



RedRover Readers Program

**Discussion and Activity
Guide for**

***Nobody's Cats: How One Little Black Kitty
Came in from the Cold***

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RedRover Readers Discussion and Activity Guide for Nobody's Cats
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Concepts

- What is a feral cat?
- What do cats need to be healthy and happy?
- How do people's reactions to the same situation differ?

Write this question on the board before class: "How is the boy in the story a hero for animals?"

Before Reading

Ask the students if they have ever *seen* a cat? -Where did you see the cat? What did you do when you saw the cat?

Share the cover with the students. Ask three to four questions, such as:

- Who is the cat shown?
- Describe this cat.
- Is this cat inside or outside? What is the weather like?
- What is in the background? What kind of building do you think that is?
- Predict (make an educated guess): What do you think will happen in this story?

During Reading

Read the story aloud and make sure all the children can see the illustrations by walking around the room.

On the page where the kids are throwing rocks at the cats, ask, "Why do you think the kids are throwing rocks?" "What does the boy do when he sees the kids throwing rocks at the cats?" "Why do you think the boy is shouting at them to stop?" "What do you think you would have done in that situation?"

On the page where the boy is talking to the two adults, ask, "How are the two neighbors' reactions different?" "What do you think you would say to the boy if you were his neighbor?"

On the page where the little black kitty is in the cage, before continuing to read the bottom of the page, ask, "How do you think the little black kitty feels in this picture?" "How can you tell?"

On the page where the veterinarian is holding the little black kitty and the boy is petting him, ask, "How do you think the little black kitty feels?" "How can you tell?" "How do you think the boy feels about the little black kitty?"

After Reading

Vocabulary:

These terms and definitions are included in the back of the book. Ask the students:

- “What is a feral cat?” “Have you ever seen a feral cat?”
 - Definition: a cat who has had little or no contact with humans since birth
- “What is a stray cat?” “Have you ever seen a stray cat?”
 - Definition: a cat who has been abandoned or has “strayed” from home and become lost
- Re-read the following quotes from the second page where it shows the little black kitty with the red truck in the background, and follow-up each quote with the question: “Do you think these are feral cats or stray cats?”
 - “Confused cats left behind by people who moved away.”
 - “Cold, hungry cats who were born there.”
 - “Sad, scared cats dropped off and abandoned at the old shed, just like the little black kitty.”
- “Have you heard of a community cat colony or a feral cat colony?”
 - Definition: a group of cats living in one place in the outdoors — a colony can include feral and stray cats
- “What does it mean to socialize a cat?” “What can you do to socialize a cat?” “Can you think of a time the little black kitty was socialized in the story?”
 - Definition: the process of teaching a cat how to be comfortable and happy to live with humans in an indoor home

Review:

Review the story’s illustrations without reading the words. Ask the students to tell you the story using the illustrations. Ask the questions below if the students need prompting or to guide the discussion.

- Where is the little black kitty when the story begins?
- How are the cats treated by the neighborhood kids?
- How are the cats viewed by the neighbors?
- Who helps the boy?
- Who helps the cats?
- What does the little black kitty learn about people?
- What happened to the little black kitty at the end of the story?
- How do you think the boy felt when he learned that he could keep the little black kitty?
- What does the little boy decide to do at the end of the story?

After retelling the story, ask: “How was the boy a hero for animals in this story?” Write the students’ responses on the board where you wrote your question.

