

TEACHERS' GUIDE

That Cat Can't Stay

SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL: K - 2nd



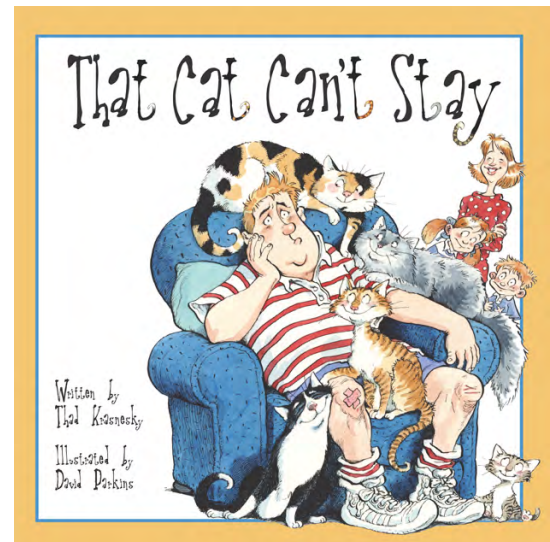
SYNOPSIS

Cats. You either love 'em or hate 'em. But what happens when Mom loves cats and Dad detests them? In *That Cat Can't Stay*, Mom keeps adopting stray cats while Dad's objections get more and more absurd:

"Mom found a little calico. / Dad said, That thing has got to go. There's no use begging. Don't say please. / I don't like cats. They scratch my knees. They carry fleas. They make me sneeze. / They're always getting stuck in trees. I want it gone. Send it away. / I'm telling you, that cat can't stay."

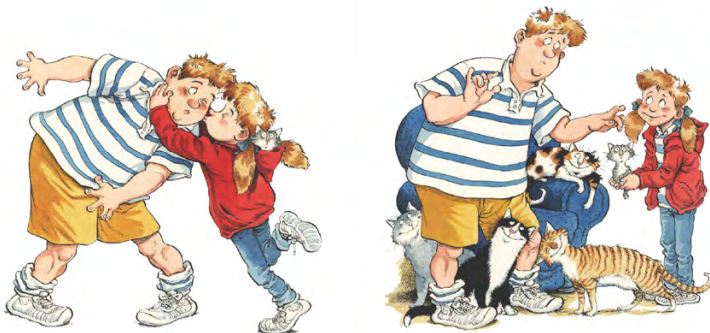
Clever Mom convinces Dad to let each cat stay for a short time, and once they're comfy in the house, they never leave. One stray, then two, then three, and Dad is at his wit's end. When stray cat number five moves in, Dad finally takes a surprising stand.

Dog-lovers, cat-lovers, and even cat-haters, will love this funny, heart-warming book.



THEMES IN THE STORY

- Family
- Pets
- Compromise
- Humor
- Perseverance
- Love in Unexpected Places



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Illustrated by: David Perkins
Published by: Flashlight Press
Read by: Haley Lu Richardson
Suggested grade level: K - 2nd

ELA COMMON CORE STANDARD

Reading Literature: Students read and respond to works of literature with an emphasis on comprehension and making connections among ideas and between texts, with a focus on textual evidence.

The standards listed below are for 1st and 2nd grades, but can be adapted to kindergarten standards.

BEFORE VIEWING

Standard: *CCSS.RL.1.1, CCSS.RL.2.1*

Objective: Tap into prior knowledge and build background to prepare for viewing the story.

Procedure: Build background with students by discussing the following points. This may be done on the carpet with A/B partners or at their desks.

- Look at the cover. What do you think the title means?
- Based on the cover and illustrations, how does the dad in the story feel about the pets? How can you tell?
- Has anyone in your family ever said “no” to a pet or a certain food, only to change their minds later?

DURING VIEWING

Standard: *CCSS.RL.1.2, CCSS.RL.2.2*

Objective: Watch the story and answer the following questions.

