



**RedRover Readers Program**

**Discussion and Activity  
Guide for**

***A Home for Nathan***

**Written by Claudia M. Roll, illustrated by Finn Rizer**



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### **Concepts**

- What is a shelter? What does it mean to provide shelter to an animal?
- What actions and steps does Claudia take to get to know Nathan?

### **Greet the Students**

Ask students if they have ever *seen* a cat. Tell the students they are going to learn about one cat's true story.

### **Before Reading**

Share the book cover with the students. Ask students to describe the cover and make predictions about what they see. Allow students to form their own ideas; they can revise their ideas as you read the story.

- Who is shown?
- What is the cat's name?

### **Clarify Vocabulary**

What is an animal "shelter"? Show students the word "shelter."

### **During Reading**

Read the story aloud. While reading, return to the question of what actions and steps Claudia takes to get to know Nathan. Why does Claudia try to get to know Nathan?

### **After Reading**

Ask:

- What is an animal shelter? What does it mean to provide shelter for an animal?
- What animals does Nathan see at the shelter? (Show students the page with the other animals.)
- Why would those other animals be at the shelter? (Ask students to guess or speculate.)
- What do the shelter workers give Nathan to take care of him?
- Who is Nathan's favorite visitor? How does she make Nathan feel? (Show students the illustration of Nathan on top of the world.)
- How does Nathan feel when Claudia adopts him? Why?
- What is the promise Claudia makes to Nathan?
- What job does Nathan have? (Show the author photo of Claudia and the real Nathan here.)

## **Activities**

Draw the chart below on a white board or chart paper. Use the suggested quotes or encourage the students to identify plot points in the story. Review the story sequence together, referring to pictures in the story.

### **1. Map Nathan’s life (or situation) from the time he is left in the animal shelter to when Nathan goes to Claudia’s home**

“Do you take cats?”	“A nice young man took Nathan to his cage....”	“Every day new people would come to visit the animals.”
“She made Nathan feel like he was the best cat in the whole world.”	“When they got home Nathan met the rest of the family.”	“Tired after a big day at school, Nathan helps Claudia read the newspaper....”

### **2. Ask**

- What is an animal shelter?
- Why did Nathan go to a shelter?
- Why did Nathan leave a shelter?
- How does Nathan’s life (situation) in Claudia’s home compare with his life (situation) in the animal shelter?
- Do you think Nathan prefers to live in the animal shelter or in Claudia’s home? Why?
- Encourage students to notice cats when they are walking in their neighborhoods. What are those cats’ stories?

### **Extensions: Choose one or more**

#### **A. A day in Nathan’s life with Claudia**

Model for the students: Fold an 8 ½ x 11 piece of paper in half lengthwise and then in thirds to create six boxes. Have students fold their papers.

Ask students to imagine a day in Nathan’s life with Claudia. Remind students that Nathan is a therapy cat. Ask students to recall what they remember from Nathan’s life. Refer to the illustrations if necessary. Have students draw in each box a part of Nathan’s day from morning to night. Encourage students to use their imaginations, combining what they know of Nathan’s life from the story with what they imagine based on what they learned.

(Create a full example of the illustration for the students before teaching the lesson.)

### **B. “All living things have a story to tell.”**

Bring photos of cats from an old calendar or from another source such as adoptable cats from the Internet. Each student will need a photo. Guide the students through looking closely at the photos. Encourage students to imagine the cat’s life. Through words or drawings, have students tell the story of the cat, including giving the cat a name.

For an extra challenge, require the students use the word “shelter” or include an animal shelter in the story.

If time allows, have some of the students share their stories.

### **C. Cat’s needs**

Bring supplies necessary to take a cat home from an animal shelter. Show a collar and tag, bowls, toys, pillow, etc. Guide the students through thinking about why these things are necessary for the cat’s happiness and health. What makes a cat feel safe and cared for? What does it mean to “take care” of an animal?

### **D. Animal Behavior Observation**

Visit a real shelter to observe animal behaviors for dogs and cats. Some animal shelters may offer virtual tours or be willing to Skype with your class to show off their animals and the facility if a field trip to the actual building is not possible.

Encourage children to choose one animal to focus on and record what they notice about the animal’s behavior and body language. Use the form below or create your own to capture the students’ responses. A sketch sheet to draw what they observe can also be added.

### **E. Design a Dream Animal Shelter**

Invite students to think about how an animal shelter keeps animals happy, healthy and safe during their stay. Brainstorm as a group some of the things that are needed. (Possible answers include soft beds, food, water, a way to keep animals separated, water bowls, food bowls, an area to play, balls to play, blankets, toys, music, caring staff and volunteers, collars, etc.)

If possible, include a visit to a real animal shelter so they can make observations.

Tell students to imagine they have community support and all of the money in the world to design their dream animal shelter. If they have visited a real animal shelter, ask how their dream shelter might be different from the animal shelter they visited and if there are ways their dream shelter would be the same. Invite students to get creative and design their own dream animal shelter. Ask students to draw their shelter and label what they decide to include in it. Before they begin drawing ask the following questions:

What will your dream animal shelter look like? (How big is it? How many animals can stay there at one time?)

Where will your animal shelter be located?

What types of things will it have in it? What will make animals like it?

(How will it keep them healthy, happy and safe?)

What will make people like it? (How will you get people to visit and adopt animals?)

Why is it a dream animal shelter?

Have students share their designs with a partner or in front of the class.

### **At the End of the Lesson**

Ask students to reflect on the questions, “What did you learn from today’s book and discussion that you didn’t know before?” You can do this with the whole group, in a sharing circle or related class meeting format, by having students fill out index cards, or other formats as you choose. We recommend that you have a variety of formats. After getting a sense of what the students learned, reinforce key themes that they mentioned and add perhaps one or two that you would like them to keep in mind from the key concepts. Also discuss any follow up assignments or take home materials. Remember the students’ responses to the question, “What did you learn?” to add to your report about this reading.



## Shelter Animal Behavior Observation

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Species/Type of Animal: \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_

What was the animal doing before you came up to him or her?

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Did the animal's behavior change when you came up to him or her? Yes or no? \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, what changes did you notice?

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Describe the animal and his or her environment:

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What do you notice about the animal's ears? (Are they up, down, forward, back or flat against the animal's head?)

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What do you notice about the animal's eyes? (Are they bright, open and alert or dim and partly closed?)

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What do you notice about the animal's body?

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What do you notice about the animal's tail?

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Based on your observations above, what do you think this animal is communicating and how do you think he or she is feeling?

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