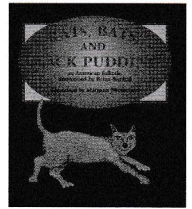


Rats, Bats, and Black Puddings

an American folktale dramatised by Brian Birchall
illustrated by Margaret Nieuwland



Book Summary

Small Cat, frustrated by her size, asks Black Bull how to grow bigger, with interesting results.

Features of the Book

- The humour in the text, especially the sayings of Small Cat.
- The use of large type for expression and characters' names.
- The range of punctuation – ellipses, question marks, exclamation marks, and quotation marks.
- The adjectives – “big”, “little”, “small”, “quick”, and “clever”.
- The character list.
- Repetition as a support for the reader.
- The use of parentheses and/or italics for stage directions.

Purpose

Rats, Bats, and Black Puddings can be used in a guided reading setting to introduce and reinforce the following skills and strategies:

- understanding the punctuation cues and their meanings;
- discussing the organisational structure of the text;
- identifying the plot and characters within the story;
- writing a recount of the story using own words.

Introducing the text

Discuss cats and what they are good at doing, and how they can catch their food and escape from their enemies. Discuss past experiences with plays. Read the cover information and identify the cat as one of the characters.

Discuss what the title may refer to.

Reading the text

- Understanding the punctuation cues and their meanings.
- Discussing the organisational structure of the text.
- Identifying the plot and characters within the story.

Pages 2 and 3 – Read the list of characters and discuss the illustration.

– *What is the cat's problem?*

Point out the first of Small Cat's funny sayings – “Rats, bats, and shiny frogs”. Discuss other sayings that the children may have heard, for example, “raining cats and dogs”, and why we use them.

Pages 4 to 11 – The illustrations in the book offer only limited support for the readers, so they need to be fully aware of the conventions in the text before they begin to read the play for themselves. Explain that they will be reading all of the parts themselves but that in a performance, each person usually takes one part.

Discuss the use of italics for stage directions and the use of punctuation to help expression. The children now read the book independently.

Revisiting the text

Talk about ways to describe the three characters in the play. Find the adjectives used in the play – “big”, “little”, “small”, “quick”, and “clever”.

– *Can the children suggest any other ways of describing Black Bull, Small Cat, and Aunt Penty?*

Spelling Up

✎ Writing a recount of the story using own words.

The children could write the story in the play as

■ a narrative.

Complete the blackline master opposite.