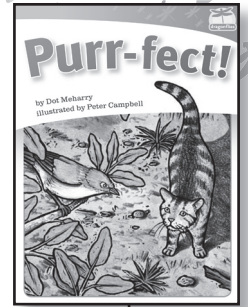


# Purr-fect!

by Dot Meharry

illustrated by Peter Campbell



## Overview

This fable is about a vain and gullible bird and a clever cat. Its dramatic ending is sure to stimulate lively discussion.

## Suggested purposes

This book supports the comprehension strategies of making and confirming predictions, drawing conclusions, and making judgments. This text provides many opportunities for the students to practise their decoding and cross-checking strategies. It's a useful text for monitoring the students' integration of reading strategies and their comprehension at this level.

## Text features (Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the high-frequency words
- the initial consonant blends – *cl, fl, pl, tr*
- the digraphs -sh – *she, washed*; -th – *that, the, feathers*
- the verbs ending -ed – *fluffed, jumped, liked, pleased, wanted, washed*
- the forms of the verb “to fly” – *flew, fly, flying*
- the irregular past-tense verbs – *could, flew, said, sang, saw*
- the pronouns – *he, she*
- the play on words in “Purr-fect”
- the use of direct speech
- the use of the ellipsis to indicate a pause
- the feeling of anticipation
- the gory (but unspecified) ending
- the characterisation
- the implied moral about the perils of flattery
- the visual language features – the changing perspective; the way the bird moves closer to the cat; the increasing dominance of the cat; the movement lines; and the recurring feather motif, especially the single feather on the title page and page 8

## Setting the scene

Have a brief discussion about cats and birds. Draw out the idea that some cats hunt and eat birds. Tell the students that the story they will read has a message. *See if you can work out what the author's message is.*

## The first reading

The students may realise the cat's intention at different stages, so provide lots of opportunities for prediction without giving the ending away.

Look at the cover. *What can you see in the illustration? What do cats say? Support the students in sounding out “fect”. Articulate the whole word and enjoy the play on words. What would be “purr-fect” for a cat? How would the cat say this? Spend a few moments practising a cat-like “Purr-fect”, savouring the rolled “rr”. Why do you think the author chose this title? Read the names of the author and the illustrator.*

**Back cover** – Read aloud the preview question. Discuss the students’ predictions.

**Title page** – Read the title again. *Why do you think there is just a feather here?* Accept the students’ suggestions but don’t give away the ending. *Let’s read and find out.*

Listen to the students read the text themselves, offering support as necessary.

**Page 2** – Note that this page establishes the time, the setting, the characters, and the fact that the cat and the bird can talk. If any students confuse “saw” with “was”, prompt them to cross-check the syntax and visual information. *“A cat was a bird” – does that sound right? Check the first letter and read it again. If necessary, clarify that the pronoun “she” refers to the cat.*

**Page 3** – The students may need help to sound out “pleased”. Check that they understand what it means. Reassure them about the irregular past-tense verb “sang”. If necessary, prompt the children to cross-check “feathers” using the illustration. Check their understanding of the pronouns. *What do the words “she” and “he” tell us about the cat and the bird?*

**Page 4** – *Compare this illustration with that on page 2. What do you notice about the cat and the bird? (They’re much closer, and the bird has fluffed up his feathers.) Why has the bird fluffed up his feathers? If the students say “flied” for “flew”, encourage them to cross-check. Does it sound right? If it was “flied”, what letter would you expect to see at the end of the word? You could tell them that “ew” sounds like “new” or “few”. If they’re unfamiliar with the irregular verb form, tell them the word.*

**Page 5** – *What do you think will happen next?* If the students haven’t worked it out, don’t tell them!

**Page 6** – *Compare this illustration with the one on page 4. The bird is now much closer to the cat. Why is the ellipsis there? Draw out the idea that this indicates a pause while the cat thinks about his next move.*

**Page 7** – *Why did the cat jump?*

**Page 8** – *What happened? Is this what you thought would happen? What do you think of this ending? Reflect on the main idea of the story. Is this story just about a cat and a bird, or does it have another meaning? Talk with the students about fables and how they often have a message or moral.*

**Ideas for revisiting the text** (Choose only one or two per session.)

- Listen to the students reread the text, observing their integration of strategies and their use of expression (a good indicator of comprehension). Talk about the characters. Track the cat’s actions together. *What was she thinking every time she said “Purr-fect”? How would you describe the cat? What do you think of the bird? How do you know the bird is foolish? Finish the discussion with an evaluation. Which character do you prefer? Why?*
- Focus on the narrative structure. Identify the introduction, the problem, and the ending. Talk about how the illustrations and the repeated dialogue build a sense of anticipation.
- Focus on any of the initial consonant blends or digraphs that the students had difficulty with. Locate examples in the text and list other words that start the same way or that contain the same digraph. Read the list together, carefully articulating the common sound.
- List the verbs that end in “ed” on the board. Experiment with adding other endings to the root verbs (“jump”, “jumps”, “jumping”, “jumped”) and use the words orally in sentences.

- Focus on any of the irregular past-tense verbs that the students had difficulty with. Explain that some verbs can't have "ed" added to them and that the students need to draw on their knowledge of spoken English to decide what sounds right. Identify the three forms of the verb "fly" in the text. Focus on "flew", using it orally in a variety of sentences.
- Talk about the purpose of the speech marks and have the students reread the dialogue, encouraging expressive reading. Use a modified form of readers' theatre, with the teacher as the narrator and the students reading the dialogue together.
- Focus on the pronouns "she" and "he". Write sentences related to the text on the board and have the students replace the subjects with the appropriate pronoun, for example, "The cat saw the bird" or "The bird flew down." This would be especially helpful for students for whom English is a second language.

### **Suggestions for further activities**

- Practise readers' theatre with groups of three students (a narrator, a cat, and a bird). Have the students take turns in each role.
- Ask the students to add thought bubbles to the illustrations of the bird and the cat on pages 6 and 8.
- Practise identifying and summarising main ideas by reading and discussing other fables.
- Read other tales about tricky characters.
- BLM word activity: practise punctuating sentences

The students can punctuate the sentences. They can then read their sentences to a partner.

- BLM comprehension activity: write thought bubbles

The students can read the sentences in the boxes. With a partner, they can then think about what the cat or bird might be thinking. They can then write the animal's thoughts in the thought bubbles.