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Instructional Guides  
for Literature

# The Fire Cat

Esther Averill





# Table of Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <b>How to Use This Literature Guide</b> .....          | 4  |
| Theme Thoughts .....                                   | 4  |
| Vocabulary .....                                       | 5  |
| Analyzing the Literature .....                         | 6  |
| Reader Response .....                                  | 6  |
| Guided Close Reading .....                             | 6  |
| Making Connections .....                               | 7  |
| Language Learning .....                                | 7  |
| Story Elements .....                                   | 7  |
| Culminating Activity .....                             | 8  |
| Comprehension Assessment .....                         | 8  |
| Response to Literature .....                           | 8  |
| <b>Correlation to the Standards</b> .....              | 8  |
| Purpose and Intent of Standards .....                  | 8  |
| How to Find Standards Correlations .....               | 8  |
| Standards Correlation Chart .....                      | 9  |
| TESOL and WIDA Standards .....                         | 10 |
| <b>About the Author—Esther Averill</b> .....           | 11 |
| Possible Texts for Text Comparisons .....              | 11 |
| Cross-Curricular Connection .....                      | 11 |
| <b>Book Summary of <i>The Fire Cat</i></b> .....       | 12 |
| Possible Texts for Text Sets .....                     | 12 |
| <b>Teacher Plans and Student Pages</b> .....           | 13 |
| Pre-Reading Theme Thoughts .....                       | 13 |
| Section 1: Pickles .....                               | 14 |
| Section 2: Pickles Up a Tree .....                     | 25 |
| Section 3: The Fire Cat .....                          | 36 |
| Section 4: The Old Tree .....                          | 47 |
| <b>Post-Reading Activities</b> .....                   | 58 |
| Post-Reading Theme Thoughts .....                      | 58 |
| Culminating Activity: Illustrate and Make a Book ..... | 59 |
| Comprehension Assessment .....                         | 66 |
| Response to Literature: Having a Pet .....             | 68 |
| <b>Answer Key</b> .....                                | 71 |

# How to Use This Literature Guide

Today's standards demand rigor and relevance in the reading of complex texts. The units in this series guide teachers in a rich and deep exploration of worthwhile works of literature for classroom study. The most rigorous instruction can also be interesting and engaging!

Many current strategies for effective literacy instruction have been incorporated into these instructional guides for literature. Throughout the units, text-dependent questions are used to determine comprehension of the book as well as student interpretation of the vocabulary words. The books chosen for the series are complex and are exemplars of carefully crafted works of literature. Close reading is used throughout the units to guide students toward revisiting the text and using textual evidence to respond to prompts orally and in writing. Students must analyze the story elements in multiple assignments for each section of the book. All of these strategies work together to rigorously guide students through their study of literature.

The next few pages describe how to use this guide for a purposeful and meaningful literature study. Each section of this guide is set up in the same way to make it easier for you to implement the instruction in your classroom.

## Theme Thoughts

The great works of literature used throughout this series have important themes that have been relevant to people for many years. Many of the themes will be discussed during the various sections of this instructional guide. However, it would also benefit students to have independent time to think about the key themes of the book.

Before students begin reading, have them complete the *Pre-Reading Theme Thoughts* (page 13). This graphic organizer will allow students to think about the themes outside the context of the story. They'll have the opportunity to evaluate statements based on important themes and defend their opinions. Be sure to keep students' papers for comparison to the *Post-Reading Theme Thoughts* (page 58). This graphic organizer is similar to the pre-reading activity. However, this time, students will be answering the questions from the point of view of one of the characters in the book. They have to think about how the character would feel about each statement and defend their thoughts. To conclude the activity, have students compare what they thought about the themes before they read the book to what the characters discovered during the story.

## Pre-Reading Picture Walks

For each section in this literature guide, there are suggestions for how to introduce the text to students. Teachers share information in a visual format and ask students to evaluate the content. Students must use the information presented in the illustrations to discuss what they are about to read and make predictions about the sections.

# How to Use This Literature Guide *(cont.)*

## Analyzing the Literature

After you have read each section with students, hold a small-group or whole-class discussion. Provided on the teacher reference page for each section are leveled questions. The questions are written at two levels of complexity to allow you to decide which questions best meet the needs of your students. The Level 1 questions are typically less abstract than the Level 2 questions. These questions are focused on the various story elements, such as character, setting, and plot. Be sure to add further questions as your students discuss what they've read. For each question, a few key points are provided for your reference as you discuss the book with students.

