

44 Tiny Secrets

Teaching Guide

ABOUT THESE RESOURCES

This pack contains BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS about the whole book, and the following resources for each chapter:

- DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
- COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS – suitable for guided reading sessions or for written work
- WRITING EXERCISES

BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

- Did you like everyone in the Bow-Linnet family? Why/why not?
- Did you guess the family's secrets? Or did you have other ideas of your own about what the truth might be?
- Betsy's mother says, "Don't waste time on something you don't love." Do you agree with this?
- At some points in the book Betsy gets very nervous and has to conquer her nerves. Have you ever felt nervous? What did you do about it?
- What tricks would you teach the forty-four tiny mice?



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Chapter 1: A Terrible Disappointment

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- We haven't met Betsy's parents yet. What do you think they will be like?
- Do you think Betsy's plan to impress her parents with her piano playing is a good idea? Why/why not?

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Betsy's house is full of 'rare and exotic' plants called ferns. What does the word 'exotic' mean? (pg. 1)
- In this chapter we are introduced to Betsy. What kind of character do you think she is and why? Find two examples from the text that tell you about Betsy's personality
- At the end of the chapter, Betsy's parents arrive home. What do you think might happen next? Why do you think this?
- What is Betsy's last name?
- Summarise this chapter in your own words

WRITING EXERCISE

- At the end of this chapter, Betsy's parents have just arrived home. What do you think they might be like? Use your own imagination to write a description of them both.



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Chapter 2: A Terrible Mess

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Betsy is very nervous before she plays. Have you ever felt nervous like this?
- What do you think of Betsy's parents, now you have met them?

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

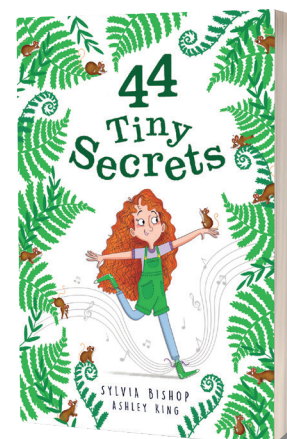
- The author says that the house has to be 'spruced up' before the party. What does the phrase 'spruced up' mean?
- In this chapter we meet Betsy's parents properly for the first time. What kind of character do you think Bella Bow-Linnet is? Why do you think this?
- At the end of the chapter, Betsy is just about to play the piece of music she has been practising. Do you think her performance will go well? Why do you think this?
- The author describes Betsy's parents from above first, and then describes how they look from the ground. Why do you think the author has chosen to do this?
- Betsy's father gives her a flower for her hair to wear to the party. What kind of flower is it? (page 30)

WRITING EXERCISE

In this chapter, we learn what Betsy's house looks like from her favourite spot, up by the bannisters. What can you see from your favourite spot in your house? Write a description. (You can write about an imaginary house if you prefer.)

You could begin:

The best place in the house to sit was... From here, YOUR NAME could see...



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Chapter 3: A Terrible Tragedy

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- This is a difficult chapter for Betsy. What advice would you give her here?
- What do you think the letter might be about?

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- This chapter is called 'A Terrible Tragedy'. What does the word 'tragedy' mean?
- How do you think Betsy feels after her performance? Find two examples from the text that show you why she feels this way.
- What is the name of the newspaper that writes about Betsy's performance?
- This chapter ends with Betsy receiving a mysterious envelope but waits until the next chapter to reveal who it is from. Why do you think the author keeps the reader waiting here?
- What do you think the letter might be about? Why do you think this?
- Summarise everything that happens in this chapter after the end of the party.

WRITING EXERCISE

- Write a diary entry from Betsy's point of view about the events of this chapter.



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Chapter 4: Gloria Sprightly

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Would you have said yes or no to Gloria's offer?
- What do you think her 'unusual' method might be?

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- When Betsy finds the envelope, she thinks "it felt wrong to tear it open in the hall" (page 58.) Why do you think Betsy thinks this?
- The chapter includes the entire letter that Betsy receives, allowing the reader to read the exact wording. Why do you think the author has chosen to include a copy of the whole letter?
- What is the name of the person who wrote the letter to Betsy?
- After delivering her reply to the letter, Betsy rushes back home and pretends to her parents that she has been there the whole time. She does this by looking at the nearest book with 'rapt attention'. What does the word 'rapt' mean?
- Summarise everything that happens in this chapter in 3 – 5 sentences.
- Betsy receives another letter from the same person, telling her to expect a parcel the next morning. The chapter ends with Betsy guessing, incorrectly, what will be in the package. What do you think might be in it? Why?

