

FABULOUS FELINES
LESSON 1: Grades 4-6
HOW TO CHOOSE THE *PURRFECT* CAT

Show-Me Standards: Academic Goals: 1.2, 1.3, 1.8, 4.1, 4.2
Knowledge Goals: Communication Arts – 6; Science – 3

Objective: To introduce students to the concept that the decision to get a pet is not something to enter into lightly and to teach them how to choose a cat companion.

Materials:

- “To Cat or Not-to-Cat” Quiz
- Paper or poster board
- Old magazines
- Glue
- Scissors
- Crayons, markers or colored pencils
- “How Old is Your Cat?” Handout
- “Cat Breeds” handout & “Answer Sheet”
- “One Cat’s Tale” handout

Method: Introduce the lesson by asking students to review what the word “responsible” means. It means to be depended on, to be reliable, to be held accountable for the care of someone or something. To be a good pet owner, you must be responsible. It is important to know that your responsibilities as a pet owner begin before you even have a pet! You must be responsible for knowing if you are ready to make a pet a part of your family; and if so, for selecting the “right” pet for you and your family.

Cats are wonderful family pets. They are loving, devoted, charming animals. They can be an endless source of entertainment for you and your family. But, they’re also a BIG responsibility.

What are some things your family should consider before they get a pet? A family must consider: how much time they have to spend with a pet; how much money they have to care for a pet; how much space they have in their home for a pet; if other pets in the household will get along with the new family member; how much work they want to do to take care of a pet; and if they can be committed to caring for a pet for the life of the pet (usually about 10-15 years!)

Take the “To-Cat or Not-to-Cat” Quiz home for you and your family to take together. If you answer “no” to three or more of the questions, you may want to reconsider if the time is right to bring a cat into your home. If you’re ready to care for a cat, there are some things to consider before bringing your new pet home.

Where should I get my cat?

Your local animal shelter, animal control or rescue group is the ideal place to look for a cat. You can save a life by adopting a cat (or dog) from a shelter. If you’re looking for a certain breed, approximately 1/3 of all shelter animals are purebred. Shelters also offer adoption counseling to ensure you find just the perfect match. Adoption fees often include the things your cat needs to get a good start in his or her new life – shots, spay/neuter surgery, microchip and a health guarantee.

Should I get an adult cat or a kitten?

Kittens are hard to resist, but they need lots of extra attention and will have to be house-trained. But, they do adapt quickly to new surroundings. For many people who are gone all day to work or school, an adult cat is the

better choice. Adults need less supervision and are better suited to homes with toddlers. Remember that kittens don't stay small forever. They'll reach their full size in one year. Just for fun, distribute the "How Old is Your Cat?" handout.

What about adopting more than one?

More than one adds to the fun! It gives you a break from being the playmate and two can keep each other company when the human members of the family are gone during the day. Look for two littermates that can grow up together, or two adult cats that came from the same household and would like to stay together in a new house. Remember that your cost for care will automatically double.

How do I know if a cat is healthy?

Look for the following signs that a cat is healthy:

Ears – clean with no discharge.

Eyes – clear, bright, and free from discharge.

Nose – cool, damp, and velvety with no discharge.

Mouth and gums – pale pink color and odor free.

Coat – glossy with no black specks that indicate fleas.

The Rear – clean, with no signs of diarrhea.

Note: Many cats that come from a shelter environment develop upper respiratory infection. This is nothing more than a cold. It is easily transferred in shelters because it is an airborne virus. If your cat starts sneezing, gets watery eyes, or doesn't seem interested in eating, he may need to visit the vet. Just as with humans there is no cure for the cold, but the vet may prescribe antibiotics to ward off secondary bacterial infections like pneumonia. With some care, your cat will recover and be back to crazy antics in no time!

How can we find the right personality for our family?

Look for a feline that is easy-going and responds to you. Kittens should be active, outgoing, and willing to be handled. Adults should be friendly and relaxed when you handle them. If you fall in love with a cat that shies away, he may just need some extra "gentle" love to trust people again. He or she is best suited to a quiet household. Remember that sometimes a shelter animal just needs some time in a safe, relaxed environment to be the outgoing, sweet pet he really is!