## Reader Response

In today's classrooms, there are often great readers who are below average writers. So much time and energy is spent in classrooms getting students to read on grade level that little time is left to focus on writing skills. To help teachers include more writing in their daily literacy instruction, each section of this guide has a literature-based reader response prompt. Each of the three genres of writing is used in the reader responses within this guide: narrative, informative/explanatory, and opinion. Before students write, you may want to allow them time to draw pictures related to the topic.

## Guided Close Reading

Within each section of this guide, it is suggested that you closely reread a portion of the text with your students. Page numbers are given, but since some versions of the books may have different page numbers, the sections to be reread are described by location as well. After rereading the section, there are a few text-dependent questions to be answered by students.

Working space has been provided to help students prepare for the group discussion. They should record their thoughts and ideas on the activity page and refer to it during your discussion. Rather than just taking notes, you may want to require students to write complete responses to the questions before discussing them with you.

Encourage students to read one question at a time and then go back to the text and discover the answer. Work with students to ensure that they use the text to determine their answers rather than making unsupported inferences. Suggested answers are provided in the answer key.

## How to Use This Literature Guide *(cont.)*

### Guided Close Reading *(cont.)*

The generic open-ended stems below can be used to write your own text-dependent questions if you would like to give students more practice.

- What words in the story support . . . ?
- What text helps you understand . . . ?
- Use the book to tell why \_\_\_\_ happens.
- Based on the events in the story, . . . ?
- Show me the part in the text that supports . . . .
- Use the text to tell why . . . .

### Making Connections

The activities in this section help students make cross-curricular connections to mathematics, science, social studies, fine arts, or other curricular areas. These activities require higher-order thinking skills from students but also allow for creative thinking.

### Language Learning

A special section has been set aside to connect the literature to language conventions. Through these activities, students will have opportunities to practice the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, capitalization, and punctuation.

### Story Elements

It is important to spend time discussing what the common story elements are in literature. Understanding the characters, setting, plot, and theme can increase students' comprehension and appreciation of the story. If teachers begin discussing these elements in early childhood, students will more likely internalize the concepts and look for the elements in their independent reading. Another very important reason for focusing on the story elements is that students will be better writers if they think about how the stories they read are constructed.

In the story elements activities, students are asked to create work related to the characters, setting, or plot. Consider having students complete only one of these activities. If you give students a choice on this assignment, each student can decide to complete the activity that most appeals to him or her. Different intelligences are used so that the activities are diverse and interesting to all students.

## Vocabulary Overview

Key words and phrases from this section are provided below with definitions and sentences about how the words are used in the story. Introduce and discuss these important vocabulary words with students. If you think these words or other words in the story warrant more time devoted to them, there are suggestions in the introduction for other vocabulary activities (page 5).

| word                     | definition  | Sentence about Text  |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| <b>anything</b> (p. 6)   | a thing of any kind   | Pickles can't find <b>anything</b> big to do.                    |
| <b>barrel</b> (p. 7)     | a round, wooden container with curved sides and a flat bottom used for storing things | Pickles lives in a <b>barrel</b> .                               |
| <b>nothing</b> (p. 8)    | not a thing   | Since Pickles has <b>nothing</b> to do, he chases cats.          |
| <b>something</b> (p. 12) | a thing that is not known, named, or specified  | Mrs. Goodkind believes <b>something</b> will change for Pickles. |
| <b>mixed-up</b> (p. 13)  | confused; hard to understand  | Mrs. Goodkind says that Pickles is a <b>mixed-up</b> cat.        |
| <b>happen</b> (p. 17)    | occur; to take place usually without planning   | Mrs. Goodkind wants good things to <b>happen</b> for Pickles.    |

# Vocabulary Activity

**Directions:** Draw lines to complete the sentences.

## Sentence Beginnings

Each day Mrs. Goodkind

Pickles does not have

The empty **barrel**

What will **happen**

Pickles is both good and bad

## Sentence Endings

has **nothing** inside it.

because he is a **mixed-up** cat.

gives Pickles **something** to eat.

**anything** useful to do.

when a cat comes near Pickles?

**Directions:** Answer this question.

1. What **happens** when Pickles chases away all the other cats?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Pickles

## Guided Close Reading

Closely reread the part where we learn about Mrs. Goodkind's friendship with Pickles (pages 12–15).

**Directions:** Think about these questions. In the space below, write ideas or draw pictures as you think. Be ready to share your answers.

---

❶ Use the text to describe what Mrs. Goodkind does for Pickles.

---

❷ According to the book, why does Mrs. Goodkind call Pickles a mixed-up cat?

---

❸ Does Mrs. Goodkind's home look like a good place for Pickles to live? Support your answer with details from the text.

## Story Elements-Character

**Directions:** Think about Mrs. Goodkind. What do you know about her? Fill in the graphic organizer below with what you know about her from the story.

