

Super Cats: True Stories of Felines That Made History

Author/Publisher/Website: MacLeod, E.
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Recommended Grades: K-7

Subjects/Courses: Science, English Language Arts

Focused Education Resources Review

DESCRIPTION

For better or worse, cats have played key roles in the world's history since the time of the Ancient Egyptians. "Super Cats" is an engaging nonfiction resource that uses detailed descriptions, stories, and images to illustrate current and historical truths about the relationships that humans have had with felines throughout history. This resource is suitable for all students at the elementary level and the information is particularly accessible for intermediate students, presenting opportunities for the development of creative and critical thinking skills through research and inquiry projects or through narrative and expository writing.

CURRICULUM FIT

Does the resource support BC curriculum? Moderately

This product supports the Core Competencies of the BC curriculum:

- Communication
- Creative Thinking
- Critical thinking
- Positive Personal and Cultural Identity

Comments:

"Super Cats" supports the BC Curriculum English Language Arts Big Ideas in Grades K–7. In Grades 4–7, it supports the Big Idea that "exploring stories and other texts helps us understand ourselves and make connections to others and to the world." It also supports the Big Idea for Grades K–7 that "language and story can be a source of creativity and joy." Additionally, it supports the Big Idea in Grade 7 Science that "evolution by natural selection provides an explanation for the diversity and survival of living things."

SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

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|-----------------|---|
| Belief System: | This resource provides short descriptions of the attitudes and beliefs that societies around the world have held about cats over time. Both positive and negative viewpoints are included. The resource shares lists of cat gods and goddesses, folktales about the luck of cats, and explains superstitions about cats. The information is presented in narrative and expository writing formats. |
| Violence: | "Super Cats" shares information and illustrated images about the beliefs and violent practices of past societies, including those where people have been killed for harming cats in Ancient Egypt, or about people and cats being burned or hanged for being associated with witchcraft. Information and photographs of cats hunting and killing other animals is included. A story set in a hospital of a cat visiting patients close to death serves as a cue of their nearness to passing. There are descriptions of conflicts that occurred during various wars and of the injuries cats and humans suffered. |
| Sustainability: | This resource explains how the introduction of a predatory animal into an environmental ecosystem can contribute to drastic changes to a habitat (for example, the extinction of the Stephens Island wren). |

Social Considerations Comments:

Do the social considerations support, rather than detract from, student learning? Extensively

Situations of violence or death in this resource are presented with context and the descriptions are not gratuitous, but these could affect younger or sensitive readers. Teachers can use the considerations identified to stimulate classroom discussions about predator-prey relationships, invasive species, the origins of folklore, therapy animals, and the semiotics of animals in iconography. The descriptions, stories, and images included in the resource may generate questions or encourage students to share stories about death so teachers may wish to be predictive and sensitive to responses students may have prior to using the resource in the classroom.

GENERAL CONTENT

Content:

| | |
|---|-------------|
| Should this product be identified as Canadian? | Yes |
| Is the resource engaging? | Extensively |
| Is the content current for the intended curriculum and grade? | Extensively |
| Is the content accurate for the intended curriculum and grade? | Extensively |
| Is the content timely and important for student broad understandings? | Extensively |

Audience:

GENERAL CONTENT

| | |
|--|-------------|
| Is the content appropriate to the emotional maturity and cognitive level of students? | Extensively |
| Does the resource provide opportunities for creative and critical thinking? | Moderately |
| Is the level of detail appropriate? | Extensively |
| Is the language use appropriate to the emotional maturity and cognitive level of students? | Extensively |
| Are the visuals appropriate to the emotional maturity and cognitive level of students? | Extensively |

Comments:

"Super Cats" is an engaging and entertaining read for intermediate students interested in cats and the history of the domestication of animals. Younger students will enjoy looking at the vibrant and diverse photographs of different breeds of cats as well as details such as "Meow" facts that highlight interesting facts. The factual information is supported by photos that are both current and historical to engage readers. Though the reading level and content cannot be differentiated or adjusted, the book could be used as a read-aloud, with every chapter starting with a short true tale told from the perspective of a cat.

TECHNICAL DESIGN

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|--|-------------|
| Does the resource make effective use of the medium? | Extensively |
| Is the location of illustrations appropriate? | Moderately |
| Is the resource easy to use? | Moderately |
| Is the use of font, text size and presentation uniform? | Extensively |
| Are extraneous elements/illustrations kept to a minimum? | Moderately |

Comments:

The table of contents provides nine descriptors (ex. Cool Cats, Cat Gods, or Spy Cats), allowing readers to easily locate topics of interest. A timeline, a list of cat-related places to visit, a bibliography, index, and sources of further information are included to support readers. Captions, fact boxes, and factoids each have their own separate font. Factoids are consistently indicated by the silhouette of a cat head. While this resource does not have a glossary, key vocabulary is often explained within the body of the text. The visual layout of the resource is busy but consistent. Some readers may find the extensive captions, factoids, and the switch between writing styles distracting.

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

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|--|-------------|
| Is the instructional design effective and appropriate for the intended audience? | Moderately |
| Is the resource suitable for a wide range of learning and teaching styles? | Extensively |
| Are the concepts clearly explained? | Extensively |

Comments:

Though this resource contains factual and informative information and could be used as an additional resource within the classroom, it is not written as an instructional book. The written component combined with the photos, captions, and supporting resources adequately provides multiple strategies to help students learn more about cats. Readers will need to research independently to learn more about specific cats or to find videos highlighted in the chapter about cats that help and heal.

PRINT CLASSROOM

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|--|-------------|
| Does the reference cover topics with sufficient depth for the intended audience? | Extensively |
| Does the classroom reference have a bibliography and footnotes? | Moderately |
| Are the subject area list and/or subtopics extensive? | Extensively |
| Does the resource broaden students' experiences and understandings? | Extensively |
| Does the resource make effective use of visual elements? | Moderately |
| Are the images compelling? | Extensively |

Descriptors:

Student research tools

Secondary reference material such as summaries or reviews of research

Comments:

This nonfiction resource features topics that will both entertain and educate intermediate readers interested in pets, ancient civilizations, science topics, or espionage. The inclusion of narrative and expository writing styles shares information in engaging forms but may be jarring for some readers. Students will encounter differing views of cats held around the world and throughout history. Students are provided with some context for how those attitudes and beliefs were established. Students will learn about famous cat owners as well as famous and infamous cats.

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM USAGE

Comments:

"Super Cats" can be used to explore nonfiction text features (table of contents, index, captions, timelines, headings, and photographs). "Super Cats" is an engaging text to introduce inquiry projects as well as the process of asking questions and researching to support inquiry projects. There are many possibilities for students to construct meaning from the text such as through expository and narrative writing, creating timelines, making inferences and summarizing. "Super Cats" is an engaging addition to the classroom collection of nonfiction books for its general interest and for its suitability for teaching how to read nonfiction text.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Readability:

At intended grade level(s)

Comments:

Awards for "Super Cats" include the EUREKA! Nonfiction Children's Book Awards Honouree, California Reading Association Best Books for Kids & Teens, and is a Canadian Children's Book Centre and Red Cedar Book Award finalist. The publisher provides a lesson plan with ideas at <https://www.annickpress.com/Super-Cats>.