Procedure: Stop the video at the noted times to ask questions or pose prompts from the suggested list below:

- What reasons does Dad give each time Mom brings home a new cat? (0:47)
- Look closely at Dad’s facial expressions. How does he look when he talks about the cats? (2:12)
- How does Dad’s expression change when he holds or interacts with the cats? (2:52)
- What do these changes tell you about how he really feels? (4:36)
- Mom and the kids each have different ways of trying to change Dad’s mind. What do you think the little girl might do to convince Dad to give the new kitten a chance? (6:41)
- How do you think Dad feels at the end when he brings home a puppy from the pound? (8:04)

AFTER VIEWING

Standard: *CCSS.RL.1.1, CCSS.RL.2.1*

Objective: Students will ask and answer such questions as *who, what, where, when, why* and *how* to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.

Procedure: Students will discuss the following questions with their carpet or desk partners:

- What is the family's problem with all the pets they want to bring home? How does the problem get resolved?
- How does the family work together and compromise to make sure everyone, including Dad and the animals, is happy?
- At the end, Dad goes to the pound and brings home a dog. Do you think this shows that Dad really does love animals? Why or why not? What details from the story support your answer?

READING RESPONSE

Standard: *CCSS.RL.1.1, CCSS.RL.2.1*

Objective: Answer a reading prompt using details from the text to explain how the story's events unfold in sequence and contribute to the overall story structure.

Materials:

- Paper
- Reading response journal
- Pencils

Procedure:

1. Have students fold their paper into fourths to create a four-panel comic strip labeled **First, Then, Next** and **Last**.
2. Have students work together to discuss and sequence the four cats Mom brings home.
3. In each panel, students should draw or write what happens and include details from the text.
4. Have students write a response to the reading prompt in their reading response journal.

Note: Younger students may use a sentence stem to help them with their responses.

For example:

First, Mom brought home the _____. Then, she brought home the _____.

Next, she _____. Last, _____.

READING

Standard: *CCSS.RL.2.2, CCSS.RL.2.3*

Objective: Students will identify, sequence and retell key events from *That Cat Can't Stay* using story sequencing cards. Students will also describe how Dad responds to the family's growing collection of cats.

Materials:

- 6 index cards per student
- **Story Sequencing** sheet for teachers (*page 8*)
- Pencils

Procedure:

1. Have students create six sequencing cards by writing one key event from the story on each index card. The teacher may display the events on the board as a guide.
2. Have students arrange their six cards in the correct order. Encourage them to use words such as **first, next, then, after that** and **finally** as they retell the story.
3. Ask students to look at Dad's responses throughout the story. How does he react when each new cat arrives? What do his actions (not just his words) tell us about his feelings toward the animals?
4. Have students use their sequencing cards to orally retell the story and then write a short response describing the most important events and how Dad changes throughout the story.

WRITING

Standard: *CCSS.W.2.1*

Objective: Students will write a persuasive paragraph about their dream pet. They will introduce the pet, describe its characteristics and needs, and explain why it would make a good addition to their family.

Materials:

- Paper
- Pencils

Procedure:

1. Have students write a short persuasive paragraph explaining why they should be allowed to have their dream pet. Students should name their dream pet, give two to four reasons why they should have that pet and conclude by restating why their pet is the best choice.
2. Invite students to add rhythm, rhyme or playful storytelling elements inspired by *That Cat Can't Stay*.

Optional Sentence Starter:

My dream pet is a _____. I should have a _____ because _____, _____ and _____. A _____ would be the best pet for me because _____.

MATH – PAWS & PROBLEMS

Standard: 2.OA.A.1 – Students use addition and subtraction within 100 to solve one- and two-step word problems and represent the problems with equations using a symbol for the unknown.

Materials:

- Math Word Problems: Cats & Dogs (*pages 9-10*)
- Pencils

Procedure:

1. Have students read each cat-and-dog word problem carefully, identify the important information, choose an operation, write an equation with a symbol for the unknown and show their work to solve the problem.
2. Have students share how they knew whether to add or subtract and explain how they found their answer.

