Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed

By
Mo Willems

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From all of us at Junior Library Guild, we wish you and your students good reading and great learning . . . with JLG Selections and JLG Guides.
# Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed

**Written and illustrated by Mo Willems**

JLG Guide written by Linda Stanek

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Book Summary

To start with, a naked mole rat is, according to Mo Willems, “a little bit mole, a little bit rat, and all naked.” Wilbur, a naked mole rat, is different—he likes to get dressed. The other naked mole rats disapprove and make fun of him. Wilbur opens a clothing store but doesn’t sell anything. The mole rats take Wilbur to a portrait of Grand-pah, the “oldest and most naked mole rat ever.” Wilbur agrees that Grand-pah would also look great in clothes. The others exclaim, “Naked mole rats don’t respond, “Why not?” The mole rats take their concerns to the very wise Grand–pah. After much thought, Grand–pah calls all the mole rats together for a proclamation. Knowing this is serious, Wilbur struggles with what to wear. Finally, he settles on wearing only a pair of socks. Grand–pah comes out wearing clothes and says he wishes he had tried dressing sooner. He proclaims that it is okay to dress or be naked. Wilbur rushes home to put on more clothes. When he returns, some of the mole rats are dressed and some are not. And some mole rats start buying clothes at Wilbur’s shop.

About the Author/Illustrator

New York Times bestselling author/illustrator Mo Willems began his career as a writer and animator for television’s Sesame Street, where he won six Emmy awards. He has since written more than twenty children’s books and has been awarded the Caldecott Honor for Don’t Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus, Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale, and Knuffle Bunny Too: A Case of Mistaken Identity. He received the Theodor Seuss Geisel Medal in 2008 for his book, There Is a Bird on Your Head! Willems lives in Massachusetts with his family.
Building Background

What is a Naked Mole Rat?

Naked mole rats live on the Horn of Africa in the countries of Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya. They are not moles, and they are not rats,—but they really are naked! These little creatures are only about three inches long, about the size of a pink eraser, but they aren’t nearly as smooth. Their pinkish-gray bodies are covered with wrinkles. They do have hair on their bodies, but it is sparse.

Naked mole rats spend their whole lives in colonies under the hard, sun-baked ground. They have tiny eyes that can hardly see, which they usually keep shut so dirt doesn’t get into them. Because they feel their way through tunnels that make up their colony, naked mole rats can run as fast backward as they can forward.

Each colony has a queen—the only female that has babies. All the other naked mole rats work hard to take care of their queen and her babies.

Some naked mole rats are called soldiers. They work to protect the colony from naked mole rats from other colonies and from snakes.

Still other naked mole rats are called workers. They dig the tunnels and gather food—the roots of plants that grow in the ground. Naked mole rats never drink; they get water from the roots they eat.

Naked mole rats have four big teeth that grow outside their mouths. Behind these teeth, hairy lips are pressed shut while the animals dig in order to keep the dirt out. When tunneling, naked mole rats line up one behind the other. The first one, called the digger, bites through the brick-hard soil and kicks it behind him. The long line of naked mole rats, called sweepers, kick the dirt behind them until the worker at the end of the tunnel near the surface of the ground, kicks it out and into the sunlight. This last worker is called the volcanoer, because the mound of dirt he creates above ground looks like a tiny volcano—about the height of a ballpoint pen.

Scientists are studying naked mole rats to learn more about the aging process (these animals live to be as much as 20 years old!).
Prereading Activities

**Bulletin Board Connection**

**CLOTHES ARE FUN !**

Set up a bulletin board with a header that reads: CLOTHES ARE FUN !
Have students draw themselves wearing their favorite outfit. Display each
child’s illustration on the bulletin board under his or her name.

Ask students to share aloud why they like their outfit. They might say that they
like the color, the way it feels, or how it makes them feel when they wear it.
Perhaps it came from a special place or was given to them by a special person.
Be sure to share YOUR story about your favorite outfit, too!

**Using Prior Knowledge**

Before reading the book, show your students the book’s cover and ask: *Do animals really wear clothes?* Perhaps they have seen a dog wearing a sweater or a
horse with a blanket on. Can they think of other examples?

Discuss why animals really don't need to have clothes. Talk about fur, feathers, skin, and other things that keep animals warm and safe. Then ask students to raise
their hands if the animal has fur and to stand up if the animal has feathers as you
name each animal below.

- polar bear
- robins
- penguins
- mouse
- eagles
- rabbits
- groundhog
- zebras
- chickens
Library Applications

Books about Animals with Clothing
Create a display of books about animals wearing clothing. In addition to *Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed*, you could use titles such as:

- *Jesse Bear, What Will You Wear?* by Nancy White Carlstrom
- *Mercy Watson, Princess in Disguise* by Kate DiCamillo
- *Animals Should Definitely Not Wear Clothing* by Judi Barrett and Ron Barrett
- *Max’s Dragon Shirt* by Rosemary Wells
- *Bear Gets Dressed: A Guessing Game Story* by Harriet Ziefert
- *A Brand New Day with Mouse and Mole* by Wong Herbert Yee

Books about Rodents
You could also display books about rodents, including mice, rats, and naked mole rats.