WRITING EXERCISE

- Write your own reply to Gloria Sprightly's letter. You can decide whether to say yes or no to her! And you might want to ask some questions...



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Chapter 5: The Unusual Method

DISCUSSION QUESTION

- Do you think the mice are going to help Betsy, or get her into more trouble? What do you think might happen?

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- The author notes that Betsy's grandad was 'happily pruning an obviously dead plant' when her package arrived. What does the word 'pruning' mean?
- What does Betsy find in her package?
- The author says Betsy read one part of the letter six times. Why do you think Betsy read this section so many times?
- The letter that comes with the package explains in detail how it will help Betsy with the piano. Summarise in a few sentences how the contents of the package will help Betsy.
- Betsy decides not to use the contents of the package even though it does exactly what she needs it to do. Why do you think she decides she doesn't want to use it? What stops her?
- At the end of the chapter, Betsy's family decides to celebrate her newfound piano skills. What do you think might happen next? Why?

WRITING EXERCISE

- Make a leaflet with instructions for looking after African pygmy mice. You can use the information in this chapter, and add in some more research of your own if you like.



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Chapter 6: A Real Pianist

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

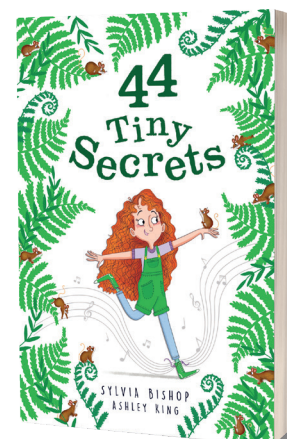
- Betsy is in a tricky situation here. What would you do?
- At the end of the chapter she wonders if she is going to meet Gloria Sprightly. Do you have any ideas about the mysterious Gloria?

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- How does Betsy feel in this chapter? How can you tell she feels this way?
- Betsy excuses herself from tea claiming to have a stomach ache, but the author reveals that her 'conscience was the bigger problem'. What does the word 'conscience' mean?
- In this chapter, Betsy talks to the mice even though they cannot answer or understand her. Why do you think the author has chosen to have Betsy speak aloud to the Mice? What effect does it have?
- In this chapter, Betsy's mother gives her a gift. What is the gift?
- At the end of this chapter, Betsy is booked to perform at the Royal Albert Hall. What do you think might happen next? Why?
- Summarise everything that happens in this chapter in 3 – 5 sentences.

WRITING EXERCISE

- Make a poster advertising the Gala concert, including special guest Betsy Bow-Linnet.



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Chapter 7: The Royal Albert Hall

DISCUSSION QUESTION

- Betsy spends the chapter getting ready to perform for 5,272 people. Would you find that exciting, or scary?

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Betsy agrees to perform instead of an 'alpine horn trio'. What does the word 'trio' mean?
- Do you think Betsy is looking forward to her performance at the Royal Albert Hall? How do you know that she feels this way?
- The author explains what usually happens when Betsy visits the Royal Albert Hall, and then describes how this visit is different. Why do you think the author has chosen to do this?
- What is the name of the woman who greets Betsy and Grandad when they arrive at the Royal Albert Hall?
- Summarise everything that happens between Betsy arriving at the Royal Albert Hall and Betsy going onstage to perform in your own words.
- At the end of the chapter, Betsy's mice have gone missing! What do you think might happen next? Why?

WRITING EXERCISE

- Write a newspaper report about the concert, describing all the events in this chapter.



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Chapter 8: Night

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

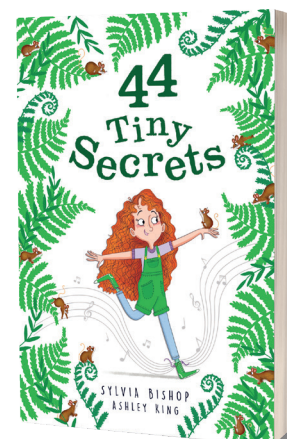
- Tired and upset, Betsy thinks *I hate my mum*, and then quickly changes her mind. Why do you think she felt this way? Does it mean she really hates her mum?
- Betsy's dad seems to know about the mice. How do you think he knows?

