

City or Country—A Mouse Chooses—A Fable

Source: Based on a public domain resource, there are many variations on this story. We have updated it including changes in plot and characters' identities, but the moral is the same. Center for Urban Education version ©2015

Jerome, a mouse who lived in the country invited his cousin Don, a mouse who lived in the city to visit him. Jerome lived in a hole near a tree.

"Very pretty" Don said about the place—so many trees. And that's a nice farm next door. What do you do for fun?"

"I take walks and look for big kernels of corn," Jerome replied.

"Hmm, not that interesting," Don said.

At dinner, Don was disappointed. All that they had to eat was dried corn.

"I collected those last month," said Jerome. Now they're really tasty because when they dry out the flavor gets bigger."

Don said, "OK, but not as good as the food at my place. "You should visit me to find out what really great food we have. And it's not boring. Every day there are adventures."

That night, they looked at the stars. "So beautiful," Jerome said. "Yes," Don replied, "but so quiet. I'm bored. You should come to my place. Never boring. And we have streetlights so we can see those bright lights every night."

In another month, Jerome went to visit Don. The very first place that Don took Jerome to see was the kitchen of the house where he lived. "Just nibble in here," Don said, as they looked on a low shelf. There was a bag of sugar with a leak that Don had nibbled. Both mice ate away happily.

Then suddenly Don said, "Run. Run and hide." Jerome ran but didn't know why. Then he saw the reason. A big cat had come into the kitchen.

"Hide here," said Don, and they ducked into a hole in the wall.

After the cat went away, they came back out.

"Let's get a cookie," said Don, and he led Jerome to another shelf.

They were eating a cookie when someone came into the kitchen and screamed loudly.

"What's happening?" asked Jerome.

"Don't ask, just run!" said Don.

They both ran quickly past a mousetrap. "What is that," Jerome asked—he had never seen a mousetrap in the country.

"Don't go near it, it will hurt you," Don said. "I know how to escape them.

That night, Jerome could not sleep at all. He kept waking up every few minutes, worried about the dangers.

The next morning, Jerome made a decision. He told Don he was going to go back to the country.

"I like my home. I hope you are happy here, but I can't stay. Come back to see me sometime. It is not as exciting as the city, but you can have a long and happy life in the country."

Thinking Challenge: First, tell what the message of this story is.

Then write your own story that communicates that same message.