

The Classified Cat

Character concept:

Respect includes accepting others for who they are and focusing on their positive traits.

Objective:

Students will recognize that a variety of pets' personality traits and physical characteristics contribute to people's fondness for them.

Curriculum connection:

Students will implement a research strategy that includes selecting appropriate sources for a specific purpose (e.g., dictionary, thesaurus, encyclopedia, informational trade books). They will correctly identify adjectives, use a thesaurus to determine related words, and use organizational features of text, such as alphabetizing. (language arts)



National standards addressed:

language arts/English (applying knowledge, applying language skills, NL-ENG.K-12.6,12)

Materials:

- dictionaries, thesauruses, various books, and magazines and newspapers with advertisements in them
- notebooks or scrap paper
- pencils

Activity: Students will play a slightly modified version of the traditional game "The Minister's Cat." Going in alphabetical order, they will take turns completing the sentence, "The cat that I love is a(n) _____ cat," using adjectives (*awesome, brave, calm*) that describe cats in straightforward, creative, and positive ways.

Procedure:

1. Have students comb through books and magazines in search of interesting adjectives (words that describe). Good sources include dictionaries, thesauruses, poetry books, sports magazines, home improvement/gardening magazines, and newspapers.

Direct students to pay special attention to advertisements in magazines and newspapers. For example, automobile ads (*dependable, sleek, powerful*), ads for beauty products, such as shampoo and makeup (*bold, shiny, manageable*), furniture ads (*well-made, sturdy, beautiful, timeless*), movie ads (*exciting, surprising, funny*), ads for services (*speedy, reliable, trustworthy*), and personal ads (*smart, attractive, athletic, caring*) often employ a number of positive, descriptive words.

Give students several minutes to look through a variety of sources and record interesting adjectives in their notebooks or on scrap paper. (Encourage them to look up unfamiliar words as well and add those to their word lists.)

2. Tell students that they will be playing a game based on the old word game "The Minister's Cat." Explain the rules as follows.

- Students will sit in a circle. You will call on one person to go first, and students will follow in clockwise order.

- Each student's job will be to finish the sentence, "The cat I love is a(n) _____ cat." They must fill in the blank with a word that describes a cat they might like. The word does not have to describe the perfect cat but simply a cat that someone might love. (Remind students that cats—like people—come in many shapes, sizes, and colors and that they have their own habits and personalities. That's what makes every cat special to the people who love him.)

The words that students choose can be silly or unusual or even poke fun at cats (for example, the cat that I love can be "loud" or "nosy"), but they must describe a cat who is well-loved and cared for (for example, not "lonely" or "filthy").

- The trick of the game is to go in alphabetical order; therefore, the first person will think of an "a" word to complete the sentence; the second person will think of a "b" word, and so on. When you have gone through the entire alphabet, you may start from "a" and go around the circle again. (You will skip the letter "x.")
- When someone is unable to think of a word, you may call on the next person in the circle to help, or you may offer some clues to one or more words.

3. Have students sit in a circle and begin the game. You may want to go first, clapping as you speak, to establish a rhythm: *The CAT that I LOVE is an ACT-ive cat.* Allow students to refer to their word lists as they play.

4. Play at least one round, A-Z, and end the game when students start having difficulty thinking of new adjectives.

Note to teachers: Below is a "word bank" you can use to help students who are stuck thinking of a word. Give hints, such as "What color might a cat be?" or "How would you describe a cat who makes you laugh?"

- a: active, alert, amazing, awesome, adult, adventurous, adopted, adorable
- b: brave, beautiful, big, bouncy, brown, black, bashful, broad, bubbly, breezy, beastly, beefy, babyish, bold, bearded
- c: calm, curious, clever, cuddly, careful, cautious, chatty, clean, curly, chubby, cozy, classy, courageous, caring, chipper, colorful, comfortable, charming, crafty, cute, cranky
- d: different, dapper, dynamite, dazzling, dark, dashing, dynamic, dinky, devoted, distinguished, drowsy, dainty, delicate, dependable, daring, down-to-earth
- e: eager, elderly, excellent, extraordinary, eight-year-old, enthusiastic, elegant, emotional, exceptional, exciting
- f: funny, faithful, fuzzy, furry, fancy, friendly, famous, fabulous, frisky, 'fraidy, favorite, fair, family, fast, fanged, far-out, festive, flashy, fit, floppy, foolish, foxy, fun, funky, frolicking, fluffy, fussy, finicky, fantastic
- g: goofy, graceful, gallant, gorgeous, gentle, gray, grandmother's, gabby, gifted, glamorous, great, good, good-looking, glorious, golden, groovy, gutsy, glossy
- h: happy, homely, handsome, hearty, healthy, heroic, hairy, heavy, helpful, hilarious, heavenly, homey, honorable, husky, huggable, humorous
- i: indoor, incredible, important, imperfect, impressive, intelligent, irresistible, interesting
- (continued)

j: jolly, joyful, jumpy, jaunty, jazzy, jealous, jittery, jumbo
k: keen, kind, kingly, kitty, knowing, kooky
l: long-haired, loving, lean, lucky, lovable, lovely, lurking, lazy, litter-trained, lively, loud, loyal, large, likable
m: mixed-breed, messy, musical, meowing, manly, mysterious, mature, macho, magical, marvelous, medium, merry, memorable, mischievous, mixed-up, modest, moody
n: nice, naughty, nosy, noisy, neighbor's, noble, nervous, nimble, nutty, nuzzling, neat, normal, nine-month-old
o: old, obedient, ordinary, orange, obnoxious, oddball, original, outstanding, outgoing
p: playful, peaceful, plain, pretty, pleasant, peppy, perky, private, pudgy, people, perfect, picky, plucky, plump, practical, prowling, protective, priceless, puffy, puzzling, proud
q: quick, quiet, quirky, quaint, quibbling, questioning
r: round, restful, regular, reckless, rowdy, ridiculous, reliable
s: silly, serious, shelter, shaggy, soft, smart, Siamese, striped, spotted, shy, sneaky, saucy, splendid, snoring, snoozing, swift, sprightly, silky, stubborn, spoiled, slender, super, shiny, smooth, sweet, scaredy
t: terrific, trained, tiny, teeny, tabby, thoughtful, thinking, typical, true, tidy, tan
u: unique, unusual, useful, understanding, unforgettable, ultimate
v: vain, valuable, visiting, vivacious, vibrant, very _____
w: well-behaved, wonderful, white, wagging, warm, worldly, wise, winking, wobbly, wiry, wimpy, wee, well-mannered, welcome, wacky, wary, watchful, witty, whiny, whiskery
y: yellow, young, year-old, youthful
z: zippy, zany, zooming, zestful, zealous

5. Wrap up the lesson by reminding students that animal shelters are filled with cats in need of loving homes. Each cat is different. Each has her own history and personality that make her special—just like the cats you described in your game.

Extension:

Divide students into small groups. Have each group write a classified ad describing a cat up for adoption at the shelter. Assign each group a cat with a different profile and have them include words in their ads that describe their particular cat in a creative, honest, and positive way. Examples of different kinds of cats may include the following: an unwanted kitten; a cat with special needs, such as one who was hurt in a fire or who was born blind; an older cat whose owner died; a cat who was abandoned by his caregivers; a lost cat whom no one has claimed; a cat who is used to being the only pet in the house; a cat who has always lived with a loving family; a cat who has always been kept safe indoors; a cat who was hurt by someone on purpose.