- *The Naked Mole-Rat* by Jody S. Rake (nonfiction)
- *Outside and Inside Rats and Mice* by Sandra Markle (nonfiction)
- *About Rodents: A Guide for Children* by Cathryn Sill (nonfiction)
- *Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents* by Terry Pratchett (fiction)

Distinguishing Real from Imaginary
Point to each of the books on display and ask students to tell you whether the animal or animals in the book are real or imaginary. Have them give you reasons for their answers.

Say: *Reading about make-believe animals is fun. Wilbur is not a real naked mole rat, but he is a fun character. And he needs some clothes! Let’s see if we can help Wilbur get dressed.*

Then give each student a copy of the Wilbur handout on page 17 in this guide. Read the directions and have students draw and color clothes on Wilbur.

Show and Tell
Allow students to bring in their favorite stuffed animals. Students could share why their toy is special or how they got it, and/or they could make up a story about the animal.
Note: The pages of the picture book are not numbered. We are counting them from the inside front page with the sign “No Shirt, No Shoes, Service” as page 1 through the last page with the sign that reads “Why not?” (book page 36)

Concepts about Print

Reading Sweep
Use the title page (book page 3) to model how we read: from left to right, top to bottom. Hold up the book, place your finger under the word “Naked” and sweep as you read the title. Then do the same with the author’s name. Have students “read” the title with you as you repeat the reading sweep.

Be sure to model the reading sweep on pages where text is not typical:

★ Page 7
★ Page 9
★ Page 10
★ Page 23
★ Page 30

Copy the exercise below and hand it out to each student or write it on the board and have students practice using their fingers to sweep along, from dot to dot, as you read the sentences aloud.

Wilbur is a naked mole rat.
He likes clothes. He gets dressed.
He wears shoes, a shirt, pants, and a tie.
Concepts about Print

Print Awareness: Lists
Turn to book page 5 and tell students that some of the words on this page make up a list. Say:

Lists are lines of words that sometimes have numbers, like this list has.
How many lines are on this list?

We read lists just like we read other words, from left to right and top to bottom. Sometimes a list is made up of sentences. Sometimes a list is made up of single words.

Write the following list on the board. Read through the list once and then have students read through the list with you as you go from top to bottom.

hat
shirt
tie
belt
pants
socks
shoes

Ask: What is this a list of? (clothing) Is there a special order to this list? (Yes, clothes that go from your head down to your feet.)

Say: There is one more list in this book. Raise your hand when we get to the page with the other list. (List appears on book page 33.)

Print Awareness: Signs
Explain to students that signs can also include words. Show them book page 12. Have students read the five signs on the page. Ask: On what other pages do you see a sign? (pages 1, 34, and 36)

Ask: What signs do you see at school or near your home?
Print and Alphabetic Awareness

Building Blocks and Word Families

Give each student a copy of the letter blocks found on page 18 of this guide. Allow them to color the letters if you want. Then have them cut out each letter and place all of them on their desks. On the board, write the following:

Ask students to say with you the sounds /a/ and /t/. Then put the sounds together and say /at/. Have students repeat the word at three times: at, at, at.

Using the letter blocks, choose one letter at a time and have students say the sound aloud: /b/ and add /at/ What is the word? (bat) Repeat with each letter block to write a list of words that rhyme with at on the board. Then read the list from top to bottom chorally. Say: This is a word family. All of the words have the same ending sound. This is the /at/ word family.

What Is It?

Discuss the following concepts:
1. A letter stands for a sound.
2. A word is made up of one or more letters.
3. Words are separated by white space.

Give students the handout on page 19 of this guide and have them color each sentence as follows:
- ★ Color spaces blue.
- ★ Color single letters red.
- ★ Color words yellow.
Phonemic Awareness

“Beginning Sounds” Family Trees
This exercise helps students form word families according to the beginning sound of each word. Hand out pages 20 and 21 in the guide.

Each tree has the letters n, m, and r on it. The apples contain pictures of words that begin with the sounds those letters stand for.

Have students cut out the apples and glue them onto the tree whose letter stands for the beginning sound of the word.

Then ask the students: What kind of animal is our book about? (naked mole rat)
Write each word on the board. As you point to each word, ask: On which tree would you put this word?

Next, ask students to name other animals whose names begin with the /m/, /n/, or /r/ sounds. Some answers might include: mouse, monkey, muskrat, mole, rat, rabbit, raccoon, newt, nightingale, nuthatch, nene, etc.

