

Cat and Fish

By Joan Grant; Illustrated by Neil Curtis

Cat and fish come from different worlds and then they meet. Cat shows fish the wonders of living on the land and fish introduces cat to the fun times they can have in the water. Their adventures take them to lots of places but neither is really happy in the other's world. So they decide on a compromise – and live 'where the sea and the land meet'.

Before Reading the Book



Ask the children about unusual animal friendships they have read about in books or seen in films. For example, the friendship between Dog and Magpie in *Fox* by Margaret Wild and Ron Brooks; *Bear and Chook* by Lisa Shanahan and Emma Quay; the *Owl and the Pussycat* in the poem and song; and the film, *Milo and Otis*.

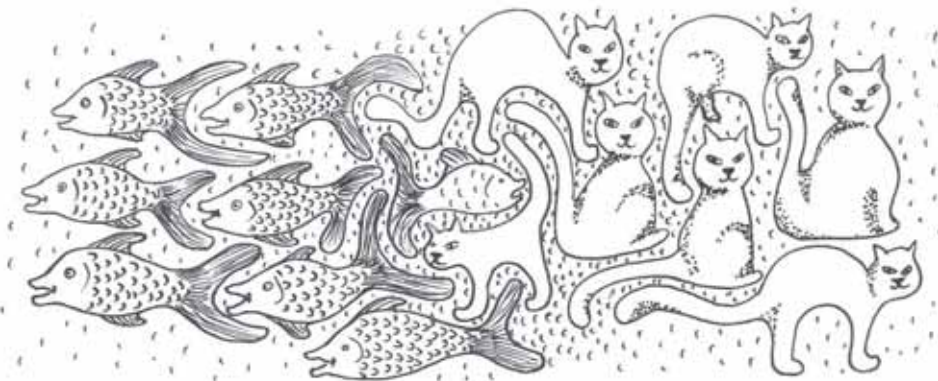
Why are these friendships unusual? What makes a good friendship?

Introducing the Book



Don't show the children the book. Tell the children that the title of the book is *Cat and Fish*. Ask them to predict what they think the book will be about. Record their predictions.

Still without showing the book, the children divide a piece of art paper into four equal parts. In one quarter they draw and colour a cat, in another they draw and colour a fish. In another quarter they draw the outline of a cat using only felt tipped pen. Tell the children the cat has stripes and that they are only to use felt tipped pens. Do the same for the fish in the final quarter of the paper. Discuss how the different illustrations look.



Read *Cat and Fish* without showing the children the illustrations.

What did Cat and Fish do together?

How do you know that they are friends?

Could a cat and fish really be friends?

Is that what the story is about?

Is the author trying to send us a message?

Read *Cat and Fish* again showing the children the illustrations.

Would the book look better if it was illustrated in colour?

How does the illustrator use line to create movement, texture, light and shade, pattern, perspective?

What feelings does the illustrator create using line?

For example, the quality of the line – thick, thin, curved or straight, can convey emotions or convey a certain idea. When Cat shows Fish how to climb, the thick, heavy lines convey the size, strength and solidarity of the mountain, while what lies beneath has tapering, broken lines as a contrast.

Responding to the Book



Visual Arts: 2D artwork

Divide a piece of art paper into six equal parts. The children express six different emotions, such as anger, joy, surprise, loneliness, fear and peace, just using lines and different thicknesses of felt tipped pens.

The illustrator, Neil Curtis, has made decisions about how space is going to be used positively or negatively. Compare the dramatic use of white space when Cat and Fish are on the mountain or when Fish carries Cat under the sea, with the use of large areas of black for the cover and the back endpapers. The children experiment using positive and negative space with a variety of mediums such as paint and pen, using Cat or Fish or both or another simple shape or animal.

The children draw a five point star on coloured A4 paper. On each point they write what they do together with others in friendship. In the centre of the star they draw a symbol of friendship such as joined hands, a peace sign or a symbol of their own. The stars can then be made into a book or displayed around the room.



Visual Arts: 2D line drawings

Show the children the detailed line drawings which illustrate the story. Ask them questions about the illustrations, eg. *How are the lines used? How effective are they? Why did the artist not use colour? How do the lines show depth in the pictures?*

Have the children draw an outline of an animal on their piece of paper, then fill it in with black and white lines, showing contours and different parts of the animal in the same way as the illustrator did in the story book.

