

# Reading with Agricultural Eyes - Who Moved My Cheese?



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Although crofting and farming may feel like they have unique problems - many of them stem from the human condition that faces people in all walks of life and business. In our 'Personal Development Book Club' we read globally popular self-development books with agricultural eyes to see what lessons we could learn for our own businesses.

## 'Who Moved My Cheese?'

Who moved my Cheese? is perhaps the most famous example of a business fable, a story that shares a lesson intended to be applied in the business world to improve organizational culture, or to people's own personal lives.

Who Moved My Cheese has four main characters: two mice called 'Sniff' and 'Scurry' and two little people called 'Hem' and 'Haw'.

As the story develops, we learn they are well named as it mirrors how they adapt to the change that is foisted upon them.

In this book Cheese is a metaphor for what we decide is important and brings us happiness. Cheese will be different things for different people - but the fable gives us a space to think about what our own Cheese is.



The story centres around a shocking event - the Cheese that all four had been enjoying at their Cheese Station is suddenly removed! The individual personalities and experiences of each of the characters mean that their reactions to this sudden change are very different.

## What is reading with Agricultural Eyes?

During this project it was great to hear of a farmer listening to the audio book while topping her rushes and the attendee who had read the book before and had thought about it in relation to her other roles, but not applied it to her farming situation before.

At the end of the webinar, where we discussed this book, we invited attendees to email us with what change they were going to make since engaging and discussing with the book. Shortly the three months will have passed and we will be emailing them to see how they are getting on with their goal.

In short, although I am a self-confessed self-help book aficionado, I believe the true value in any of these books is not the message or the system per se – rather what they provide is another lens to view our lives and businesses. In a time of ever more change and pressures, I think this practice is needed more than ever.



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## Discussion Questions

1. In this book what do we think the Maze represents?
2. Out of the four characters who did you identify with most?
3. The Cheese moving is a metaphor for change. What changes is farming and crofting having to deal with now?
4. The characters are well named with how they adapt to change – which character:
  - Notices the change in the situation first
  - Is quick to move?
  - ultimately discovers the ability to laugh at himself
  - is most angry about the change?
5. In what ways are we, as a people or as an industry, like the little people before the Cheese was moved?
6. What lessons should we learn from the mice's behaviour before the Cheese was moved?
7. We are all a mixture of the characters which one do you relate to the most?
8. Did you enjoy the story? Or would you have preferred a more practical guide to thinking about change?
9. What do the characters learn by the end of the story?
10. If you had a friend or family member whose tenancy and business was coming to an end, how could you apply some of these lessons to help them with the transition?
11. What things should we be doing in our own lives to be alive to change? What does “smell your cheese” mean in agriculture?
12. How does the book suggest we find new Cheese?
13. What are the benefits of looking for new Cheese?
14. What is your favourite saying that Haw writes on the wall for Hem?
15. What do you think happens to Hem at the end?
16. Let's reflect on this story and what we are going to do differently ourselves now when faced with change.

## Want to Hear More?

Visit the FAS website where you can hear audio-clips where various aspects of this book were discussed from how the characters react to the sudden change, the benefit in being able to laugh at ourselves and the value of benchmarking.

## Share Your Thoughts

We would love to hear from you after you have read or listened to this very short book and this discussion starter with agricultural eyes. Please email [advice@fas.scot](mailto:advice@fas.scot) with Book Club in the title

Thank you and Good Luck finding your Cheese!