Same Sound—Name Sound
It is fun for students to link their names to lessons. Ask if any of the students in the classroom or library has a name that begins with the /m/, /n/, or /r/ sound. Help students write their classmates’ names on the appropriate tree.

Hello, my name is
Decoding and Word Recognition

Long and Short: Super Silent E

This is a lesson about Super Silent E. Share this with your class.

Super Silent E has a special power. She can make a letter say its name. For example, the /a/ sound in can is the short a sound. But when silent e is added, the short a changes. Silent e makes the a say its name: the long a sound /ay/. Can becomes cane.

Use this example:

\[
\text{can } + e = \text{ cane}
\]

Give students the handout on page 22 (shown at right) so they can complete the puzzle using Super Silent E.

Sight Words

Some words are easier to learn as sight words. Write the following sight words on the board. Read each word aloud. Then ask students to use the word in a sentence that has to do with Wilbur's story:

- said
- when
- saw
- clothes
- they
- look
- thought
- wear
What is a Rat? What is a Mole?

After you review the information on page 4 about naked mole rats, can you and your students see how they are alike and different from moles and rats?

First, all three (naked mole rats, moles, and rats) are **mammals**. However, only naked mole rats and rats are **rodents**. Moles are not. They are related to shrews.

Naked mole rats and moles do not have external ears. Rats have small external ears.

Remember that naked mole rats are only about 2.5 inches long. Much larger, rats have bodies that are about 7.5 inches long. They have long tails—usually longer than their bodies. They look like very big mice. They live above ground, and some rats even climb trees. Rats eat fruits, grain, and food scraps from humans.

Moles are about 6 inches long, including their stubby tails. They live underground, and because skin grows over their eyes, they are truly blind. They tunnel using claws on their front paws. They eat earthworms, bugs, and roots of plants that grown in the dirt where they tunnel.

Using Measurement: Each Its Own Size

Give students the worksheet on page 23 of the guide. These are life-sized outlines of a naked mole rat, a mole, and a rat. Ask students to identify which animal is the largest and which is the smallest.

Give each student a piece of yarn that he or she can cut to a length slightly longer than the rat. Explain that a rat's tail is a little longer than the length of the rat's body. Let students glue the tail onto the rat. Then have the students color the pictures. (Note: rats can be black, brown, gray, or other similar colors. Moles are usually black. Naked mole rats, of course, are pinkish.)
Vocabulary

Talk about the Words

*Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed* contains some words that some students won’t be familiar with. Go over the following words with students so they can get the most out of this book.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>proclamation</td>
<td>An official and public announcement</td>
<td>“I declare that on Thursdays, all first graders get double recess!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sarcastic</td>
<td>With a tone that makes fun of something</td>
<td>“I just <em>love</em> brussel sprouts. Yuck!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heroic</td>
<td>Brave</td>
<td>The firefighter saved the puppy from the burning building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regal</td>
<td>Like a king or queen or other royal person</td>
<td>The lion held his head high and looked over the crowd like he was their king.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slacks</td>
<td>Pants</td>
<td>Dad bought a brown belt to go with his new slacks.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fine Arts Connection: Readers’ Theater

Some of the pages of this picture book include small, handwritten words spoken by the characters. One of the characters is Wilbur. Another Grand-pah. Then there are the three tattletale naked mole rats.

Assign each of those five characters to students. Go over their “parts” ahead of time, and include the times when the naked mole rats say “Eeeewwww!” and “Yuck!” Then, when you read the book aloud to the class, have the students act out their parts.

End the reading by having the entire class say the last phrase: “Why not?” Or you can use the cue cards on page 24 to show the students when to join in.

![Cue cards](image-url)
Reading Comprehension

Making Predictions
Checking Predictions
Read Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed aloud and pause from time to time to ask questions and discuss the ideas below.

Make Predictions:
After reading pages 5 and 6 of the story, Wilbur explains why he likes to get dressed. Ask: How do you think the other naked mole rats will respond to Wilbur? (they will either like his idea or will not like that he is different)

Checking Predictions:
Continue reading. After page 7 of the story, ask students if they think a naked mole rat means it when he says, “If you like clothes so much, then why don’t you open a store or something?” (No. He’s being sarcastic.)

Make Predictions:
On Pages 21 and 22 of the story, when Grand-pah announces he will make a proclamation, ask: What do you think Grand-pah is going to announce? (Answers may vary.)

Point out page 27 of the story and ask students what is unusual about Grand-pah. (He’s wearing clothes.)

Checking Predictions:
Ask: Why does Grand-pah say naked mole rats are allowed to wear clothes? (Answers may vary.)