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Summarise everything that happens from the beginning of the chapter to the point at which Betsy begins hunting down her mice, in your own words.
- Betsy hides in the Royal Albert Hall until everyone inside goes home. Where does Betsy hide?
- The author asks the reader a rhetorical question in this chapter: 'Have you ever worked all through the night, alone?'. This is a type of question that does not require an answer; instead, the question is asked to make the listener think about what their answer might be. Why do you think the author has chosen to use a rhetorical question here?
- How do you think Betsy feels in this chapter? What shows you that she feels this way? Does she feel the same way the whole way through the chapter?
- No matter what time it is outside, the inside of the Royal Albert Hall is described as the same 'relentless red'. What does the word 'relentless' mean?
- At the end of the chapter, Betsy's father arrives. Why do you think Bertram is there? Why do you think this?

WRITING EXERCISE

- Imagine how the mice feel, lost in this enormous concert hall. Rewrite the chapter from the perspective of a mouse.



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Chapter 9: Dawn

DISCUSSION QUESTION

- What do you think Betsy and her dad should do?

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What is the name of the mouse that is still missing at the beginning of this chapter?
- Betsy asks multiple times for her father to explain why he was there, but he puts her off and only reveals his reasons to Betsy *and* the reader later. Why do you think the author chose to delay revealing this information?
- How do you think Betsy feels after her dad shares his secret? Does she only feel one emotion? How do you know she feels this way?
- Summarise everything that Betsy's dad reveals to her in this chapter.
- The author describes how Bertram's beard 'quivered'. What does the word 'quivered' mean?
- At the end of the chapter, Betsy finds out some more information about Gloria Sprightly. What do you think might happen next? Why do you think this?

WRITING EXERCISE

- Imagine that you write an advice column, and Betsy has written asking what she should do. Write your article responding to her. Your aim is to persuade her that your advice is correct.

Here is her letter:

Dear Advice Anonymous,

My mother is a very brilliant concert pianist. This last week I have been pretending that I am a good pianist too, but the truth is I have been using some piano-playing mice. I just found out that my father has been doing this too, for seventeen years, and my mother doesn't know! I feel terrible about the lies, but she would be so hurt if she knew the truth. What should we do?

Yours in confusion,

Betsy Bow-Linnet



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Chapter 10: Gloria Sprightly Again

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

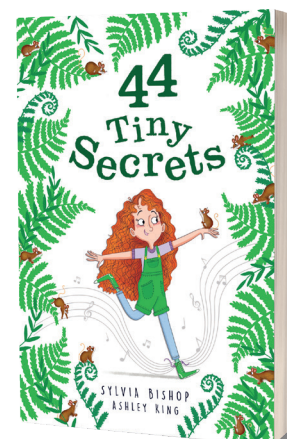
- What do you feel about Grandad's story?
- How do you think Bella is going to react to the family's secrets?

COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

- How do you think Grandad feels in this chapter? Why do you think this?
- Most of this chapter is made up of dialogue between Betsy and Grandad. Why do you think the author has chosen to do this?
- What job did Betsy's grandmother do?
- The author describes Grandad's elbow movement as the 'elbowy equivalent of a blush'. What does the word 'equivalent' mean?
- Summarise everything that Grandad tells Betsy in this chapter, in your own words.
- At the end of the chapter, Betsy and Grandad decide to 'unravel everything from the beginning'. What do you think might happen next? Why do you think this?

WRITING EXERCISE

- We don't find out what Bertram and Grandad said to Bella, or what she said to them. Write this scene yourself. Try to imagine what each person would feel, and want to ask or explain.



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Chapter 11: Unravelling

DISCUSSION QUESTION

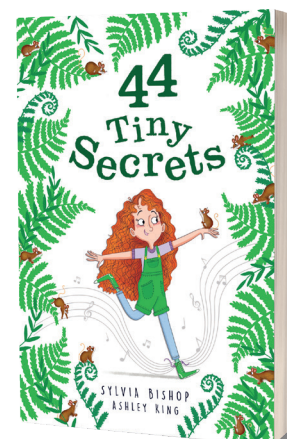
- The family go through a difficult argument in this chapter. Do you think it was worth it? Are things better or worse now than they were at the start of the book?