Is a male or female cat more affectionate?

Both male and female cats are equally affectionate.

No matter what age or sex of cat you choose, when you adopt from a shelter you immediately have a devoted friend for life!

For reinforcement of this lesson, distribute the "One Cat's Tale" handout; a story with a happy ending about cat adoption.

Call to Action: Visit an animal shelter with your family or ask your teacher if your class can take a field trip. Note the variety of cats. Are there all ages from the tiniest kitten to a senior adult? How do they act differently? Are there a variety of breeds and colors? Which do you like best? Are some cats healthier than others? How can you tell? How would you describe some of the different personalities that you see? Talk to a staff member at the shelter. Find out more about the cat you like. Has he lived with other pets? What kind of food does he eat? What kinds of toys does he like to play with? Has he lived with children? Which one do you think would make the best pet for your family?

Find out about the characteristics of a cat you know. It could be your pet, a neighbor's, relative's, or a friend's. Create a collage that shows the characteristics of that cat. Use pictures and words to answer all of the questions above, and why he is a good pet for the family he lives with. Be sure to include a photo or drawing of him! Display the artwork in the school to teach other children about cats.

Related Reading:

Don't Tell Anyone, Peg Kehret, 2000 Dutton Children's Books

12-year-old Megan just wants to care for the feral cats she discovers in an abandoned lot. This exciting novel will have readers enthralled as Megan struggles to protect the cats and herself from a greedy developer and a mysterious stranger. A thoughtful introduction to the dangers facing stray/feral cats and what people can do to help. Ages 9-12.

Web sites: For recommended animal-related web sites visit **www.apamo.org** and choose "Animal Issues" from the left-side menu, then choose "Links" from the top of the page. Or [click here](#) to launch your browser and link directly to the list.

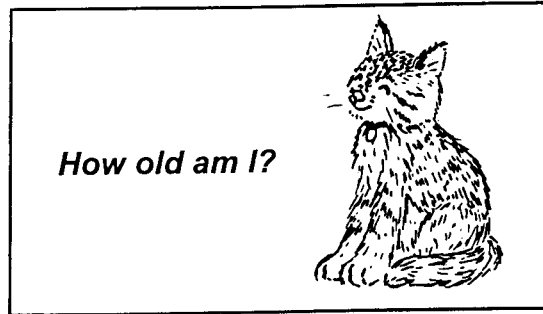
To Cat or Not-to-Cat?



Before adopting, take this quiz. If your family answers "no" to three or more questions, you may want to reconsider if the time is right to make a cat a part of the family.

- | | |
|--|--|
| We can afford the average yearly cost of \$350 per cat. | <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| We have an hour a day to devote to the care of a cat. | <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| We won't mind scooping the litter box every day. | <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| We believe in spaying and neutering. | <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| We are willing to care for a cat for 12-20 years. | <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| We believe that cats should live indoors. | <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| We don't mind sharing our home with someone who sheds, tracks litter, and throws up hairballs. | <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| We all understand how important it is to be gentle with pets. | <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| We don't mind being awakened occasionally at night by outrageous antics. | <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| We believe a cat should wear a safety collar and I.D. tag even if she lives inside. | <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| We will enjoy the constant companionship and unconditional love a cat provides. | <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no |

How old is your cat in people years?



How old is your cat compared with you? Find out by looking at the chart below.

