

Muse®

Pets on the Mind

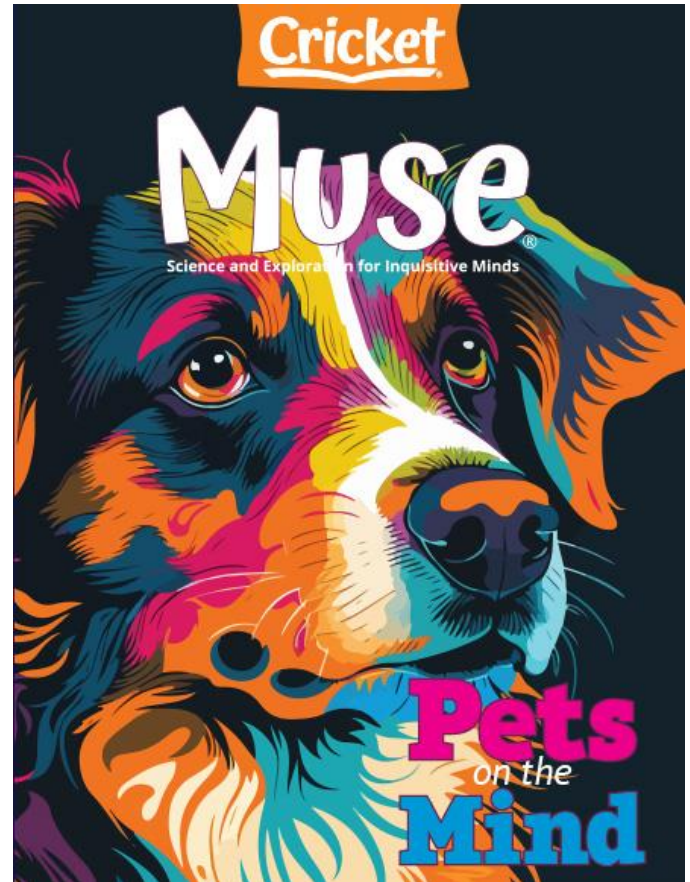
The bond between pets and humans is a mutualistic relationship that influences the physical, mental, and social well-being of both parties. This issue of MUSE magazine examines the connection between people and their furry friends.

CONVERSATION QUESTION

What psychological connections do humans share with their pets?

TEACHING OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn how pet preferences are related to personality traits.
- Students will learn how pets positively affect human well-being.
- Students will learn about the history of cat domestication.
- Students will identify patterns.
- Students will collect evidence to support a claim.
- Students will construct explanations.
- Students will create pet profile cards and engage in a matching activity.
- Students will use a mathematical process to solve a word problem containing fractions.
- Students will create a theme-based comic strip.



In addition to supplemental materials focused on core STEAM skills, this flexible teaching tool offers vocabulary-building activities, questions for discussion, and cross-curricular activities.

SELECTIONS

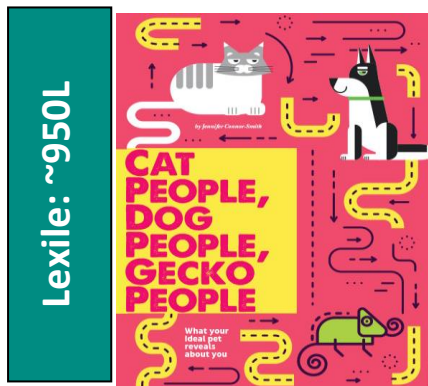
- **Cat People, Dog People, Gecko People**
Expository Nonfiction, ~950L
- **Animals on My Mind**
Expository Nonfiction, ~850L
- **How to Conquer the World (According to Your Cat)**
Expository Nonfiction, ~950L

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Cat People, Dog People, Gecko People

pp. 10–15, Expository Nonfiction

This article presents a study that attempts to link personality types to pet preferences. Data supports the idea that aligning the physical and social needs of the pet with its owner seems most beneficial in creating a lasting bond.



RESOURCES

Identify Patterns: Pet Profiles

OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn how pet preferences are related to personality traits.
- Students will identify patterns.
- Students will create pet profile cards and engage in a matching activity.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **reputations** (p. 11) the common opinions that people have about someone or something
- **stereotypes** (p. 11) unfair beliefs that all people or things with a common characteristic are the same
- **solitary** (p. 11) being alone or without companions
- **eccentric** (p. 12) strange or unusual

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: What psychological connections do humans share with their pets?

Take a quick poll to see what pet preferences students have in your class. Ask students if they think their personality or family's lifestyle is connected to their pet choice. Discuss variables.

