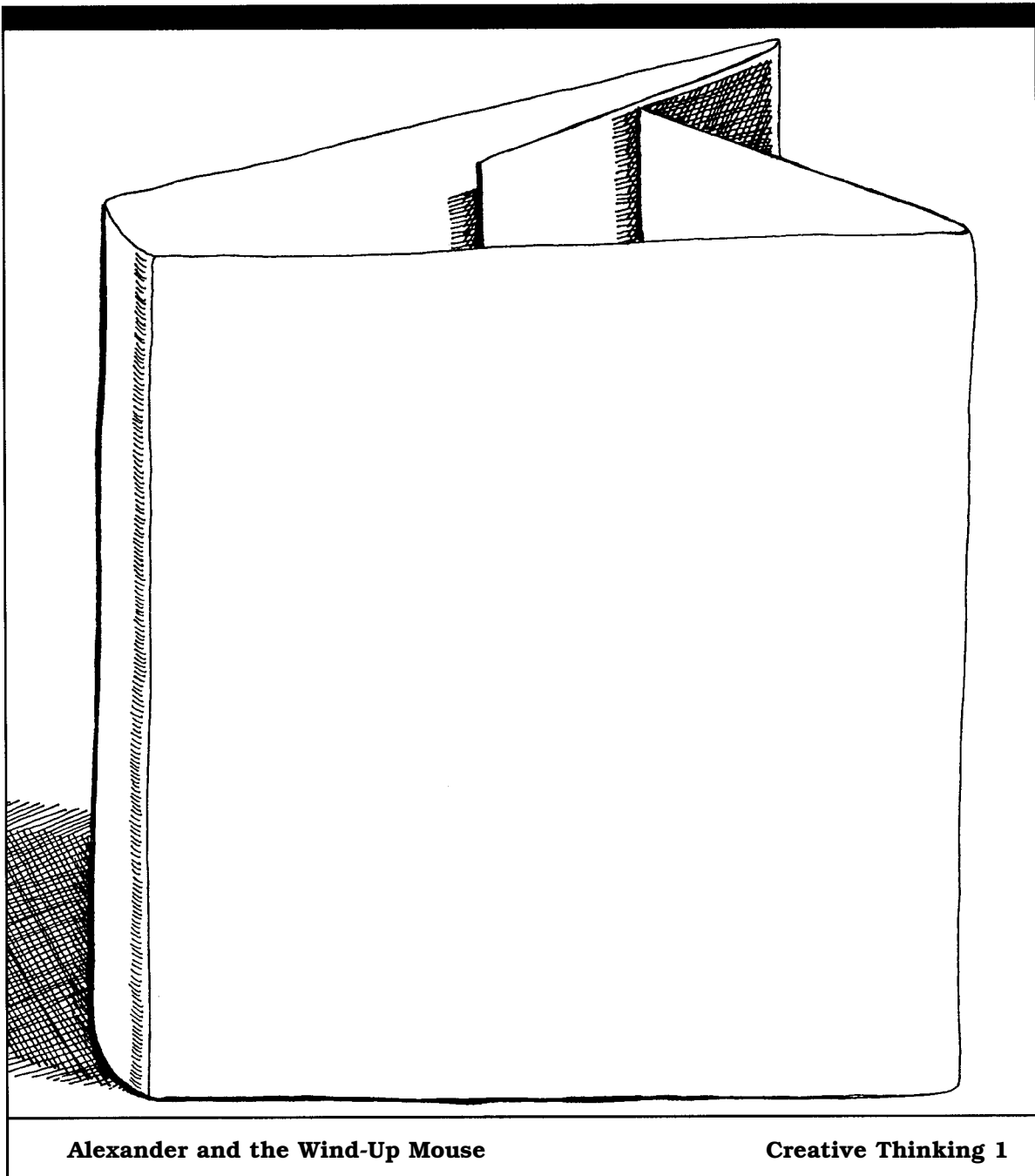
Remember, "the woods would be silent indeed if only the best birds sang," so be sure to represent the efforts of everyone, no matter how modest.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Design a Book Cover

Design another book cover for *Alexander and the Wind-Up Mouse*. Make sure that you give the reader clues about the story in your artwork. Include the name of the author, as well as the title.



Name: _____

Date: _____

Be a Playwright

For a play, write a conversation between Alexander and Willy as they sit in their mouse house. Have them discuss what would have happened if the toys would have been given to another child instead of being thrown out.

