



They're the Cat's Pyjamas!

From tigers to tabbies, every cat is a Very Important Person—and knows it! You can't own a cat—though one may be kind enough to let you look after it!—and it will always do exactly as it pleases. Independent, beautiful and wild at heart, cats have fascinated people since time began.

The ancient Egyptians looked on cats as sacred creatures and worshipped a cat-headed goddess called Bast. Hundreds of cats lived in luxury in Egyptian temples, lovingly cared for by devoted priests. When they died, they were carefully mummified and laid to rest in elaborate coffins, often with mummified mice placed alongside them to provide a tasty meal in the afterlife! Families kept cats, too—and when their pets died, the law demanded that they shave off their eyebrows as a sign of mourning.

Mohammed, the founder of Islam, was a great cat lover too—although he didn't worship them. It is said that, one day, he found a cat fast asleep on his

coat, and rather than disturb it he cut the cloth around it. To this day, Muslims allow cats in their mosques in remembrance of Mohammed.

Unfortunately, Christians in the Middle Ages weren't so enlightened! For a time cats were thought to be in league with the devil and were actually persecuted and killed—along with the “witches” who cared for them. But it was a big mistake to reduce the cat population—some historians believe that this was why the dreadful plagues swept through Mediaeval Europe. These diseases were spread by rats and the fleas they carried, and without any cats to control them the rats got out of hand.

Cats are so clever and mysterious that people have often thought that they have magic qualities—either for good or for evil. Like Puss in Boots they can bring fame and fortune to their human companions. Another pantomime character—Dick Whittington—would never have become Lord Mayor of London without his cat!

We all know that a black cat crossing your path brings luck, but did you know that





cats are supposed to be able to cure all kinds of illnesses? Just rub a cat's tail on the problem area and you might get rid of a sty on your eyelid, a fishbone in your throat, or even a bald head!

Cats bring people together, too. According to folklore, if a bachelor accidentally steps on a cat's tail, he is sure to marry before the year is out. And it is to be hoped that the cat will reappear on the wedding day, because if it sneezes near the bride it will bring her happiness!

Cats are friends to people in many ways—including getting rid of rats! That's why no ship would set to sea without one. The ship's cat is an important and much-loved member of the crew, and whenever Sir Winston Churchill boarded a vessel he always asked to be introduced to the cat.

Cats make themselves useful in many other places. They have been employed in post offices up and down the land since 1860—when the problem of post being eaten by rodents became an embarrassment to the Royal Mail! These cats are official employees, paid an allowance for their food by the Post Office. Cheeky—the mouser who currently guards the Bag Switching Depot in Edinburgh—is paid £4 a month.

This certainly wouldn't have been enough for Tiddles—



the cat who patrolled the ladies' lavatory at Paddington Station for 11 years. He weighed in at a staggering 15 kilos (32 lb) and was one of the sights of London until he died peacefully in 1983, after enjoying a last gargantuan meal prepared by a devoted attendant.

Cats have a genius for persuading humans to pander to their every whim! Some of the greatest minds in history have been slaves to their cats. Dr Samuel Johnson, a great writer and famous wit, insisted on going out personally to choose oysters for his cat, Hodge, because the task was too important to be left to a servant. Edward Lear—who wrote numerous verses, including *The Owl and the Pussycat*—went even further to please his cat. When he was forced to move house, he had another one built to exactly the same design as the original house, to ensure that his cat would feel at home in it.

The great poet T S Eliot found cats so inspiring that he dedicated a whole book to them—*Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*. Andrew Lloyd Webber based his smash-hit musical *Cats* on the wonderful feline characters T S Eliot created.

It is difficult to imagine anyone writing a musical about dogs. Or rabbits. Or gerbils. Cats have a very special place in the human heart. They are the wildest of wild things—miniature tigers who choose to lounge by our firesides. They are the supreme hunters, with no natural enemies except human beings—and they tamed us long ago. No wonder they think they're the cat's pyjamas!

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Puss in Boots



The story of *Puss in Boots* can be traced back to the Italian writer Straparola, whose *Piacevole notti* (night 2, fable 1) first appeared in 1553. This contained the tale of a cat whose extraordinary talents were explained by the fact that he was a fairy in disguise. Although animal helpers are a common feature of some of our best-loved fairy tales, not many have such a large role to play as the hero of this tale.