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Have students locate the vocabulary words on pages 11 and 12. Review how to infer the meanings of new words by using context clues and background knowledge. Have partners work together to determine the meaning of each word. Discuss the process and then reveal the definitions provided in the Key Vocabulary section.

READ & DISCUSS

Have students read the article and then lead a class discussion based on the following prompts.

1. What kinds of stereotypes do people have about different pet owners?
2. How was information gathered to support evidence about the psychological connections between pets and humans?
3. What strategies are certain pet adoption agencies using to increase the number of successful adoptions?
4. What reasons does the article give to persuade people to adopt instead of buy their pets?
5. Why are there exceptions to this study's results?

SKILL FOCUS: Identify Patterns

INSTRUCT: This article explores the truth behind stereotypes people have about pet preferences through a scientific study. Have students review the article to identify the patterns that researchers discovered about the personalities of cat owners versus dog owners. Discuss the findings and invite students to share personal evidence in agreement or disagreement with the observations cited in the study. Call attention to the phrases “more likely” and “tend to be” in the article and ask students why the scientists did not use terms like “always” and “are.”

ASSESS: Circulate during the discussion to assess students' ability to identify and differentiate personality patterns associated with pet preferences as found in the study.

EXTEND

Language Arts: Have students create several pet profile cards for an imaginary pet-matching service. They can illustrate the profiles or use magazine/computer images. The pet cards should include the size, breed, and personality of the pet listed on the *Pet Profiles* graphic organizer. Shuffle the profile cards and distribute them to small groups. Students will discuss the personality and pet traits to determine the best match for each student.

Pet Profiles

Identify Patterns: Reread the article and use the template below to create Pet Profile cards. When they are completed, each pet strip will be cut out, shuffled, and redistributed to small groups. Members will collectively match the pet to its most appropriate owner.

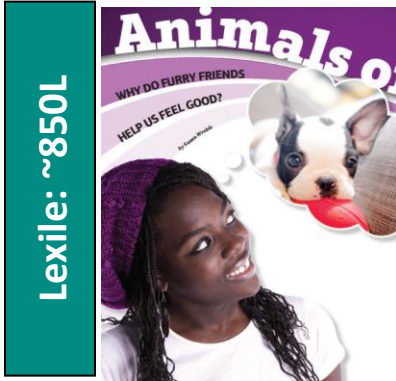
Pet Photo #1	Pet Photo #2	Pet Photo #3
Name:	Name:	Name:
Kind of Pet:	Kind of Pet:	Kind of Pet:
Size:	Size:	Size:
Breed(s):	Breed(s):	Breed(s):
Physical Description:	Physical Description:	Physical Description:
Personality Traits:	Personality Traits:	Personality Traits:

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Animals on My Mind

pp. 16–18, Expository Nonfiction

In the United States, more than two-thirds of families have pets. Readers will learn how pets trigger the release of feel-good hormones and explore the effects on their human companions.



RESOURCES

Collect Evidence: Happy Hormones

OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn how pets positively affect human well-being.
- Students will collect evidence to support a claim.
- Students will use a mathematical process to solve a word problem containing fractions.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **hormone** (p. 17) a natural substance that is produced in the body and affects many different processes
- **adrenaline** (p. 17) a hormone that is released in the body of a person who is frightened, angry, or excited
- **oxytocin** (p. 17) a hormone responsible for human behaviors associated with relationships and bonding
- **cortisol** (p. 18) a hormone that regulates processes throughout the body, including metabolism and responses to stress

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: What psychological connections do humans share with their pets?

Show students pictures of everyday objects such as a pencil, a chair, a car, etc. Then, show students pictures of pets such as a dog, a cat, a hamster, etc. Ask students what they noticed about their feelings as they looked at pets. Ask students to share stories about their own pets. Present the article, “Animals on My Mind” and tell students that this article provides evidence that pets positively affect human emotional and physical health.

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Post and discuss the key vocabulary. Provide groups of students with actual Scrabble tiles or print out a letter/value sheet online. Have students list the point value for each word and total the sum. Then, instruct them to put the four words in order from lowest value to highest value. During a quiet period, allow students to search the entire MUSE issue to locate and define the word that has the highest point value.

READ & DISCUSS

Reinforce comprehension of the concepts presented in the article by using the following questions to direct discussion.

