



**RedRover Readers Program**

**Discussion and Activity  
Guide for**

***Mrs. Crump's Cat***

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**Concepts:**

- When a person finds a stray cat (or a stray cat finds a person), what choices does he or she have?
- How (in what ways) could the companionship of a cat benefit a person?
- What does it mean for a pet to belong to someone?

Write on the board: “What choice do people have when they find a stray cat?”

**Before Reading**

Ask students if they have ever *seen* a stray cat. What does it mean to be “stray”? What is a “stray cat”?

Share the front and back covers with students. Ask students, “Whose yellow cat is shown?” Show students the dedication page. Ask students to describe the illustration on the two pages. (What’s the weather like? What colors do you see? What’s the brightest figure in the illustration?)

Ask:

- What do you think will happen in the story?
- Who is Mrs. Crump?

**During Reading**

On the page where the cat is rubbing against Mrs. Crump’s legs, ask “How do you think Mrs. Crump feels in this picture?” (How do you know?) “How do you think the cat feels?” (How do you know?)

On the page where Mrs. Crump enters the store, ask, “What does it mean to say something curtly?” (Define for them if necessary.) “Why do you think she is speaking curtly?”

On the page where she walks back home in the rain, ask: “How do you think Mrs. Crump feels now?” “Why do you think she feels this way?”

After Mrs. Crump makes the sign and hangs it in the store, ask, “Do you think Mrs. Crump wants to find the owner of the cat?” (What makes you think that?)

Last page: “How does Mrs. Crump feel?” “How does the cat feel?”

**After Reading**

Go back through the illustrations and ask, “How do the expressions on Mrs. Crump’s face change in the illustrations as we go through the story?” “Why do you think her expressions change?”

**Activity: What happens when the yellow cat enters Mrs. Crump's life?**

On the whiteboard or chart paper, create the chart labeled "First, Then...Finally" as shown. Review the illustrations as the students re-tell the story. (Possible responses are in italics.)

<i>First, a yellow cat shows up on Mrs. Crump's doorstep.</i>
<i>Then she tries to shoo away the cat.</i>
<i>Then the cat sneaks in and Mrs. Crump lets the cat dry.</i>
<i>Then she talks with Mr. Henry and buys things for the cat.</i>
<i>Then she lets the cat stay and starts to take care of the cat.</i>
<i>Then she talks with Mr. Henry some more and buys more things for the cat.</i>
<i>Then she bathes and feeds the cat and makes a sign and hangs it in a dusty corner of Mr. Henry's store.</i>
<i>Then Mrs. Crump buys more food for the cat and sings on the way home.</i>
<i>Then Mr. Henry visits Mrs. Crump.</i>
<i>Finally, Mrs. Crump wonders how she ever got along without the cat and the cat cuddles on her lap.</i>

Have students list as a class five words or phrases that describe Mrs. Crump *before* she meets the yellow cat and five words or phrases that describe Mrs. Crump *after* she meets the yellow cat.

Refer back to the question you wrote on the board in the beginning of the lesson.

Ask:

- If you were Mrs. Crump would you have kept the cat? Why or why not? (What would you do if a stray cat came up to you?)
- Could the yellow cat be beneficial (helpful) for Mrs. Crump? Why or why not?
- Would living with Mrs. Crump benefit the yellow cat? Why or why not?
- Why do you think the yellow cat chose to go to Mrs. Crump's house in the first place?

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

### **A. What Does a Cat Need?**

Ask the students what Mrs. Crump provides for the cat (a slice of bread, cream, soap, dish, collar, liver, tuna). Ask students what a cat needs. List the items on the board as students name them (The list may include cat food, a visit to the vet, litter box, a name tag...; you can also explain that prepared cat food is a better choice than tuna and cream if students don't bring this up.). Ask students why Mrs. Crump would not have known a cat needs these things. After the students have listed the items, show some that you have brought to share. Encourage students to think of ways to learn more about cats and cat care. Consider bringing in items that dogs and cats need such as a water bowl and toys for the children to feel and explore.

### **B. Lost and Found**

Mrs. Crump finds a stray cat. She makes a "Found" sign for the cat. Review the illustrations with the "Found" sign. Ask students: What words does Mrs. Crump use to describe the cat? What does Mrs. Crump's "Found" sign reveal about her feelings for the cat? Have students write and draw "Found" signs for the yellow cat as if they really wanted the cat to be claimed. Encourage students to describe the cat positively and give the cat a name.

### **C. Safe and Warm**

Share with students the final illustration of the cat on Mrs. Crump's lap. Reread the last sentence of the story. Reread the first sentence of the story. One more time, read the final two sentences of the story.

Have students look again at the final illustration. The cat is resting, maybe sleeping. Ask students to imagine they are the cat. Ask students: What could the cat be feeling? Have students draw a picture that imagines what the cat could be dreaming or thinking. Encourage students to write one sentence on their illustration: The cat is dreaming (thinking) about....

Do animals dream? Research shows they do!  
<http://web.mit.edu/newsoffice/2001/dreaming.html>

### **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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