



RedRover Readers Program

**Discussion and Activity
Guide for**

Duncan and Dolores

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Concepts:

- Why does someone choose to adopt a cat?
- What role does a person's behavior play in developing a relationship with a cat?
- Why are cats sometimes afraid of people?
- What steps can a person take to make friends with a cat?

Greet the Students

Ask students if they have ever scared a cat, either accidentally or on purpose. Tell students they don't need to share! Just ask them to recall the incident.

Tell the students they are going to learn about a girl who very much wants a cat for a friend but keeps scaring the cat away, making the cat afraid of her. How will she learn to make friends with the cat?

Before Reading

Look at the students. Pause and listen silently.

Share the cover of the book with the students.

- Ask students to describe the cover.
- Who could be Duncan? Who could be Dolores?
- How might the cat be feeling? Why?

Clarify Vocabulary

What does it mean to be "afraid"?

What behavior could cause a cat to be afraid of a person?

During Reading

Read the story aloud.

Pause early on to clarify why Dolores wants to adopt Duncan. How does Dolores behave as soon as Duncan arrives?

While reading, return to the question of what behavior by Dolores causes Duncan to be afraid. When Dolores shows behavior that scares Duncan, pause and invite students to think of alternate behaviors that she could show.

Ask, “How could Dolores behave differently that would not scare Duncan?” “What behavior could she choose?” Emphasize the relationship between Dolores’s behavior and Duncan’s behavior. Point out that cats *respond* to human behavior.

After Reading

Use questions to guide students through the idea that cats respond to a person’s behavior and that a person can take steps to make friends with a cat.

- What is Dolores’s first demand of Duncan?
- What specifically does Dolores try to get Duncan to do?
- How does Duncan respond to Dolores’s demands?
- How does Duncan respond to Dolores’s sister, Faye? Why?
- When Dolores changes her behavior, or chooses different behavior, what happens?
- How does the volume of Dolores’s voice affect Duncan’s response to her? Why?
- How does Duncan learn about Dolores? (He learns about her by observing her.)

Activity: How long does it take to make friends with a cat?

Review the time frame of the story with the students. Review the setting. The story takes place over a period of five days in Dolores and Faye’s house.

On the whiteboard or chart paper, create a chart. Have students tell you the main plot points in order of occurrence. Refer to the book as needed.

Emphasize the narrative time of the story, and that the relationship between Duncan and Dolores develops over time. Tell students that making friends with a new cat can take as long as a few days to a month.

After summarizing the plot, ask students to evaluate Dolores’s behavior. Refer to the book as needed.

Suggested responses are in italics.

Plot	<i>Dolores and Faye see the sign for Duncan.</i>	<i>Duncan arrives. He hides under the refrigerator.</i>	<i>Dolores tries to play dress-up and magic tricks with Duncan. He runs away. Duncan sits with Faye.</i>	<i>Dolores decides Duncan doesn't like her. Faye tells her he is afraid of her.</i>	<i>Duncan approaches Dolores.</i>
In what ways does Dolores behave that are helpful toward Duncan		<i>She keeps Duncan inside. They feed him.</i>		<i>Dolores starts to ignore Duncan so he can observe her.</i>	<i>She says "Thank you" when Duncan brings the paint brush. She whispers when Duncan hops on her bed. She appreciates Duncan.</i>
In what ways could Dolores change her behavior to help Duncan	<i>She wants a cat because he's cute. She could think about the cat's needs.</i>	<i>She demands Duncan play with her. She could let him sniff around and learn what Duncan likes to do.</i>	<i>She could be quieter and more patient around Duncan.</i>	<i>Dolores could use a softer voice around Duncan. She could not chase Duncan.</i>	<i>She yells! She could remember to talk softly around Duncan.</i>

Extensions: Choose one or more

A. The Next Page

Review the last three pages of the story with students. Dolores is so happy she yells and scares Duncan. He hides under her bed.

What should Dolores do next?

Provide students with 8-1/2 x 11 sheets of paper. Have students illustrate the next page of the story. What behavior should Dolores choose?

B. How to Make Friends with a Cat

Review with students the first page of the story and re-read the sign. Ask students, “How old is Duncan?” “How old is Faye?”

Share with students the relative ages of cats and humans. A four-year-old cat is about the same age as a 32-year-old human.

<http://cats.about.com/cs/healthissues/a/agechart.htm>

Ask students to recall what they know about four-year-old people. Listen to their ideas. Then ask students to think of ways to explain to a four-year-old child “How to Make Friends with a Cat.” Encourage students to refer to the story and list ways that Duncan reacts to different behavior on Dolores’s part. List students’ ideas on chart paper or on the white board.

Ideas include:

- talk softly
- be patient
- don’t expect the cat to want to play like a person
- say “thank you”
- etc.

After you have a list of five to seven ideas, have students create a booklet for a four-year-old child titled: How to Make Friends with a Cat. (One possibility is to divide students into small groups and have each student create a page for the book. Or, if the class comes up with enough ideas, create one book.) Provide paper and colored markers or pencils. Remind students of the audience: a four year old. Encourage students to use simple directions and illustrations.

Encourage students to share completed books.

C. Cat’s Needs

Bring supplies necessary to take care of a cat. 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?

Do you think Dolores will learn how to "take care" of Duncan?

Encourage students to think of additional responsibilities Dolores has toward Duncan, such as providing him with a collar and tag and making sure he has vaccinations.

Additional video resource: Cat body language can be difficult to read. Here is a video that was filmed at a RedRover Responders development in Hawaii. It shows cat behavior and would be great to show students who may be unfamiliar with cat body language:

<http://redrover.org/VideoMauiCats2015>

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.