

Faces™

Cats: The *Purrfect* Pet?

English writer Charles Dickens once mused, “What greater gift than the love of a cat?” This month’s issue of FACES magazine studies the impact of cats on generations past and present. Cats can be fiercely independent or wonderfully affectionate and have mastered the art of living in the moment. For this, and many other reasons, humans have a lot to learn from these feline fur balls.

CONVERSATION QUESTION

How have cats impacted people, places, and culture throughout history?

TEACHING OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn about the relationship between humans and cats.
- Students will learn various characteristics about diverse cat breeds.
- Students will learn about Japan’s Cat Island.
- Students will determine the order of events.
- Students will distinguish between facts and opinions.
- Students will use a map to explore the relationship between geographical locations.
- Students will answer and construct theme-related mathematical word problems.
- Students will contribute a page to a class book titled, “Cat Breeds.”
- Students will create a comic strip depicting Cat Island.



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

- **A Tiger in Your House**
Expository Nonfiction, 1220L
- **Folded Ears and Missing Tails**
Expository Nonfiction, 1230L
- **A Visit to Cat Island**
Expository Nonfiction, 1150L

A Tiger in Your House

pp. 8–10, Expository Nonfiction

Have you ever wondered why cats were domesticated? This article provides evidence of the prominence of cats in human society since ancient times and explains their role.



RESOURCES

Determine Order: Purr-fect Timing

OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn about the relationship between humans and cats.
- Students will determine the order of events.
- Students will answer and construct theme-related mathematical word problems.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **descend** (p. 8) be a direct blood relative of
- **demeanor** (p. 10) outward behavior

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: How have cats impacted people, places, and cultures throughout history?

Lead students in a game of “20 Questions” in which they will try to guess the topic of the article (cats). 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 answers, have students write their guess on a piece of paper after each question. At the end of the 20 questions, did all students have the word *cat* written? 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.

- What people do you **descend** from? List relatives as far back as you can.
- How does someone’s **demeanor** affect your first impression of them? Give examples.

READ & DISCUSS

Have students read the article with a partner and answer the questions.

1. What evidence points to the notion that cats were domesticated several thousand years ago in ancient China and Egypt?
2. What information did scientists uncover by analyzing ancient cat bones?
3. Why were cats highly valued in ancient Rome?
4. How does the meaning of the *maneki-neko* change depending on which paw is raised?
5. Why did the sentiment about cats drastically change in the Middle Ages?

SKILL FOCUS: Determine Order of Events

INSTRUCT: Social Studies standards require students to create timelines to express the chronological order of events and to distinguish between the near and distant past. Have students revisit the article and highlight six events in the history of the cat that led up to the house cat of today. Distribute the *Purr-fect Timing* worksheet and have students record their chosen events in chronological order, as told in the article.

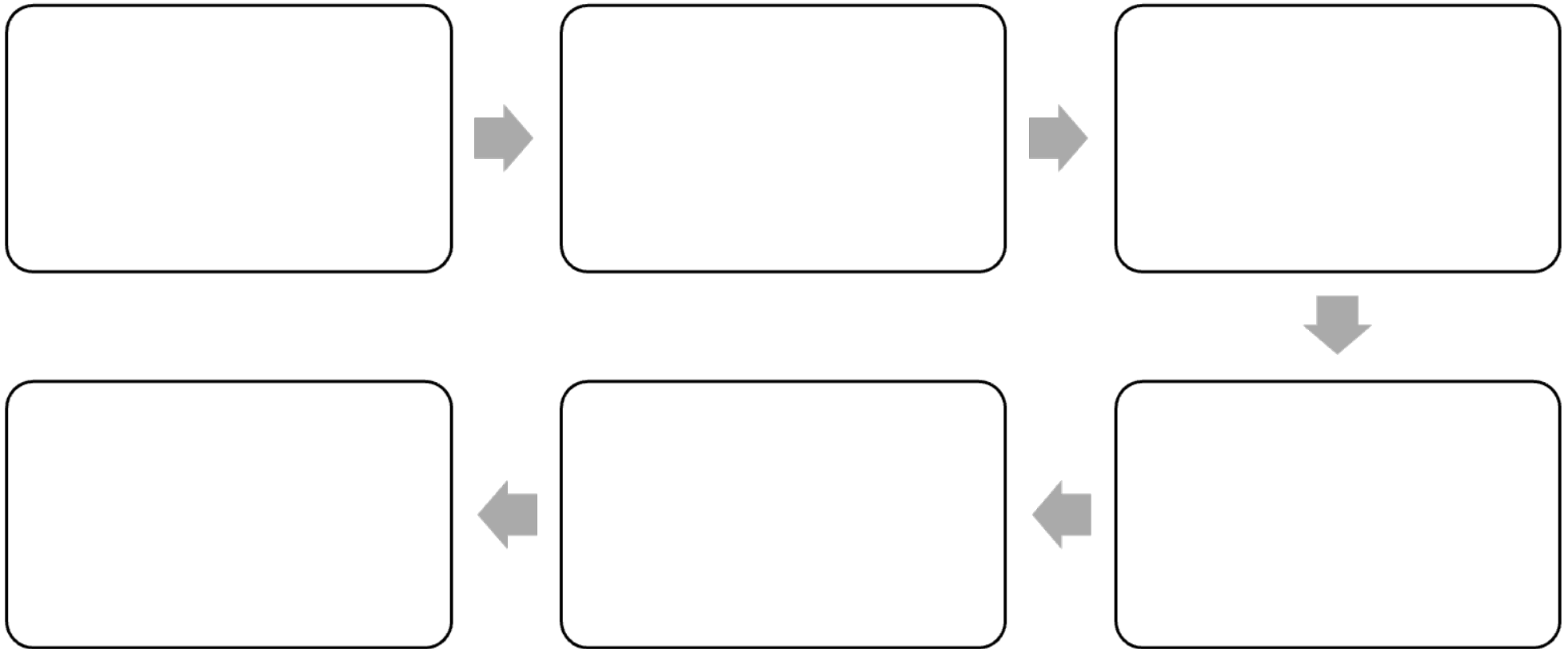
ASSESS: Review correct sequences. Have students retell the story using the information on their worksheets.

