

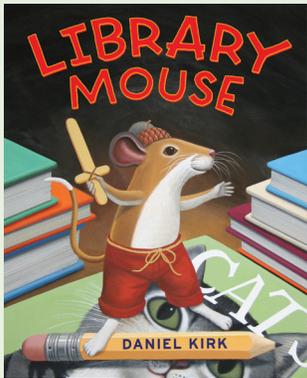
# The World of LIBRARY MOUSE

A Teaching Guide for Daniel Kirk's  
*Library Mouse Books*

## About the Author:

**Daniel Kirk** was inspired to write the *Library Mouse* books after spending countless days with his family perusing the stacks of his local library. He lives in Glen Ridge, New Jersey with his wife, three children, and two rabbits. Visit him at [www.danielkirk.com](http://www.danielkirk.com).

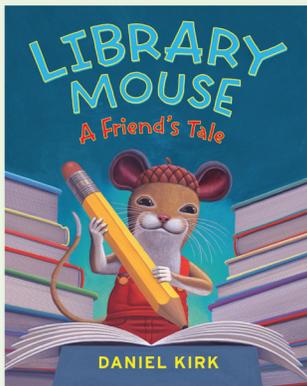
## About the Books:



### Library Mouse

Sam is a library mouse. His home is in a little hole in the wall behind the children's reference books, and he thinks that life is very good indeed. For Sam loves to read. He reads picture books and chapter books, biographies and poetry, and ghost stories and mysteries. Sam reads so much that finally one day he decides to write a book himself!

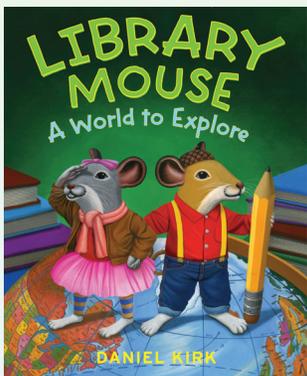
Sam shares his books with other library visitors by placing them on a bookshelf at night. But there comes a time when people want to meet this talented author. Whatever is Sam to do?



### Library Mouse: A Friend's Tale

Sam loves to write and draw, and everyone loves the little books he leaves on the shelves of the library for them to find. But Sam is also very shy around people, and no one at the library has ever met him—until Tom.

When the library's Writers and Illustrators Club is given an assignment to work in partners, Tom finds that he is the odd kid out. Then he discovers Sam's identity and hopes they can work together on a project. But what will happen if everyone discovers Sam is a mouse? Can Tom keep the secret?



### Library Mouse: A World to Explore

In the library one evening, Sam meets fellow mouse Sarah, a wild-eyed explorer who loves adventure! Sarah would rather scurry to the tops of the tallest library shelves and roam the darkest corners of the building than read about the places she wants to visit. Unlike Sarah, Sam never climbs up high—he's too afraid! He'd rather research subjects and write about them.

When Sam reveals to Sarah the joy and adventure one can have by reading books, she decides to help him in turn. Can Sarah help Sam overcome his fear of heights? Together this duo shows that, with teamwork and determination, anything is possible.

# A Conversation with Daniel Kirk

## Q: What inspired you to write *Library Mouse*?

Writing “Library Mouse” was a long and winding road. The story started as an “ABC in the Library” book until I discovered that there were already several such alphabet books in print. Around that time I met a school librarian who was plagued with a naughty wild mouse, causing endless mousey mischief in her stacks. This gave me the idea of putting a mouse in my story, and Sam’s personality sort of fell into place with the plot. The library is a perfect home for a mouse who loves to read and write!

## Q: When you are creating a story, what comes first—the words or the pictures?

I think developing characters is a good way to start working on a story, so often I’ll make many drawings before I begin writing. This helps me figure out what my characters will look like, and gives me a glimpse into their personalities. But I don’t do actual illustrations for a book until the story is done and the text is written in stone!

## Q: Sam’s character is smart, sensitive, curious, and kind, yet he could also be described as timid because of his anxiety of new places and experiences. What made you decide to develop his personality in this manner?