Display their work with a sentence explaining how they created their artwork.



Dance: Action / Dynamics / Space

Read through the story and identify pages where the content of the text is portrayed visually, eg.

They played in the maze. Fish lurked and cat prowled (Circular text)

As the sun was rising..... (Words are on same angle as tightrope)

He showed fish how to climb (Words go up the page)

Fish was lonely for the water (Words are wavy, like water)

Float (Letters are floating)

Where the land and sea meet (Circular text – the end meets the beginning)

Use these six shapes to create a dance, ie.

- 8 beats (*maze*): Start in a low position and spiral up to a standing position
8 beats (*tightrope*): Move to the right moving bodies to a low position
8 beats (*climb*): Keep feet still, rise up and bring the body and arms to a high position
16 beats (*water*): Float arms and bodies 4 beats to the right, 4 beats to the left, repeat
8 beats (*float*): Join hands with a partner and float around the room
16 beats (*living together*): Join in a circle, skip 8 beats to the right, 8 beats to the left

Practise and present the dance to music with a strong beat.



Visual Arts: Visual sentences

Read through the story and identify pages where the content of the text is portrayed visually (see above dance activity).

Have children make up their own sentence about any subject they like.

Have them write the sentence in a way which describes visually the content of the words.

Share these with the rest of the class and have each child explain what they have done and how they did it. Display their artworks with explanatory sentences.



Music: Tone Colour

Give each small group of children the text from one of the pages.

Have them describe the content of the text and emotions suggested by the pictures, using only instruments, and no words.

Use the book as a graphic score.

As each page is turned the appropriate group plays their musical depiction of the text until the whole story is told with no words, just instruments.



Drama: Role-Play

Brainstorm other unlikely pairs of animals to become friends, eg.

- *Lion and mouse*
- *Elephant and flea*
- *Eagle and baby lamb*
- *Unicorn and dragon*
- *Penguin and tiger*

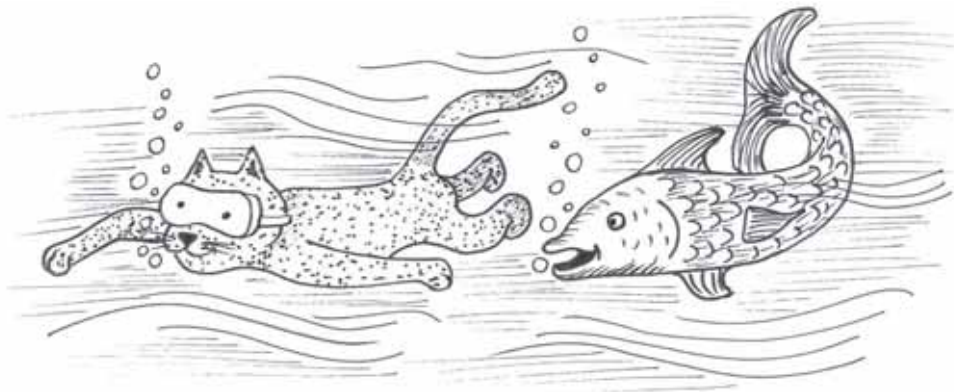
In pairs, have children choose one pair and improvise a situation where each partner shows the other one their home and they agree to live somewhere that suits both of them.



Music: Structure

Choose a simple, familiar song and put new words to it, based on the text of the story, eg. to the tune *Three Blind Mice* (*The Essential Arts Handbook*, page 217):

1. *Cat and fish, cat and fish,
Went to the park, went to the park,
They played in the maze and they lurked and prowled,
They sheltered from rain and they stole away,
Cat and fish, cat and fish.*
2. *Cat showed fish, cat showed fish,
His cosy hide-out, his cosy hide-out,
He showed fish how to climb the rocks
And how to live on the land at night,
Cat and fish, cat and fish.*
3. *Cat took fish, cat took fish,
To the ocean, to the ocean,
They played in the sea and cat could float
They met fish's friends and decided to live
Where the land met the sea, where the land met the sea.*





Music: Dynamics

Sing through the song and decide which lines should be sung softly, medium or loudly.

Clap to the beat and sing the song, showing the different dynamic levels throughout the song.