In the original version, a poor woman in Bohemia dies, leaving her three sons all her worldly possessions. This doesn't amount to much. The eldest son receives a kneading trough, the second a pastry board, and all that is left for the youngest, who is named Constantino Fortunato, is the family cat. Originally disappointed with this inheritance, the young man soon discovers that he is indeed more fortunate than his brothers.

Puss is the original confidence trickster who relies on his wits and a healthy dose of cunning and subterfuge. He catches various tasty treats for the King and tells him that they are the gift of his master Constantino. When the King begins to feel kindly towards the young man, Puss persuades his master to jump in the river beside the castle and pretend to drown. The King sends members of his household to the rescue, and when Puss tells him his master was on the way to visit him with a rich gift of jewels (totally fictitious of course), but has been attacked and robbed, the King feels even more well-disposed towards him. He determines that Constantino shall have his daughter as a wife and presents him with ten mule-loads of gold, and five mule-loads of rich clothes.

The only possible fly in the ointment is quickly dealt with by Puss. When the bride and groom are sent off home with a group of retainers, Constantino is perplexed as to where to go. Puss solves this problem by travelling ahead of him and telling all travellers that a great body of armed men are approaching; he insists if they want to be safe they have to say they are Constantino's men. The retainers then believe they are on his master's lands.



To put the icing on the cake, Puss finally arrives at a castle guarded by a few men whom he also persuades with the same story. The retainers are told the castle is Constantino's and make themselves at home. Luckily for him, the true lord of the castle meets with an accident and Constantino stays there. When the king dies, the people choose him as their new King.

The next version of the tale appeared in Basile's *Pentamerone*, written in 1634. Although set in Naples, it has many similarities to the original. Puss uses the same tricks to ingratiate his master, Lord Gagluiso, with the King. A fictitious account of his master being robbed by his servants ensures that rich clothes are once more supplied.

The most well-known version of the tales, and the one with which we are most familiar, was written by Perrault in 1697. Entitled *Le Chat Botte*, it introduced us to a cat who had a thing about boots! All he asks of his master, the creatively named Marquis of Carabas, is a bag and a pair of boots, before he sets off to make his master's fortune. Again the pretence of drowning and robbery are used to ingratitate Carabas with the King.

Perrault also introduced an ogre into the proceedings. The stately castle in this version belongs to an ogre who can change himself into different animals. Cunning as ever, Puss originally gets him to change into a lion before questioning the ogre as to whether he could change himself into smaller creatures such as a rat or a mouse. The ogre rather foolishly changes himself into a mouse. Puss gobbles him up and Carabas takes over the castle.

Clearly, although the versions of the tales differ in some respects, they all have one thing in common — the hero of the tale is the cat and, although he receives benefits from his own actions, the poor youngest son is the main beneficiary.

What a Thing to Say!

"He is the cat who walks by himself,
and all places are alike to him."
Rudyard Kipling

"Of all God's creatures, there is only one
which cannot be made a slave of the lash.
That one is the cat. If a man could be
crossed with a cat, it would improve man,
but it would deteriorate the cat."
Mark Twain

"A little lion, soft and dainty sweet."

Graham R Tomson

"When I play with my cat, who
knows whether she is not amusing
herself as much with me more than
I am with her."
Michel de Montaigne

"A cat's friendship is not easily won,
but it is something worth having."
Michael Joseph

"The smallest feline is a masterpiece."
Leonardo da Vinci

"Who can believe there is no soul
behind those luminous eyes?"

Theophile Gautier

"The cat is a dilettante in fur."

Theophile Gautier

"I have noticed that what cats most
appreciate in a human is not the ability to
produce food, which they take for granted,
but his or her entertainment value."

Geoffrey Household

"Cats are a mysterious kind of folk.
There is more passing in their
minds than we are aware of"

Sir Walter Scott

No self-respecting cat wants to be an artist's model."

Anonymous

"For I will consider my cat, Jooffrey,
For he is the servant of the Living God,
dearly and dearly serving him."

Christopher Smart

"cats look down on us,
dogs look up to us,
pigs is equal"

Anonymous





Quick Quiz for Crafty Cats!

