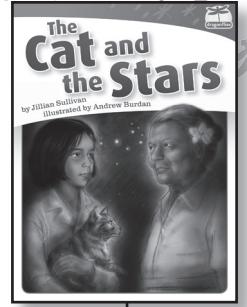


The Cat and the Stars

by Jillian Sullivan

illustrated by Andrew Burdan



Overview

This is a touching narrative about Evie and her grandmother. Evie is tired of sharing her home with her grandmother. One day, Evie discovers that they are both interested in the stars and she finds out that her grandmother can teach her more than she realised.

Suggested purposes

This text supports the comprehension strategies of summarising the main ideas; interpreting and analysing characters' feelings, relationships and actions; and making judgments.

Text features

- the themes of co-operation and tolerance and finding things in common to share
- the relationship between the characters and the different points of view
- the narrative structure and the use of dialogue to drive it
- the indicators of time – *on Saturday morning, that night, the next morning, that afternoon*
- the action verbs that provide interest to the writing – *banging, crept, whispered, rubbed, shining*
- the word endings – *ed, ing, ly, est*
- the comparative adjective – *tallest*
- the irregular past-tense verbs – *had, said*
- the contractions – *don't, I'm, didn't, there's, they're, you're*
- the alliteration – *clever cat, seven stars shining*
- the onomatopoeia – *meow, purr*
- the colloquial language – *OK, oh!*
- the commas for phrasing
- the compound words – *Grandmother, forever, downstairs, pancakes, strawberries, everything, upstairs, afternoon, sometimes, goodnight*
- the blends – *gr – grandmother; -sh – shiny, shadow; -wh – whispered; -br – bright, brave; -cl – climbing; -st – storm*

Setting the scene

Tell the students that they are going to be read a book about a girl and her grandmother. *Who has a grandmother or someone older in their family with whom they have a special relationship?* Be aware that some students may not have these people in their lives. Share your own experience about a grandparent. *Do you get on with everyone in your family?* Discuss how sometimes it is difficult for everyone to get on in a family.

The first reading

Front cover – Read the title and the names of the writer and the illustrator. Look at the illustration and predict what the story might be about.

Back cover – Read aloud the preview question. Help the students to make connections with the preview question and their own experiences.

Discuss any special hobby or activity the students do with their grandparent or special person.

Pages 2 and 3 – Read the text and look at the illustration. *Where do you think Evie’s grandmother is from?*

How does Evie feel about her grandmother? Discuss the clues the author gives, such as Evie banging the door, thinking about how her grandmother has “come to live with them forever”, and how she has to sleep in the sewing room.

Pages 4 and 5 – *Why does Evie think her grandmother doesn’t like her? How has the author described Evie on page 4?* Discuss the way the author has described Evie as a cat. *Does Grandma like Evie?* Discuss her actions and reactions to Evie being a cat. *Why is Evie behaving like a cat?*

Pages 6 and 7 – *Why do you think Grandma is crying? How might she be feeling? How might Evie feel seeing her Grandma upset?* Look at the illustration on page 6. *Who makes Evie feel better? Does Grandma have someone like Silas?*

What happened during the storm? Why did Evie get upset? How did she feel being alone? Make a list of Evie’s feelings during the storm. Encourage the students to come up with descriptive vocabulary.

Pages 8 and 9 – *Why is Grandma living with Evie? How does Mum react to Evie’s feelings? When does Evie really need her mum?* Encourage the students to see that Evie is having to become more independent. *How does Mum help resolve things?* Lead a discussion about the students’ experiences.

Discuss the use of dialogue in the middle of a paragraph. Look at the sentence structure on page 8 and how punctuation has been used.

Pages 10 and 11 – *Why did Evie open the window? Why do you think she “meowed” to her grandma? Why has Grandma been upset?* Discuss the feeling of being homesick and encourage the students to share their experiences. *How do we know Evie does really care about her grandmother?*

Page 12 – *What do they realise they have in common? What message do they get from the stars?* Discuss the importance of family. *What have Evie and her grandma done to help their relationship? Who has compromised what?*

Ask the students to think about why the author wrote this story. *What message was she trying to give? What can it remind?* Ask the students to think of anyone they may not be getting along with and what they could do to resolve the problem.

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

- Listen as the students reread the text with a partner, observing how they manage. Note the students who use expression and appropriate phrasing. Discuss any vocabulary they find challenging.
- Reflect on the text and identify each of the following as a model for the students’ writing.
 1. Plot: *What happened?*
 2. Setting: *Where did the story take place? When did it take place?*
 3. Characterisation: *Who were the main characters? What did they look like?*
 4. Structure: *How did the story begin? What was the problem? How was the problem resolved?*
 5. Theme: *What theme was the author communicating?*

- Identify the alliteration. If the students are unfamiliar with alliteration, explain it and give them an example such as “clever cat” on page 4. Discuss the effectiveness of this example and ask the students to find other examples.
- Focus on the adjectives in the text. Draw out the idea that the adjectives add clarity and interest and help the reader to interpret the text.
- Discuss similes. Ask the students to find the simile on page 5. Discuss why the author used this simile. As a group, practise writing similes for sentences that have the same structure, for example, “He walked like a ...”
- Write “purr” and “meow” on the board. Discuss the features of onomatopoeia and how it suggests sounds through words, for example, “crackle”, “splat”, “ooze”, “squish”, “boom”. Brainstorm any other examples the students can think of and how they could use it in their writing.

Suggestions for further activities

- During shared writing, encourage the students to use this format for writing their own story. Tell them they may like to use a situation when they have not got along with someone. They can follow the structure of the text in their writing.
- Rewrite part of the story from the point of view of Silas, including what he sees, hears, and feels.
- Practise writing alliteration in a sentence or as part of an animal-based poem that reflects the student’s personality.
- BLM word activity: use past-tense verbs

The students can practise writing past- or present-tense verbs. They can then identify five more verbs in the text and write each one in a new sentence using the correct tense.

- BLM comprehension activity: make a story web

The students can use the text to make a story web. They can identify the setting, the characters, and the events.