Alexander:	Willy:
Alexander:	Willy:
Alexander:	Willy:
Alexander:	Willy:

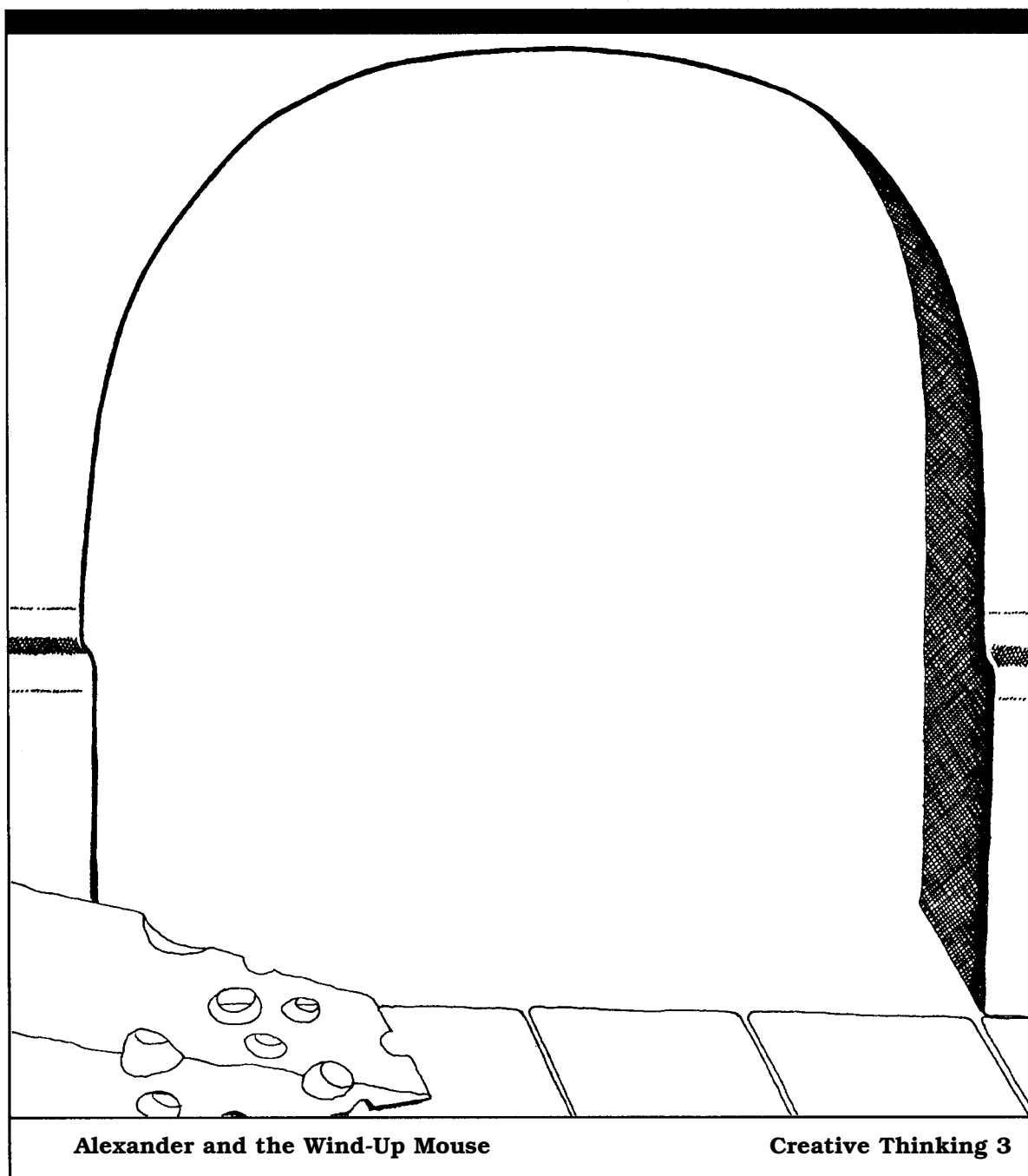
Alexander and the Wind-Up Mouse **Creative Thinking 2**

Name: _____

Date: _____

A Happy Home

The pictures in the books are collages. This kind of art has cut-out shapes that are pasted down to make a whole picture. Make your own collage of the inside of Alexander and Willy's mouse hole. Cut out colorful bits of paper and paste them on this page.