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- When they confront Bertram, the author describes how he 'spluttered'. What does the word 'spluttered' mean?
- Grandad and Bertram speak to Betsy's mother without Betsy in the room, so neither Betsy nor the reader find out exactly what was said. Betsy merely witnesses Bella storming out of the house from her favourite spot on the landing. Why do you think the author has chosen to structure the chapter in this way?
- How do you think Betsy's mother, Bella, feels in this chapter? Does she feel the same way throughout the chapter? How do you know she feels this way?
- When Bella returns to the Bow-Linnet household, she and Betsy have a conversation. Summarise that conversation in your own words.
- What change does Betsy's dad make to his appearance in this chapter?
- This is the final chapter of the book. What do you think might happen to the Bow-Linnet family after the book ends? Why do you think this?

WRITING EXERCISES

- Imagine you could teach the mice a new trick, now that they have finished playing the piano. Write a short story about the next adventure they have!



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Knitting Pattern

Materials:

- DK (light worsted/ 8 ply yarn):
- Small ball of brown (approx 30 m/33 yards) Colour A
- Small ball of white (approx 10m/11yards) Colour B
- Small amount of pink (to embroider details)
- Small amount of black (to embroider details)
- Small amount of black sewing cotton for whiskers.
- Toy filling (polyester fibrefill recommended)
- Optional - White and black felt for eyes, pink felt for inside of ears.

Needles:

- 2.5 mm knitting needles and double pointed needles (US 1.5, UK 12)
- (optional - just use DPNs)
- 3mm double pointed knitting needles (US 2 or 3, UK 11)
- Large eyed blunt tapestry needle or bodkin for making up and finishing

Other:

- Sharp scissors
- Pencil



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Tension:

Tight enough so stuffing does not show through - approx. 2.5cm (1 inch) measured over 10 sts and 10 rows worked in stocking stitch, using 2.5mm needles

Finished size:

Height approx. 7.5 cms/3 inches nose to base of body, tail 11cm / 4.5 inches long.

Notes:

- a) Before starting to knit, wind off a separate small ball of colour A from original ball to use for colour change with B when knitting body.
- b) When joining in a new colour, twist with working yarn of previous colour at back of work before making next stitch in new colour each time, to avoid holes in work and keep tension tight.

Abbreviations:

cm	centimetre(s)
DPN	double pointed needle(s)
in	inch(es)
K	knit
Kfb	knit into front and back of stitch to increase by one stitch
K2tog	knit 2 stitches together to decrease by one stitch
mm	millimetre(s)
P	purl
Pfb	purl into front and back of stitch to increase by one stitch
P2tog	purl 2 stitches together to decrease by one stitch
sts(s)	stitch(es)
(-, -) x times	repeat stitch sequence inside brackets by number of times shown



INSTRUCTIONS:

Body and head (worked bottom to top):

Using Colour A, cast on 6 stitches on 2.5 mm needles

Row 1: (Kfb) 6 times (12 sts)

Row 2: Purl

Row 3: (Kfb, K2) 4 times (16 sts)

Row 4: Purl

Row 5: (Kfb, K3) 4 times (20 sts)

Row 6: Purl

Row 7: Knit

Row 8: Purl

Row 9: K9 in A, join in colour B twisting at back of work with A to avoid hole, K2, join in second ball of A twisting with B on back of work as before, K9 with A

Continue to twist yarn on back of work with each colour change in following rows:

Row 10: P8 A, P4 B, P8 A

Row 11: K7 A, K6 B, K7 A

Row 12: P7 A, P6 B, P7 A

Rows 13 - 18: Repeat Rows 11 and 12 three times

Row 19: K7 A, K6 B, K7 A (20 sts)

Row 20: in A P1, (P2tog, P1) twice, in B P2, P2tog, P2, in A P1, (P2tog, P1) twice (15sts)

Row 21: in A K1, K2tog, K2, in B K2tog, K1, K2tog, in A K2, K2tog, K1 (11sts)

Row 22: P4 A, P3 B, P4 A

Shaping the head:

Row 23: in A K1, (Kfb) twice, K1, in B K3, in A K1, (Kfb) twice, K1 (15 sts)