Here’s a secret—Sam is really me. He fantasizes that he is bold and adventurous, but in reality he’s kind of shy and reclusive, and most of his adventures take place in his imagination, where it’s safe from real danger. I’m pretty much like that, myself.

## Q: In what ways do you think young readers benefit from meeting a character like Sam?

Sam is curious, imaginative, good-hearted, and he sticks at things—he’ll keep trying until he gets something right. The fact that he isn’t perfect, that he’s shy and finds certain things about the world scary and daunting, appeals to kids because they understand his weakness and empathize with him. We all have things we’re afraid of, and we all have to keep exposing ourselves to challenges to make ourselves grow.



## Q: Which is more satisfying for you—writing or drawing?

When I spend a lot of time writing, it’s always refreshing and fun to get back to drawing pictures. But when I am swamped with trying to meet a deadline for my illustrations, I long to go back to the world of words. There I can describe a character or scene in just a few words or sentences that it might take me weeks to paint. Sometimes it’s hard juggling both of these skills, but there are many ways to tell stories, and I like exploring them all. That’s why it makes sense for me to write AND draw.

## Q: You serve as the author and illustrator of the *Library Mouse* books; how is this experience different from your other projects where you provide the illustrations in collaboration with another author’s story?

More than anything else I love being a solo creator, telling my own stories in my own way and illustrating them with appropriate pictures. I think of myself as an artist and writer working in the medium of books. Once in a while, though, I’ll be offered the chance to illustrate someone else’s story. This has the possibility of forcing me to be creative in a different way . . . I find new ways of expressing ideas, or developing characters. Sometimes I reach a whole different audience with books that I illustrate, but did not write. It’s an interesting experience. Someday it would be fun to have another illustrator tackle one of my stories. No matter what my role, it’s all an adventure in creativity and expression!

## Q: How do you use your local library when putting the books together?

Research is a big part of any book, whether you’re writing or illustrating. I use my library all the time to help me with research. In the last couple of years I’ve needed information about what mice, elephants, and hawks looks like, what the North Pole is like in the autumn, how a tow truck works, and how birds are handled in an animal shelter. I’ve researched global warming, how the Dewey decimal system operates, and studied how libraries and librarians have been described in children’s books over the last fifty years. The library is an invaluable tool for me. I’ve gone to the library to photograph a globe, to see how light looks falling on the shelves on a sunny morning and on a cloudy day. Librarians help me find things I’m looking for, and can order books for me that I might find useful. I’d be lost without my local library!

# Library Mouse

## Discussion Questions for *Library Mouse*



- 📌 As Sam explores the library and reads widely, he begins to create his own stories. Why does reading so many different types of books make this easier for him?
- 📌 Based on hints embedded in Kirk's illustrations, how does Sam feel about seeing his books being read by the children that visit the library?
- 📌 Though he is excited that his books are well loved, Sam is nervous and afraid of people finding out who and what he is. Do you agree with the way he feels?
- 📌 Consider his dilemma to being asked to attend "Meet the Author Day." Do you think creating the "Meet the Author" box (with the mirror contained inside) is the best solution to his problem? Why or why not?

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

### Learning the Library Layout: Host a Scavenger Hunt

Throughout the course of Sam's adventures, he explores the library and learns about the different sections of the children's department. To help students become more familiar with the library, create a scavenger hunt and have students work in small teams to search for answers to the questions you provide. Make sure to:

- 📌 Decide what areas of the library students need to best become familiar with ahead of time.
- 📌 Ask simple questions that offer student's specific direction for their search. An example might be to "find a biography of an American president and determine what year he was born."
- 📌 Keep the scavenger hunt fairly short (7-10 questions).
- 📌 Encourage students to work in small groups and provide prizes for completed sheets.
- 📌 Prevent crowding by rearranging the order of the questions so that groups are searching for different answers at the same time.