Optional: Students may create their own silly one or two-step math word problem featuring cats, dogs or other animals. Problems should use numbers up to 50 and include an addition or subtraction equation with an unknown.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) TEAM BUILDER – PURRFECTLY FOCUSED

Standard: Students develop self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making while creating art that explores personal ideas and encourages empathy, self-regulation, and conflict resolution.

Objective: Students will participate in cat-themed physical activities designed to regulate energy, improve impulse control and build focus during book time.

Procedure:

1. **Pounce & Stretch** (Energy Regulation)

What to do: Have students pretend to be cats waking up. Lead them through a “cat-cow” yoga stretch (arching and rounding the back five times), followed by a slow, controlled stretch. Next, ask students to “pounce” on a specific spot on the rug like a cat, channeling their wiggly energy into one controlled movement.

SEL Skill: Body awareness and physical self-control.

2. **Copycat Breathing** (Mindfulness)

What to do: Tell students they are going to be “copycats” of your breathing. Have them inhale slowly for three seconds, hold for three seconds and exhale for five seconds with a soft “purring” sound.

SEL Skill: Self-regulation and preparing the body for focused learning.

3. **Feline Freeze Dance** (Impulse Control)

What to do: Play fun music. When the music stops, students must freeze perfectly still, balancing on one foot or striking a “stealthy cat” pose.

SEL Skill: Impulse control and self-control.

SEL TEAM BUILDER – CONTINUED

4. Whisker Focus (Active Listening)

What to do: Before reading, ask students to wiggle their fingers by their ears like “cat whiskers.” Explain that, just as a cat uses its whiskers to sense the world, students will use their ears and eyes to listen carefully and follow along with the book.

SEL Skill: Attentive listening and focus.

SCIENCE – VENN DIAGRAM

Objective: Students will compare and contrast cats and dogs by exploring how their physical traits, behaviors and basic needs help them survive and grow. Students will identify shared and unique characteristics using a Venn diagram and use evidence to explain which animal they prefer.

Materials:

- Cats & Dogs Information Page (*page 11*)
- Cats & Dogs Venn diagram (*page 12*)
- Pencils

Procedure:

1. As a class, discuss how cats and dogs are alike and different. Use the **Cats & Dogs Information Page** to identify examples of their body parts, physical traits, behaviors and basic needs.
2. Have students complete a **Venn diagram**. Students should record characteristics that are unique to cats in the cat circle, characteristics unique to dogs in the dog circle and characteristics they share in the overlapping section.
3. Have students turn their paper over and write which animal they prefer and explain why using at least one characteristic or behavior from the Venn diagram to support their choice.

Discussion Questions:

- What characteristics do cats and dogs have in common?
- What is one physical trait that makes cats different from dogs?
- How do cats and dogs communicate differently?
- How do their behaviors help them survive?
- Which animal would you choose as a pet? Why?

STORY SEQUENCING SHEET

That Cat Can't Stay

Card 1

The First Stray: A Rainy Day

The Arrival: Mom brings home the first stray cat on a rainy, stormy day. Dad insists that the cat can't stay.

Card 2

The Second Stray: The Calico

The Arrival: Mom finds a beautiful calico cat and brings it home. Dad once again says the cat can't stay.

Card 3

The Third Stray: The Parking Lot Cat

The Arrival: Mom rescues a third cat that has been abandoned in a parking lot. Dad continues to insist that the cats can't stay.

Card 4

The Fourth Stray: The Injured Ginger

The Arrival: Mom brings home an injured ginger cat that has been hit by a car. Dad's actions begin to show that he may care more about the cats than he admits.

Card 5

The Fifth Stray: The Tabby Kitten

The Arrival: The young narrator finds a tiny tabby kitten and secretly brings it inside. Dad discovers the kitten and must decide what to do.