EXTEND

Mathematics: Read aloud: *Currently there are an estimated 220 million domestic cats and approximately 480 million feral cats in the world. How many more feral cats are there than domesticated cats? (260 million).* Challenge students to create their own word problems using information from the article.

Purr-fect Timing

Determine Order Reread the article and highlight six events or discoveries that demonstrate how cats evolved into the house cats that we all know today. Use details, and dates if given, to record the information in chronological order.



DISCUSS: Which events occurred in the *distant* past? Which events happened in the *near* past?

(**Near** past refers to a time relatively close to the present, where events are still in recent memory. **Distant** past is a period of time further removed from the present, where events may require research and historical context.)



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Folded Ears and Missing Tails

pp. 14–15, Expository Nonfiction

Cats vary greatly in size and appearance due to natural genetic mutations and human breeding practices. Students will learn about various breeds of cats and consider which traits make them more or less appealing.



RESOURCES

Facts and Opinions: Feline Friends

OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn various characteristics about diverse cat breeds.
- Students will distinguish between facts and opinions.
- Students will contribute a page to a class book titled, "Cat Breeds."

KEY VOCABULARY

- **mutation (p. 14)** a change in the genes of a plant or animal that causes physical characteristics other than what is considered "normal"
- **hybrid (p. 14)** an animal or plant that is produced from two animals or plants of different kinds
- **breed (p. 14)** a particular kind of dog, cat, horse, etc.

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: How have cats impacted people, places, and cultures throughout history?

As a motivational philanthropic activity prior to the reading, students will be making simple sock-fish cat toys. Each student will need a sock, some crinkly paper (visit the recycling bin), and nontoxic markers. Follow the simple steps below, and then donate toys to any cat lover or to your local animal shelter.

1. Stuff the sock with paper.
2. Twist the top and tie a knot.
3. Use the markers to make fish features (eyes, scales, etc.).

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Post and review the three vocabulary words. Inform students that all of these terms can be found in the article, "Folded Ears and Missing Tails." Have them use the title and the vocabulary terms to predict the content of the article. Revisit the predictions after the reading and challenge students to write a brief summary of the article, incorporating all three words.

READ & DISCUSS

As a post-reading activity, lead a discussion based on the following questions:

1. What is a *natural breed*?
2. How are new breeds created with the help of humans?
3. Why do natural breeds often occur in one location?
4. Why is the price of a Khao Manee so high?
5. How do most people choose their pet cat?

SKILL FOCUS: Fact and Opinion

INSTRUCT: Review with the class that it is important to be able to make distinctions between facts and opinions in order to determine the credibility of information. (**Facts:** can be proven, true for everyone.

Opinions: can't be proven, personal judgment.) Instruct students to review the article and to classify each statement on the *Feline Friends* worksheet as a fact or opinion.

ASSESS: After reviewing answers, have students choose one fact statement and one opinion statement and explain WHY it is a fact or opinion.