## What's in a Name: Discovering Biographies and Autobiographies

As Sam explores the library, he reads a variety of biographies and autobiographies that help him better understand these genres as he begins to create his first book, *Squeak! A Mouse's Life*. Using the resources in the library, have students learn more about what makes these types of nonfiction works unique. Have students create a Venn diagram charting the similarities and differences of these types of writing.



After discussing these similarities and differences, have students create original biographies. Begin by pairing students up and providing them an interview sheet so they can ask questions of their partner. After gathering necessary information, have them create a biography about their classmate. Alternatively, students can use Sam's model and write an original autobiography about themselves, creating original art and illustrations or using copies of family photos. Using the title of Sam's work as a model (*Squeak! A Mouse's Life*), have students reflect on what their story would be named or entitled.

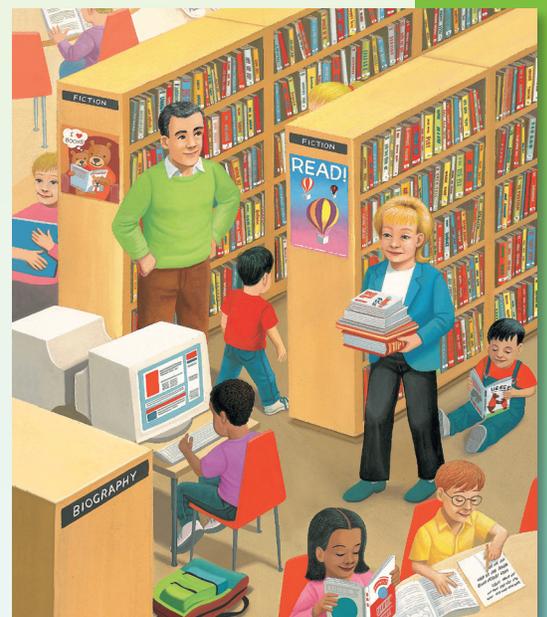
## Host a "Meet the Author" Day

After sharing *Library Mouse* with classes, have students regroup at stations where tissue box/mirror units have been placed. After allowing students time to "reflect" and consider what story they have to tell as an author, provide them with small, prepared mini-books similar to those created by Sam. Encourage students to write the kind of story they like to read or share a past personal experience. After the story has been drafted, provide the "authors" time to illustrate their work. After all the works have been created, display these books in the classroom and allow time for students to read and share each other's work. As an enrichment activity, consider hosting a Young Author's Celebration and invite other classes and families to come celebrate the work of these young authors.



## Genre Studies: Generating a Greater Understanding of Literary Categories

In *Library Mouse*, readers discover that Sam reads widely as he explores the vast variety of books within the library. Introduce the term *genre* to students and have them create a list of the many types of books Sam reads and, eventually, writes. Discuss the major components of these types of books and have students consider what makes these genres unique. Have students analyze the books they have read most recently to determine what genre category in which they fall. Is there a pattern to their reading? After allowing time for analysis and discussion, take students to the library to select a book that falls into a new genre that they haven't read recently.



# Library Mouse: A Friend's Tale



## Discussion Questions for *Library Mouse: A Friend's Tale*

- ✎ After the Writing and Illustrators group pairs up to complete their assigned activity, Tom is left without a partner. How do you think this makes him feel? Have you ever been in a similar situation? What was that experience like for you?
- ✎ Once Tom discovers Sam's work and his tracks, his curiosity leads him on a quest to learn more about Sam's identity. Do you think Tom is making the right choice in trying to discover who Sam really is? Have you ever been so curious about something that you searched widely for answers?
- ✎ Tom fears that if others learn Sam's real identity, he might be at risk. Do you agree? Why or why not?
- ✎ Predict what will happen to Sam and Tom after the story ends.