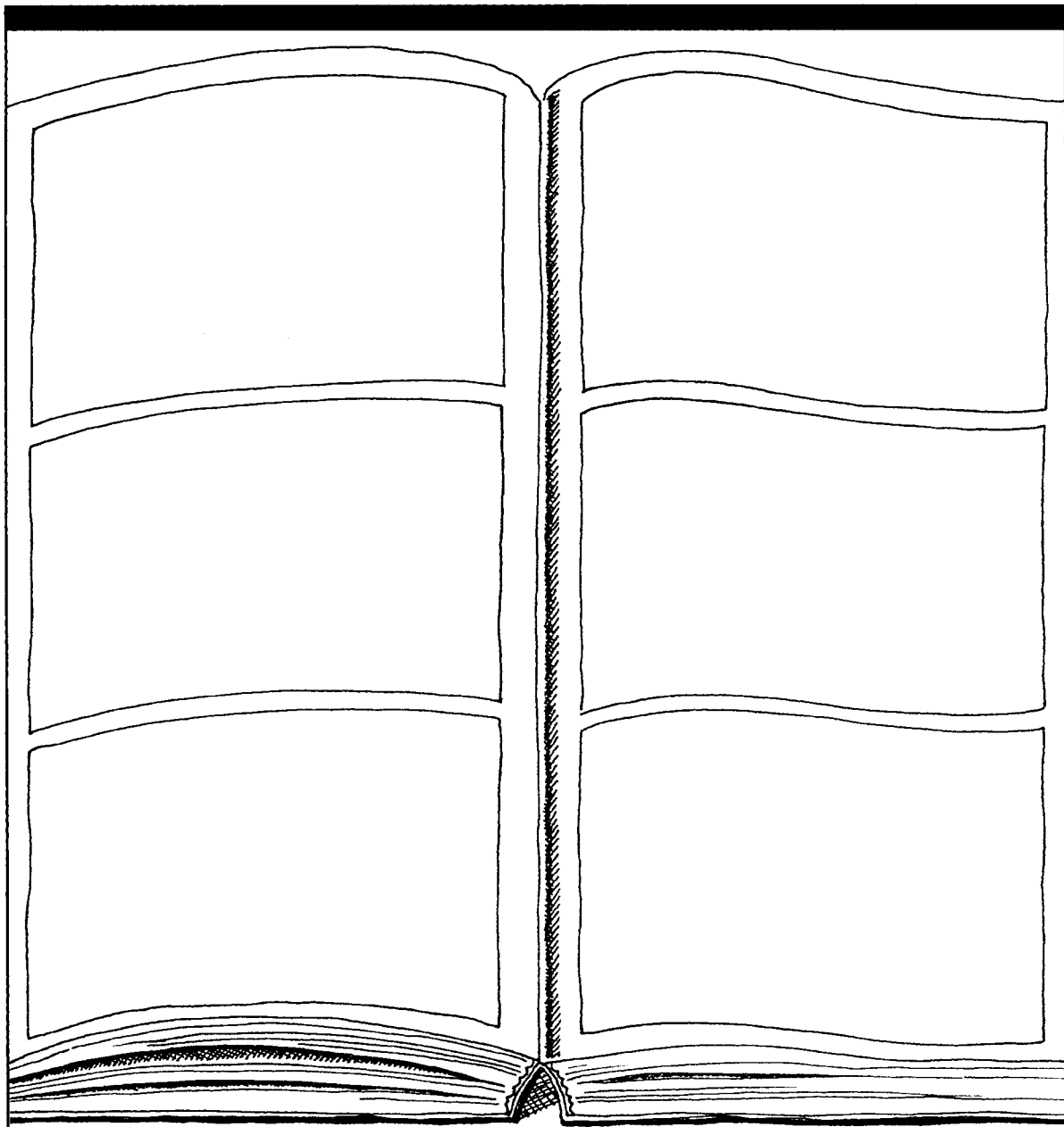


Name: _____

Date: _____

My Story Book

Think of six events in the story. In each space, draw one event showing a place and at least one character. Retell the story to your teacher, using the illustrations. Display your work.



Alexander and the Wind-Up Mouse

Creative Thinking 4

Student Book Log

Name:

Class:

Title	Author	Date Read	Personal Reaction (Comments)

Vocabulary-Building Bookmark

by Beverly Jones and Maureen Lodge

Write the title of your book and draw a picture. Cut out the bookmark. As you read your book, write new words on the lines



Name _____

Book Title _____

