

Improving Your Reading with Rex Retriever: The Rats of Newtown



Newtown is a sleepy little town upon the Solent shore. Although it is sleepy now, it was once very noisy. What made the noise? Rats. The place was so infested with them that nobody wanted to live there.

There wasn't a barn, a room or a cupboard that rats hadn't eaten their way into. The rats had gnawed on every wheel of cheese and bag of sugar. Even the wooden barrels of wine and beer were not safe. The rats would chew a hole in the barrel and lower themselves down into the liquid while holding onto another rat's tail.

However, the rats did something even worse. They squeaked, shrieked, hurried and scurried so loudly that the people in Newtown couldn't hear themselves think. They also couldn't get a wink of sleep. Every mother across the town had to keep watch over her baby's cradle all night long to stop a big, ugly rat from running across the poor baby's face.



1. What were the people of Newtown not able to do? Tick **two**.

- Stand guard
- Sleep and rest
- Hear themselves think
- Leave the town

2. Give **one** item that the rats gnawed on.

3. Give **two** reasons why people in Newtown did not like the rats.

1. _____

2. _____

4. Tick **one** box in each row to show whether each statement is **true** or **false**.

Statement	True	False
Rats lowered themselves into barrels of oil.		
Mothers stayed up all night long to protect their babies.		
The rats would eat loaves of bread.		
The rats moved quietly around the town.		



Answers

1. What were the people of Newtown not able to do? Tick **two**.

- Stand guard
 Sleep and rest
 Hear themselves think
 Leave the town

2. Give **one** item that the rats gnawed on.

Accept any one of the following: wheels of cheese; bags of sugar; wooden barrels of wine; wooden barrels of beer.

3. Give **two** reasons why people in Newtown did not like the rats.

Accept any two of the following: they had eaten their way into every barn, room and cupboard; they had gnawed every wheel of cheese; they had gnawed every bag of sugar; they had entered the barrels of wine and beer; they squeaked and shrieked/hurried and scurried so loudly that no one could sleep; they were so loud that people could not hear themselves think; they would run across babies' faces.

4. Tick **one** box in each row to show whether each statement is **true** or **false**.

Statement	True	False
Rats lowered themselves into barrels of oil.		✓
Mothers stayed up all night long to protect their babies.	✓	
The rats would eat loaves of bread.		✓
The rats moved quietly around the town.		✓