Music: Pitch

Find the notes C, D and E on a tuned instrument (ie. xylophone, glockenspiel, handbells, recorder, piano, keyboard, etc). Have children learn to play the melody of the first and last lines, eg.

E, D, C, E, D, C (*First line*)

E, D, C E, D, C (*Last line*)

Extension: Some children (and teachers!) will know how to play the full melody on a tuned instrument.

Encourage them to play along as the rest of the class sings the song, eg.

(*Note: C' = high C*)

E D C E D C

Cat and fish, cat and fish.

G F F E G F F E G

Went to the park, went to the park. They

C' C' C' B A B

played in the maze and they

C' G G G

lurked and prowled, They

C' C' C' B A B

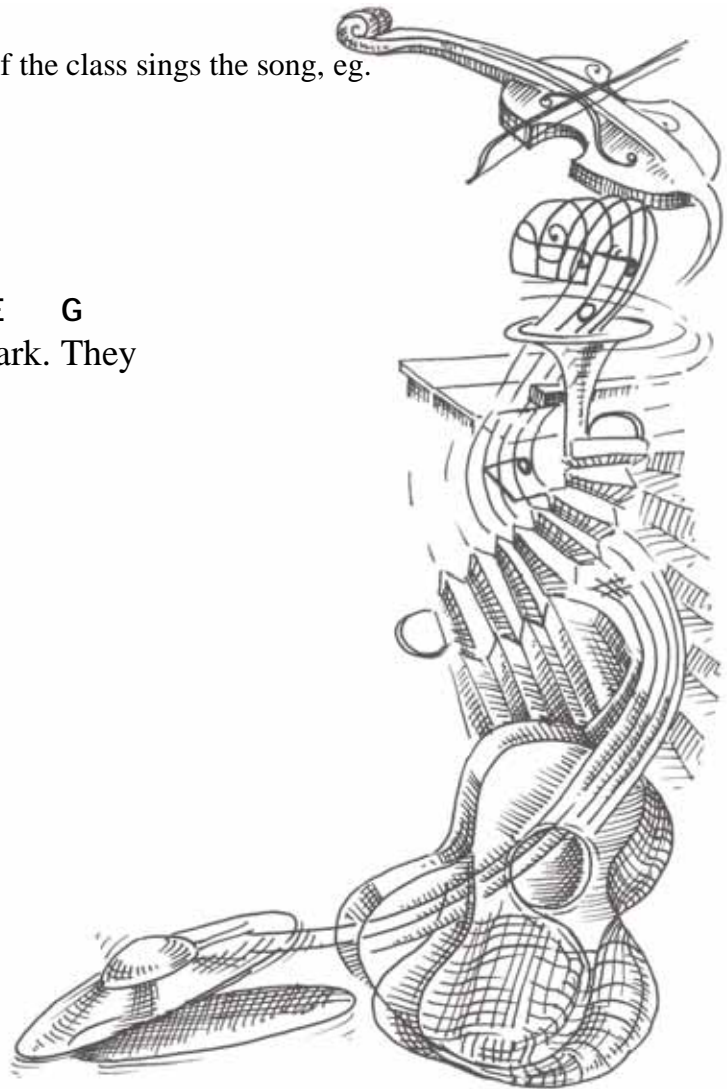
sheltered from rain and they

C' G G

stole away

E D C E D C

Cat and fish, cat and fish.





Drama: Improvisation

Using the song, have half the class improvise actions to the lyrics as the other half sings the song.

Swap over so everyone has a turn at dramatising the actions in the song.



Dance: Action

Have children experiment with movement sequences showing:

- *Cat walking on dry land*
- *Fish moving on dry land*
- *Cat and fish in a boat in the air*
- *Cat and fish in a boat on the water*
- *Cat in the water*
- *Fish in the water*

Have them take four of these movement sequences and create a dance showing the difference between cat and fish on land and water.

Practise and present the movement sequences to music with a strong beat.

Going Beyond the Book



Look at other books illustrated in black and white. For example, *The Widow's Broom* and *Jumanji* by Chris Van Allsburg. Compare and contrast books with black and white illustrations with those with colour.

Experiment with pattern using black and white paint. For example, look at the stripes of a zebra, the geometric chess board, positive and negative shapes created by shadows.