Row 24: in A (P1, Pfb) 3 times, in B P1, P2tog, in A (Pfb, P1) 3 times (20 sts)

Row 25: Continue in colour A only: K9, K2tog (but twist A with end of B on reverse as



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you knit), K9 (pick up second A ball and twist with working yarn on reverse as you knit for a few stitches, cut off second A ball) leaving main working yarn from first ball. Cut off B leaving end, weave this into sts on purl side of white patch using tapestry needle (19 sts)

Row 26: P9, Pfb, P9 (20 sts)

Row 27: K9, (Kfb) twice, K9. (22 sts)

Row 28: P2tog, P8, (Pfb) twice, P8, P2tog (22 sts)

Row 29: (K2tog, K2) twice, K2tog, (Kfb) twice, (K2 tog, K2) twice, K2tog (18 sts)

Row 30: P2 tog, P6, (Pfb) twice, P6, P2tog (18 sts)

Row 31: K2tog, K6, (Kfb) twice, K6, K2tog (18 sts)

Row 32: Optional:

Either: Cast off purlwise, pull yarn through last st and tighten. Cut off yarn leaving long end. Turn head right side facing out. Using long end with tapestry needle and ladder stitch, sew up seam from nose and over head to back of neck. Make sure end of nose is fully pushed out (use point of a pencil). Stuff head with toy stuffing.

Or: Divide 18 sts equally onto 2 DPNS, fold sts so knit sides are together and sts are parallel on the 2 needles. Push all sts to ends of DPNs with working end of yarn on first st.

Use third 2.5 mm needle for 3 needle cast off - pick up and Ktog first stitches on each of parallel DPNs. Repeat for next pair of stitches, one from each needle. Once 2 sts on third needle, cast off first stitch there by lifting over second stitch and off end of needle.

K next pair of parallel stitches together, cast off another st on third needle as before.

Continue until all sts cast off, thread yarn through last stitch leaving long end. Turn head right sides facing out, sew up seam from top of head to back of neck using long end, tapestry needle and ladder stitch. Make sure end of nose is fully pushed out (use point of pencil). Stuff head with toy stuffing.

Sew rest of back seam to base with more of colour A, tapestry needle and ladder stitch, leaving 2.5cm/1 in gap at base. Stuff body fairly firmly, sew gap and finish off end of yarn.

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Ears: (Make 2)

Optional: Either cast on 4 sts in A, or pick up 4 sts on one side of top of mouse's head

Row 1: K4

Row 2: P1, (Pfb) twice, P1 (6 sts)

Row 3: K6

Row 4: P6

Row 5: K1, (K2tog) twice, K1 (4 sts)

Row 6: P1, P2tog, P1 (3 sts)

Row 7: K2tog, cast off 1

Pull yarn through last st, cut off leaving long end. Use tapestry needle to weave in end down one edge of back of ear. Pull end to adjust and 'round' off ear shape if necessary, fasten off at base of ear, or use to sew ear to side of head if ears knitted separately.

Legs: (Make 2)

Change to size 3mm DPNs, use colour A and cast on 4 sts leaving long end

Using icord method:

K4, slide sts to other end of same needle, take working yarn round back of existing sts, K4 again from st nearest end of needle. Repeat process to form 'tube' of knitted icord, until leg measures approx. 6cm/2.5 in

Change to size 2.5mm DPNs: K4 onto first 2.5 DPN, continuing in icord method.

Next row: K1, K2tog, K1 (3 sts)

Knit next 4 rows in icord method.

Final row: Cast off 2 sts, pull yarn through last st, tighten and cut off leaving end, weave end back through leg

Optional (only if mouse not to be used as children's toy): thread a length of brown pipe cleaner through centre of icord leg, easing yarn over with tapestry needle. Take care pipe cleaner does not poke through side or end of icord at narrow 'foot' end. Lightly stuff icord at thigh end of leg with small wisps of toy stuffing around pipe cleaner.

Estimate length of pipe cleaner already threaded, allow this length again and add 3cms.

Cut off pipe cleaner at combined length. Make a channel through mouse body stuffing

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at base, from side to side about 1cm up, using a pencil - entry and exit should each be about .75cms/.5 in from middle of back (for top of legs). Carefully thread empty end of pipe cleaner through channel and pull up existing leg to body. Thread second leg onto pipe cleaner, lightly stuff thigh end and pull up to body on other side.