CAT	HUMAN
1 YEAR	24 YEARS
2 YEARS	36 YEARS
3 YEARS	42 YEARS
4 YEARS	45 YEARS
5 YEARS	48 YEARS
6 YEARS	51 YEARS
7 YEARS	54 YEARS
8 YEARS	57 YEARS
9 YEARS	60 YEARS
10 YEARS	63 YEARS
11 YEARS	66 YEARS
12 YEARS	69 YEARS
13 YEARS	72 YEARS
14 YEARS	75 YEARS
15 YEARS	78 YEARS
16 YEARS	81 YEARS
17 YEARS	84 YEARS
18 YEARS	87 YEARS
19 YEARS	90 YEARS
20 YEARS	93 YEARS



Cat Breeds

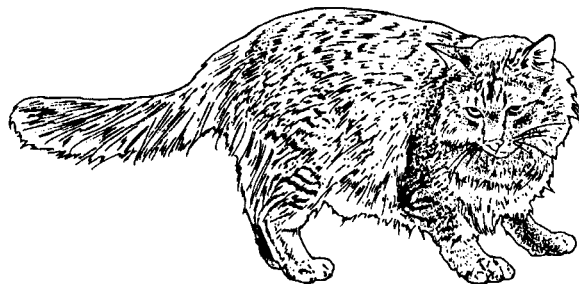
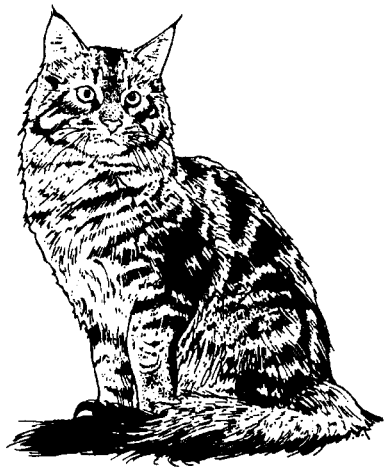


What are the most popular cat breeds in America? The Cat Fancier's Association, the world's largest registry of pedigreed cats, tracks pedigreed cats and ranks them based on registrations. A "pedigreed" cat has parents that are from the same breed. Most cats in the world are not pedigreed, but rather are combinations of various different breeds of cats. The domestic shorthair continues to be the favorite non-pedigreed cat in America!

Below is a list of the most popular pedigreed breeds, as determined by the Cat Fancier's Association. To the right are facts about each breed. See if you can correctly match each fact to the breed it describes. Draw a line to the correct answer.

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| 1. Persian | A. Famous for their ability to vocalize. Their loud, raspy yowls are used to get attention and express their moods. |
| 2. Maine Coon | B. Best known for their "folded ears." |
| 3. Siamese | C. Myths claim that this cat descended from cats worshipped by the ancient Egyptians. |
| 4. Exotic | D. The most popular breed of cat in America since 1871. |
| 5. Abyssinian | E. Has a long, silky coat, striking blue eyes, and white gloves on each paw. |
| 6. Oriental | F. A solidly built feline with a short, soft coat that requires little care. These cats love to play. |
| 7. Birman | G. One of the largest domestic breeds. Males weigh in at 12-18 lbs, while females range from 10-14 lbs. |
| 8. American Shorthair | H. Looks and acts like a Siamese, but comes in more than 300 color combinations. |
| 9. Scottish Fold | I. Called "a Persian in pajamas." A solidly built, rounded cat that has shorter fur. |
| 10. Burmese | J. While this breed comes in many colors, the most striking and best known is the silver tabby. |

Cat Breeds Answer Sheet



1. D
2. G
3. A
4. I
5. C
6. H
7. E
8. J
9. B
10. F

KIND Name _____

One Cat's Tale

Read the story below. In some places, pictures are used instead of words. What are the words that go with the pictures? Write the words in the blank lines. Use the word box for help.

Word Box			
cat	eyes	man	tags
collar	food	rabbit	tail
dogs	home	shoes	toys

Spock is a  _____. He needed a  _____. One day, a  _____

named Louis went to an animal shelter. There he met many friendly



_____.



_____.

Then he saw Spock, the



_____. Spock had big, bright



_____. He had a striped



_____.

Louis asked a shelter worker if he could pet Spock. Spock was happy! He

purred. He rubbed his cheeks on Louis's



_____.

Louis knew he and Spock would be good friends. He adopted Spock. He

gave him a



_____ and



_____. He bought him



_____. He gave him some



_____. Spock and Louis

share a



_____.

On the back, draw Spock and Louis in their home.