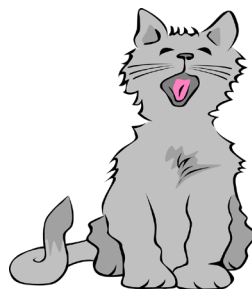
EXTEND

ELA: Instruct students to revisit the article and to underline all of the cat breeds mentioned (there are 12). Assign each pair of students a different cat breed to learn about. Students will use information from the article, as well as online resources to create a page to contribute to the class book, "Cat Breeds." Their page should include cat's appearance, weight, height, temperament, and where the breed originated. Unusual traits, in addition to eating habits, breeding practices, toys, habitat, and unique facts, should also be included.

Feline Friends

Distinguishing Facts and Opinions Read each statement below. Then, mark each statement as FACT (F) or OPINION (O). *Hint:* Facts can be proven; opinions are personal judgements.

- _____ 1. Some cat breeds have occurred naturally, when a cat was born with a genetic mutation.
- _____ 2. The most well-behaved breed of cat is the Persian cat.
- _____ 3. The famous Japanese good fortune cat, *maneki-neko*, is a Japanese Bobtail with one paw upraised.
- _____ 4. Some cat breeds have been created with the help of humans.
- _____ 5. People will be happier choosing a purebred cat as a pet because they are smarter.
- _____ 6. Whether it's having flopping ears, little fur, or no tail, feral and domestic cats vary in size shape and features.
- _____ 7. A Teacup Persian, a special kind of Persian cat, is bred to be small enough to fit in a teacup.
- _____ 8. The sweetest cats are the ones with long fluffy tails.
- _____ 9. Cats are better pets than dogs because they are quieter and more independent.
- _____ 10. The Khao Manee was once a royal cat in Thailand and still highly prized today.



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A Visit to Cat Island

pp. 20–22, Expository Nonfiction

Tashirojima, also known as Cat Island, is a small island off the coast of Japan. Here, the cat population outnumbered people and draws tourists from all over the world.



RESOURCES

Using Maps: Where in the World

OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn about Japan's Cat Island.
- Students will use a map to explore the relationship between geographical locations.
- Students will create a comic strip depicting Cat Island.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **shrines** (p. 20) places regarded as holy because of their association with a divinity, sacred person, or relic
- **manga** (p. 20) a style of Japanese comic books and graphic novels
- **submerged** (p. 21) below the surface of an area of water

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: How have cats impacted people, places, and cultures throughout history?

On the board, draw a fishing net and label it with the phrase, “fishing net woven from silk.” Then draw a mouse nibbling on part of the net. Ask students to infer the reason that cats were highly valued by the Japanese people throughout history. Display a map of Japan, so students can see that Japan is an island nation, surrounded by water.

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Post and review the three vocabulary words and definitions. Allow students to roll a die for vocabulary activities for each word.

- 1 = Use the word in a sentence.
- 2 = Draw a picture that demonstrates the word.
- 3 = List 2 antonyms for the word.
- 4 = List 2 synonyms for the word.
- 5 = Break the word into syllables and list the part of speech.
- 6 = Make a connection between the word and your life, a book, or a movie.

READ & DISCUSS

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

1. Where is Tashirojima, aka Cat Island, located?
2. Why is Cat Island a great place to be a cat?
3. How did Tashirojima become Cat Island?
4. How did the big Japanese earthquake and tsunami in 2011 affect Cat Island?
5. Besides Tashirojima, Japan boasts five other Cat Islands. Identify and describe each island.

SKILL FOCUS: Using Maps

INSTRUCT: Guide students to acknowledge the importance of cardinal directions (N, S, E, W) and the key and markings when trying to understand the location of various places on a map. Review map skills. Distribute the *Where in the World* worksheet. Students will be using the map and key provided to complete the questions.

ASSESS: Instruct students to independently complete the worksheet, then review. Remediate map skills in a small group, if necessary.

EXTEND

Graphic Art: Have students use information from the article to create a comic strip illustrating the phenomenon of Cat Island. 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. (Comic strip templates are easily available online, if needed. Sentence strips can also be used.)

Where in the World

Using Maps Use the map of Japan, the key, and the compass rose to answer the questions.



Part I: Use the map of Japan and the compass rose to provide the answers below. (N,S,W,E)

1. Akita is _____ of Morioka.
2. Aomori is _____ of Mito.
3. Kagoshima is _____ of Fukuoka.
4. Kushiro is _____ of Sapporo.

Part II: Answer the questions below using the keys and symbols on the map.

5. What is the capitol of Japan? _____
6. List two mountainous cites of Japan: _____
7. What sea lies west of Mount Fuji? _____
8. Locate the white diamond that lies northeast of Sendai. That is where Cat Island is located. Follow the line into the Pacific Ocean and draw a cat face on the map.