Bend both legs into 2 shape with 'knee' bend half way along wider stuffed icord, 'heel' bend at start of narrower icord 'foot'. Sew top of legs firmly to sides of body about .75cms/.5 in from middle of back with long yarn end and tapestry needle, also sew on insides of thighs to fix 2 shape, feet facing forwards in position to allow mouse to sit squarely.

Arms: (Make 2)

Use colour A and 2.5mm DPNs to cast on 3 sts leaving long end, K approx 3cms in icord method.

Last row: Cast off 2 sts, pull yarn through last st, tighten and cut off yarn, weave end back through arm using tapestry needle.

Use long ends at cast on edge to sew arms to sides of upper body, either side of white patch and below neck, to hang angled down towards middle front.

Tail:

Use pink yarn and 2.5mm DPNs to cast on 2 sts, leaving long end. K in icord method until tail measures approx 11cm/4.5 in.

Final row: K2tog, pull yarn through last st and tighten, cut off and weave end back through tail. Sew tail to mouse centre back at bottom between legs, using long end from cast on edge.

Finishing:

Using tapestry needle:

Embroider pink yarn 'satin stitch' on inside of ears (optional - use circles of pink felt)

Embroider 3 small lines of pink yarn on front ends of feet to suggest 'toes'

Eyes: Embroider 'circles' in white yarn for eyes approx .75cm/.25in wide ('chain st' or 'satin st'), on either side of face below ears and approx 2.5cm/1in back from nose (optional - use circles of white felt)

Embroider small dots in black yarn as 'pupils' on front of white eyes (optional - use black felt)



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Nose: Embroider small rounded 'triangle' v shape in black yarn on tip of nose

Mouth: Stitch one strand of black yarn from point approx 1cm back from nose on right side of face, round under chin to matching point on left side. Bring needle with black yarn out again at top centre of front white patch next to black stitch and catch middle of black yarn with another tiny stitch, tighten to form curved 'smile' and finish off.

Whiskers: Use black sewing cotton to sew in whiskers each side of nose, above and in front of mouth. On each side: fasten on with 2 small sts, make a 2cm loop, anchor with another small st at base of loop. Make another 2cm loop, anchor with 2-3 more small sts at base and finish off. Cut loops to make 4 equal 1cm whiskers, on either side of face.

Finally, if using pipe cleaner in legs, adjust legs and feet to help mouse to sit up straight.

Keep away from your favourite cheese.



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Make your own Tiny Secrets finger puppets...

Use the template below as a guide.
Cut the mouse out and roll into a cone shape.
Glue the tab to stick to the other side.
Fold the mouse's ears upwards using the dashed line as a guide.

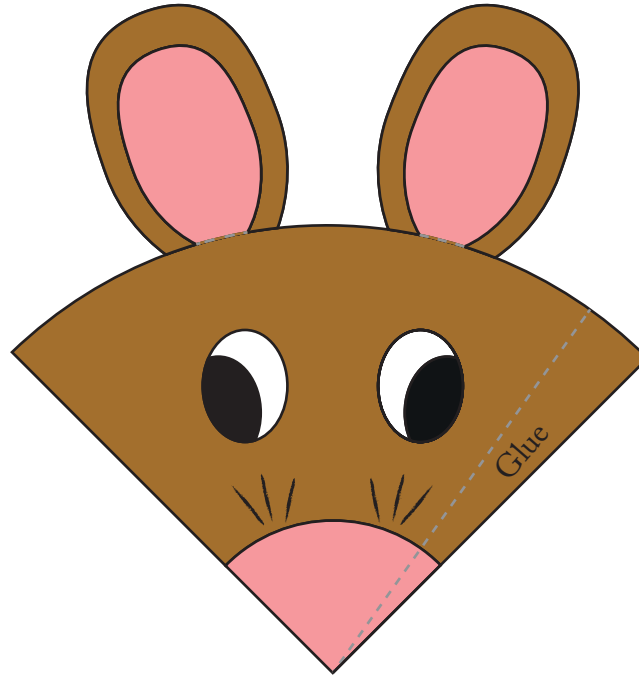


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