Big Ideas: Grand-pah’s Proclamation
Discuss the book with students. Ask: Why were the other naked mole rats upset with Wilbur? (because he was wearing clothes) Why didn’t the naked mole rats think Wilbur should wear clothes? (because he was different from them; because they think naked mole rats are supposed to be naked)

Ask: What was Grand-pah’s proclamation? (That all naked mole rats could wear clothes if they wanted to) Do you think this was a good thing to do? (Answers will vary. Encourage them to give reasons for their answers.)
Literary Response
with Writing Strategies

Responding to a Theme: Tolerance
After reading the book to the students, ask them:
*Why did the other naked mole rats make fun of Wilbur?*
*How do you think Wilbur felt when the others didn’t like that he wore clothes?*
*Why do people sometimes make fun of other people?*
*Why is this not a good idea?*
*Have you ever felt like Wilbur?*
*What did the naked mole rats learn when they listened to Grand–pah?*
*How did they change?*
*Do you think people can change, too?*
*What did you learn from this book?*

Write All About It: Doing Things Differently
After the discussion above, help students think of times when they wanted to do something that was different.

Once I wanted to

................................................................................................................

................................................................................................................

People said

................................................................................................................

................................................................................................................

This is what I did.

................................................................................................................

................................................................................................................

Hand out the worksheet on page 25 so they can make complete the sentences and illustrate their experience.
Reproducible Pages
**Wilbur’s Clothes**

You will need: crayons, markers, colored pencils.

Wilbur is naked and needs new clothes! Help him by drawing on clothes you think he will like.
Building Blocks

Color the letters, cut out the blocks, and use them to make word families.

Add your own letter here
Something had to be done.

like a hid

socks is said

The gets did e

naked mole rat 9 w

What is it?
Word Family Tree
Word Family Trees

n

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**Super Silent E**

**Super Silent E Makes the Vowel Say Its Name!**

When you write an e at the end of these words, the sound of the vowel changes. It says its name—*at* becomes *ate* and *hop* becomes *hope*!

Add the e to each word below. Then read the new word. Find the picture that goes with each word. Draw a line to the picture.

---

**man + e = mane**

**cap + e =**

**pin + e =**

**cub + e =**

**not + e =**

**tap + e =**
Each Its Own Size

rat

mole

naked mole rat
Eeeewww!

Yuck!

Why not?
My Name______________________________________

Write All About It

People said

This is what I did:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Area</th>
<th>Standard Area</th>
<th>Standard Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fine Arts: Theater</td>
<td>NA–T.K–4.2</td>
<td>Acting by Assuming Roles and Interacting in Improvisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Arts: Visual Arts</td>
<td>NA–VA.K–4.1</td>
<td>Understanding and Applying Media, Techniques, and Processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Arts: Visual Arts</td>
<td>NA–VA.K–4.3</td>
<td>Choosing and Evaluating a Range of Subject Matter, Symbols, and Ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages Arts: English</td>
<td>NL–ENG.K–12.1</td>
<td>Reading for Perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages Arts: English</td>
<td>NL–ENG.K–12.2</td>
<td>Reading for Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages Arts: English</td>
<td>NL–ENG.K–12.3</td>
<td>Evaluation Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages Arts: English</td>
<td>NL–ENG.K–12.4</td>
<td>Communication Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages Arts: English</td>
<td>NL–ENG.K–12.5</td>
<td>Communication Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages Arts: English</td>
<td>NL–ENG.K–12.6</td>
<td>Applying Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages Arts: English</td>
<td>NL–ENG.K–12.12</td>
<td>Applying Language Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics: Numbers and Operations</td>
<td>NM–NUM.PK–2.1</td>
<td>Understanding Numbers, Ways of Representing Numbers, Relationships Among Numbers, and Number Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics: Communication</td>
<td>NM–COMM.PK–12.2</td>
<td>Communicate Their Mathematical Thinking Coherently and Clearly to Peers, Teachers, and Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>NS.K–4.3</td>
<td>Life Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>NSS–G.K–12.1</td>
<td>The World in Spatial Terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>NSS–G.K–12.2</td>
<td>Places and Regions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Answer Key

Page 5: Animals with fur: polar bear, mouse, groundhog, rabbit, zebra; animals with feathers: robin, eagle, penguin, chicken

Page 6: The only real animals are featured in the nonfiction books. All of the others are imaginary.

Page 8: There are 3 lines on page 5.

Page 9: Building Blocks: Words in the /at/ family will be: bat, cat, fat, hat, mat, pat, rat, sat. What Is It?: All spaces will be blue. Single letters are red: g, w, z, e, k, s, a, d, Words are yellow: naked, mole, rat, gets, did, The, socks, said, like, hi, Something, had, to, be, done.

Page 10: On the “n” tree: nine, nut, net; on the “m” tree: mouse, money, mower; on the “r” tree: ring, rhino, rooster, rocket.


Page 14: Answers are on the page itself.

Page 15: Answers will vary. Try to be sure to include everyone when having this discussion.