

A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO

THE CAT WHO DECIDED by Margaret Forrester



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Themes/issues addressed in this book

Belonging, family, home, friendship, independence, death, Edinburgh, music, change

Book Summary

Mac the cat wants to find a home and a family that will love him just because he is Mac himself, and not because they have to. First of all Fred, 'The Boss', takes him home to the tall house in Edinburgh because he feels sorry for him. Then the musical doctors next door adopt him when Fred and Alice move away. He is happy with them because they are kind to him and their home is full of music. When the doctors move into a retirement home and sell their house, they do so on the condition that the new owners, Marion and Peter, take Mac with the house. However, Mac is indignant; he wants to be loved and wanted, not bought or sold like a piece of furniture, so he hatches a plan to find out whether they really want him, and he discovers they do.

BEFORE READING

Group Activities

- Discussion: do you have a pet? If so, what kind? If not, would you like to have one?
- Discussion: do you play any instruments? If so, what do you play?
- Discussion: where do you belong? Do you think you belong to anybody? Does anybody belong to you?

AFTER READING (note, contains spoilers!)

Individual Work

- Write a paragraph on the thoughts and feelings you had when:
 - a) All the kittens find homes except Mac (chapter 1)
 - b) Mac runs away (chapter 12)
 - c) Mac 'lets' Marion buy the house (chapter 16)
 - d) Mac dies (chapter 21)
- The word 'fechter' on page 29 is Scots for fighter. Think of another five words in Scots and write them down alongside what they mean. Ask your family to help you if you are having difficulty. Share them with your classmates.
- Have you ever moved house? If so, write three paragraphs on what it was like. Include one good thing and one bad thing about moving and say whether you like your new house or your old house better. (If you have never moved house, or can't remember moving house, use your imagination instead and write about what you think it would be like).

Group Activities

- Class activity: designing a garden. Look at the following list of some of the flowers, shrubs and trees that are mentioned in the book: purple aubrietia, candytuft, lilac tree, ivy, yellow aconites, snowdrops, witch hazel, catmint, tulips, clematis, dahlia, chrysanthemum, lupin, honeysuckle, pheasant's eye narcissi, bluebells, rosemary. Choose seven items from the list and see if you can find pictures of each one using books, magazines, or the internet. Then on a large piece of paper, design a garden, drawing or painting the items you have chosen. When you have finished, decide which group has the finest gardeners.
- Class discussion: change. Mac hates change. What do you think about change? Is change a good thing or a bad thing? Discuss some recent changes that have happened to 1) you, 2) your family, 3) your class, and 4) your town.

Kelpies Series Summary

The award-winning Kelpies series is Scotland's favourite collection of children's fiction. Floris Books took over the list in 2001, republishing classic works by authors such as Kathleen Fidler, Mollie Hunter, George Mackay Brown and Allan Campbell McLean. Since then, we have continued to add to the series with a range of highly successful new Scottish novels for children including books by Gill Arbutnott, Alex Nye, Lari Don, Anne Forbes, Annemarie Allan, Mike Nicholson and Margaret Forrester.

CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS COVERED

5-14 Curriculum (Scotland)

Years: P4-P7

Listening:

Listening in Groups
Listening for Information, including instructions and directions

Reading:

Reading for Information
Reading to Reflect
Awareness of Genre

Talking:

Talking in Groups
Talking about Texts
Talking about Experiences, including feelings and opinions

Writing:

Functional
Imaginative

National Curriculum (England, Wales, Northern Ireland)

Key Stage 2

English: Reading

Reading Strategies
Response to Texts, including analysing and evaluating
Reading for Information

National Literacy Strategy:

Text-Level Reading
Text-Level Writing
Vocabulary

(continued overleaf)

- Class activity: listening to music. Find a recording of Mac's favourite music, Bach's Cello Suites, and listen to it. Or invite a cellist to your class to play you some pieces from Bach's Cello Suites. Afterwards discuss how the music made you feel. Did you enjoy it? Do you think a cat like Mac could really enjoy music? Give reasons for your answers.

Vocabulary

- Check you know what the following words mean (page numbers of example words in brackets):

adapting (89)	deter (90)	instinctively (42)	physiotherapist (66)	tally (88)
amid (86)	dignity (70)	linoleum (82)	profile (93)	tantalizing (34)
anxious (72)	discordant (90)	mahogany (28)	quaint (72)	threshold (26)
aright (71)	distinctive (28)	meekly (89)	quintet (91)	topaz (24)
binoculars (55)	efficient (56)	memoirs (32)	recitals (44)	unfurl (24)
bough (23)	elegant (28)	mesmerized (91)	retirement (48)	unravalled (45)
brindled (10)	enigmatically (12)	mongrel (10)	scavenged (58)	vain (45)
complexion (15)	evaporated (71)	murmur (72)	sincere (72)	vivid (9)
convenient (68)	feline (37)	nocturnal (57)	sustenance (92)	voraciously (28)
cornices (73)	florid (14)	paraphernalia (44)	tailcoat (9)	wistfully (20)