Card 6

The Resolution: A Surprise at the Door

The Twist: Instead of sending the cats away, Dad comes home from the pound with a sad, lonely puppy. The family realizes that Dad may complain about the cats, but he has a soft spot for animals after all.

Discussion Questions

What happens first, next, and last?

How does Dad respond when each new cat arrives?

What do Dad's actions tell us about his character?

How do Dad's feelings toward the animals change throughout the story?

What does the ending teach us about Dad?

Name: _____

Date: _____

MATH WORD PROBLEMS

CATS & DOGS

Read each story problem. Circle the operation (+ or -) you will use in the equation.
Solve the problem and show your work. Solve the problem and show your work.

1. Mom has 12 cat toys. She buys 8 more. **How many cat toys does she have now?**

Circle One: + -

Equation: **12** **8** = _____

Solve/Show Work: _____

Answer: Mom has _____ cat toys.

2. There are 25 dogs at the shelter. 7 dogs find homes. **How many dogs are left?**

Circle One: + -

Equation: **25** **7** = _____

Solve/Show Work: _____

Answer: There are _____ dogs left.

3. Dad sees 14 cats outside. Then 9 more cats arrive. **How many cats are there altogether?**

Circle One: + -

Equation: **14** **9** = _____

Solve/Show Work: _____

Answer: There are _____ cats.

4. The family has 32 treats. The cats eat 15 treats. **How many treats are left?**

Circle One: + -

Equation: **32** **15** = _____

Solve/Show Work: _____

Answer: There are _____ treats left.

Name: _____

Date: _____

5. Mom brings home 18 kittens. Then she brings home 11 puppies. **How many animals did she bring home altogether?**

Circle One: + -

Equation: **18** ☐ **11** = _____

Solve/Show Work: _____

Answer: She brought home _____ animals.

6. There are 41 animals at the shelter. 16 animals are adopted. **How many animals are still there?**

Circle One: + -

Equation: **41** ☐ **16** = _____

Solve/Show Work: _____

Answer: There are _____ animals still there.

Make Your Own Pet Math Problem!

Create a silly problem about cats, dogs or another animal.

My animals are: _____ and _____

Write your problem:

Circle One: + -

My equation: _____

My answer: _____

Challenge! Can you make a problem with two steps?

Step 1: _____

Step 2: _____

CATS & DOGS

INFORMATION PAGE

How Are Cats and Dogs Alike?

Cats and dogs are both **mammals**. They have many characteristics in common, but they also have special traits and behaviors that make them different.

Both cats and dogs have:

Fur: Fur helps keep their bodies warm.

Senses: Both have strong senses of hearing and smell.

Basic Needs: Both need food, water and a safe place to live.

Body Parts: Both have eyes, ears, paws and tails.

Four Legs: Both use their four legs to walk, run and move around.

How Are Cats Different?

Claws: Cats have sharp **retractable** claws, which means they can pull their claws back into their paws.

Food: Cats are **obligate carnivores**, which means they rely on nutrients found in animal-based foods.

Behavior: Cats are often more **independent**. They may enjoy exploring, hunting and playing on their own.

Communication: Cats **meow**, **purr** and **rub** against people or objects to communicate and show how they feel.

How Are Dogs Different?

Claws: Dogs have claws that generally **remain visible** and do not retract the way cats' claws do.

Food: Dogs are **omnivores**, which means they can eat foods from both plants and animals.

Behavior: Dogs are often **social animals**. They may enjoy being around people and other dogs and playing together.

Communication: Dogs **bark**, **pant** and **wag their tails** to communicate and show how they feel.