- 1 Which type of cat has no tail?
- 2 What colour is Postman Pat's cat?
- 3 Which big cat is the fastest on earth?
- 4 Which cartoon cat is the enemy of the canary Tweety Pie?
- 5 What is a polecat, and does it live at the North Pole?
- 6 Alice in Wonderland meets a cat with a huge grin. What sort of cat is it?
- 7 One thing cats aren't very good at is singing. Do you know what the horrid wailing noise they make is called?
- 8 Can cats really see better than humans in the dark?
- 9 There are true wild cats living in one part of Britain. Where are they?
- 10 Name the overweight, lasagne-loving cat created by cartoonist Jim Davis.
- 11 What are male cats called?
- 12 What name links a car with a large spotted cat from Central and South America?



Answers

Wonderful Wordsearch: Curiosity killed the cat
 Bafoing Boots (top): Wellington, shoe, platform boot, rollerskate, stilleto, ballet shoe
 (pointe), trainer, slipper, football boot, boot, ice-skate, jester's shoe, sandal, flipper.
 Bafoing Boots (bottom): F doesn't belong! The pairs are: A-K, B-D, C-H, E-J and G-I.
 Quick Quiz: 1: Manx; 2: Black-and-white; 3: Cheetah; 4: Sylvester; 5: A member of the weasel family (a wild ferret), and it is found in Wales and Scotland; 6: The Cheshire Cat; 7: Caterwauling; 8: Yes; 9: Scotland; 10: Garfield; 11: Toms; 12: Jaguar.

Baffling Boots!

Stare at the picture below for exactly one minute. Then put the programme away, and try to memorise all fourteen pieces of footwear!



Here are eleven boots. There are five pairs — can you spot them? And can you find the one boot that doesn't belong to a pair?



Wonderful Wordsearch!

L C H E E T A H S Q C
L E X N Y L J U R U T
E T O S W A L C I E O
H I B P G O S P S E L
S G I U A P E I T N E
E E A X R R A G U O C
S R E Y S M D W K I O
I R L I E N E T T I K
O L A S X E D S T H E
T N E N L I O N E C A
R N A I N I S S Y B A
O M W H I S K E R S T
T A B B Y A R O G N A

TABBY
LION
ANGORA
REX
ABYSSINIAN
LYNX
TORTOISESHELL

PERSIAN
TIGER
OCELOT
JAGUAR
BURMESE
CLAWS
MANX
PAW

CHEETAHS
KITTEN
QUEEN
SIAMESE
WHISKERS
LEOPARD
COUGAR

Can you find all the words hidden in this wordsquare? They may run up, down, forwards, backwards and even diagonally! When you have found all the words, there should be twenty-one letters left over, which will spell out a famous feline proverb.

Answers

Baffling Boots

The various items of footwear were: wellington boot, slipper, flipper, sandal, stiletto, trainer, jester boot, ice skate, roller skate, flip-flop, platform boot, ballet shoe, football boot, black shoe, and army boot.



Wonderful Wordsearch!

L	C	H	E	E	T	A	H	S	Q	C
L	E	X	N	Y	L	J	U	R	U	T
E	T	O	S	W	A	L	C	I	E	O
H	I	B	P	G	O	S	P	S	E	L
S	G	I	U	A	P	E	I	T	N	E
E	E	A	X	R	R	A	G	U	O	C
S	R	E	Y	S	M	D	W	K	I	O
I	R	L	I	E	N	E	T	T	I	K
O	L	A	S	X	E	D	S	T	H	E
T	N	E	N	L	I	O	N	E	C	A
R	N	A	I	N	I	S	S	Y	B	A
O	M	W	H	I	S	K	E	R	S	T
T	A	B	B	Y	A	R	O	G	N	A

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L	C	H	E	E	T	A	H	S	Q	C
L	E	X	N	Y	L	J	U	R	U	T
E	T	O	S	W	A	L	C	I	E	O
H	I	B	P	G	O	S	P	S	E	L
S	G	I	U	A	P	E	I	T	N	E
E	E	A	X	R	R	A	G	U	O	C
S	R	E	Y	S	M	D	W	K	I	O
I	R	L	I	E	N	E	T	T	I	K
O	L	A	S	X	E	D	S	T	H	E
T	N	E	N	L	I	O	N	E	C	A
R	N	A	I	N	I	S	S	Y	B	A
O	M	W	H	I	S	K	E	R	S	T
T	A	B	B	Y	A	R	O	G	N	A