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

### Dynamic Duos: Researching Author/Illustrator Teams

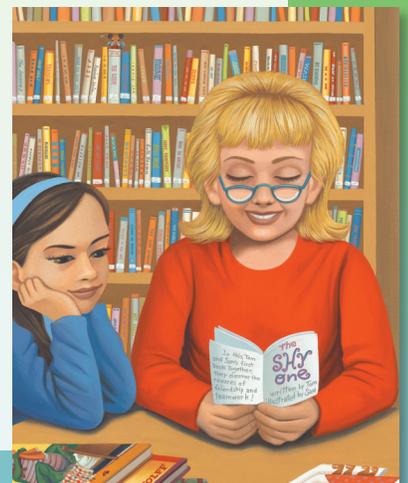
Author Daniel Kirk takes special care in his artwork to highlight and acknowledge collaborations of many author/illustrator pairs. After reading ***Library Mouse: A Friend's Tale*** with students, have them closely examine Kirk's illustrations. What other books are featured in his artwork? Place students in pairs or small groups and have them select a highlighted pair. Take students to the library to learn more about their selected author/illustrator team. Have them answer the following questions:

- ✎ Who is the author and illustrator?
- ✎ How many times have they collaborated on books?
- ✎ What are some of the titles of their work?
- ✎ Does the pair live close by each other?
- ✎ Does either partner work with other authors/illustrators?

### Perfect Pals: Create a Friendship Handbook

In ***Library Mouse: A Friend's Tale*** readers witness Tom taking special care to win Sam's trust. Reread the story and answer the following: How does Tom feel when he learns the identity of Sam? What are some of the things Tom does to prove his friendship and protect Sam? In what ways are they ideal friends for each other?

After discussing, ask students to consider their own actions and the ways they can prove they are a true friend. Have each student create a Friendship Handbook detailing and listing the qualities and behaviors of good friends.



# Library Mouse: A World to Explore

## Discussion Questions for *Library Mouse: A World to Explore*

- 📌 In *Library Mouse: A World to Explore*, Sam spends an evening looking at the class projects displayed in the library which highlight what the children have learned about places all over the world. If you could select a place or historical landmark to explore, what would it be? What makes you interested in learning more about this topic?
- 📌 Sam is very surprised to learn that Sarah also lives in the library. After their initial meeting, they quickly discover that they are both explorers, but the manner in which they conduct their explorations is quite different. What are the benefits to each of their styles? In what ways are Sarah and Sam alike? How are they different? Thinking about yourself, who do you think you are more alike? Why?
- 📌 Describe Sarah. In what ways is she a good influence on Sam? Do you have a friend who pushes you to try new things? What are some of the benefits of having a friend who is bold and fearless? What are some of the drawbacks?
- 📌 Looking at the illustrations, which one is your favorite? What is it about the picture that appeals most to you?

## Write All About It!: Journaling Activity

After discussing the possibility of climbing into the display plane suspended over the library so that they can have a panoramic view of the facility, Sam's hesitation and fear is obvious. Sarah tells Sam, "Tonight we're going to get into that airplane, and we're going to see the world!" After sharing this passage with students, take a few minutes to allow them to study the illustrations. Next, make a list of the emotions that are evident based on the images of the characters. After discussion, share a personal experience where fear temporarily handicapped you. After offering your story (and how you overcame your apprehensions), ask students to reflect on a time where, like Sam, they were afraid to try something new (examples could include starting school, sleeping without a night-light, trying out for a sport, etc.). Have them consider this fearful experience and what made them afraid, and finally, what happened when they chose to try to overcome their fear. Allow students a few minutes to reflect before journaling and sharing their story. To enrich this activity, have students draw illustrations of the experience after completing their story.



## Introducing the Basics of Research: Guiding Students as They Learn the Research Process

Like the student projects referenced in *Library Mouse: A World to Explore*, students love learning and discovering new topics of interest while exploring the wide variety of informational books in the library. For young children, a basic introduction of research is helpful. Begin by working with your librarian to design and teach basic research lessons. Lessons may include (but are not limited to) an introduction to the Dewey decimal system, the Big6 research model, or I-Search research framework. After selecting the research technique best suited for the students, allow them to self-select a topic of which they want to learn more, and follow these steps outlined in the research model, making sure to offer a wide variety of choices in regard to the creation of a final product.



This guide was created by **Rose Brock**, a school librarian and doctoral candidate at Texas Woman's University, specializing in children's and young adult literature.

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