1. Why do you think that kids rely more on their pets for comfort than their siblings?
2. How did the “Waffle” study validate new uses for pets?
3. Explain the system that Maggie O’Haire created for recording the interactions between animals and children with autism.
4. How can a little stress be helpful to humans?
5. In what other ways do animals help humans?

SKILL FOCUS: Collect Evidence

INSTRUCT: This article presents the reader with detailed information about the effects of human-animal interactions. Instruct students to review the article and highlight sentences that provide evidence to support each of the claims listed on the *Happy Hormones* organizer. They will record and cite the information with details.

ASSESS: Have students peer-review their work by sharing completed worksheets with another student. Circulate and guide as they discuss.

EXTEND

Mathematics: The article states on page 17, “In the United States more than two-thirds of families have pets.” The U.S. Census Bureau reported that there were approximately 81 million (81,000,000) families in the United States in 2023. Use this information to calculate the answer to the following question: *If two-thirds of the families in 2023 owned a pet, how many families owned a pet?*

(Answer: $\frac{2}{3}$ of 81,000,000 = 54,000,000 families owned a pet in 2023.)

Happy Hormones

Collect Evidence: Gather evidence from the text to support each claim. Include details and cite your findings by using page numbers.

Claim: Oxytocin helps to create a strong attachment called a human-animal bond.

Supporting evidence (p. _____)

Claim: When you pet your dog or snuggle with a purring cat, your body and brain calm down.

Supporting evidence (p. _____)

Claim: Animals can help kids with autism be more social.

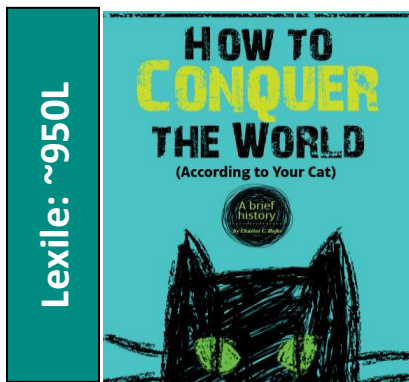
Supporting evidence (p. _____)

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How to Conquer the World (According to Your Cat)

pp. 34–37, Expository Nonfiction

Humans and wild cats likely coexisted for thousands of years. This article traces the history of domestication and chronicles the cat's well-earned place in our hearts and our homes.



RESOURCES

Construct Explanations: Catty Questions

OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn about the history of cat domestication.
- Students will construct explanations.
- Students will create a theme-related comic strip.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **domesticated** (p. 35) an animal that is tamed and kept as a pet or on a farm
- **mutualism** (p. 35) a relationship between two species or organisms in which both benefit
- **interactions** (p. 37) communications or direct involvement with someone or something

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: What psychological connections do humans share with their pets?

Lead students in a game of "20 Questions" in which they will try to guess the main animal of the article (cat). In this game, the players are allowed to ask yes/no questions one by one in order to unravel the mystery. Instead of calling out the answer, have students write their guess on a piece of paper after each question. At the end of the questions, did all students write the word, *cat*? Pose the following question: What is the difference between a domesticated cat and a wild cat?

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Post the key words and discuss the meanings of the terms. Then display the following prompts and have students discuss responses with a partner.

- How are animals **domesticated**?
- Can the relationship between you and your pet be considered an example of **mutualism**? Why or why not?
- What **interactions** did you have with humans this morning? Did you have any interactions with animals? Discuss.

READ & DISCUSS

Reinforce comprehension of the concepts presented in the article by using the following questions to direct discussion.

1. How did newly discovered farming practices likely lead to cat domestication?
2. Why do scientists believe that dogs were domesticated before cats?
3. Why is it complicated to pinpoint the exact time of domestication?
4. How do we know that cats held a special place of honor in ancient Egypt?

SKILL FOCUS: Construct Explanations

INSTRUCT: Advise students to review the article to study all of the events that led up to the domestication of cats. Distribute the graphic organizer, *Catty Questions*, and tell the class that they will use the article to explain the where, when, how, and why of the process.

ASSESS: Reconvene and review the worksheet. Give students a few moments to work in small groups to discuss the domestication of other animals. Ask: Are these relationships equally beneficial?

EXTEND

Graphic Art: Have students use information from the article to create a comic strip illustrating the domestication of cats. The text can be humorous or strictly informational but must contain at least two important facts presented in the article. Encourage students to be creative, to use clear text and interesting illustrations. They should brainstorm ideas and create a draft sketch before transferring their ideas onto a five-panel strip.

Catty Questions

Construct Explanations: Record evidence presented in the article that assembles the puzzle of where, when, how, and why cats were domesticated.