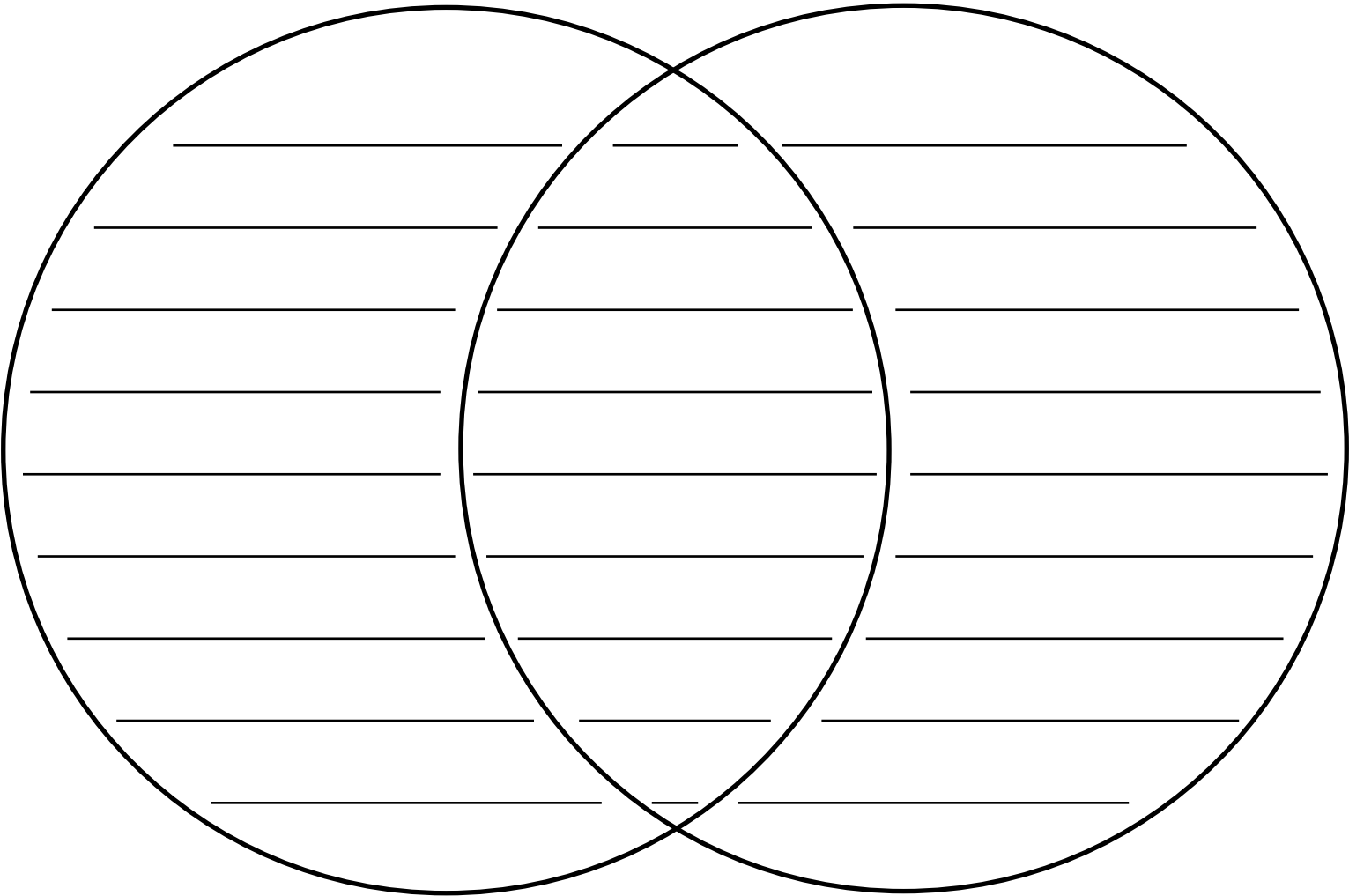
Name: _____

Date: _____

CATS & DOGS VENN DIAGRAM

Cats

Dogs



ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide enhances the English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum by providing supplemental learning opportunities alongside quality children’s literature, engaging students as they listen to expressive read-alouds.

Suggested story related activities in this guide are aligned with ELA Common Core Standards.