Activity: Compare and contrast the characters' reactions to "nobody's cats"

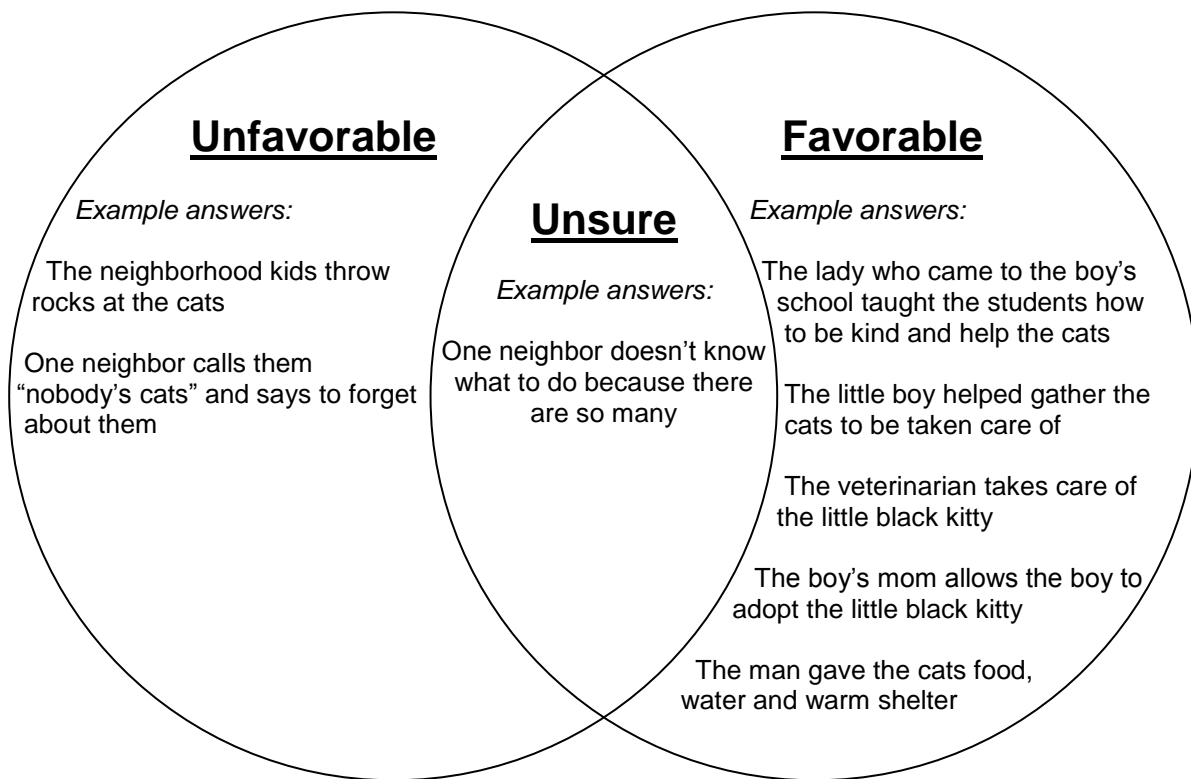
Create a venn diagram with the headings "Unfavorable," "Unsure," and "Favorable" like in the example below.

Ask the students which characters they remember from the story. For each character that is mentioned, ask the following questions:

- What did the character do in the story?
- How did they react to "nobody's cats"?
- Where do you think that reaction best fits in the venn diagram?

Then complete the venn diagram using the answers the students have given (the answers provided in the diagram below are simply examples). You may use the illustrations in the story to help the students identify the characters and their reactions.

The Characters' Reactions to Nobody's Cats



Follow up with the question, "Why do you think some people help cats and other animals?"

Extensions: Choose one or more depending on time and interest.

A. Imagining a Story

Ask the students how they think the boy's life changed after meeting the little black kitty? How did the little black kitty's life change? How do you think their new life together would be now if the story continued? Ask the students to imagine they are the boy in the story. Then ask them to write about or draw a picture of a day with their new little black kitty.

Have the students consider the following questions:

- Would you give the little black kitty a name?
- What would you need for your new kitty?
- Would you set up a bed for him or give him toys to play with?
- Would you give him food and water or a bath?
- What kinds of things would you do together?

B. Cat Body Language

Re-visit the following parts of the story, *Nobody's Cats*, and ask the students to quietly observe the little black kitty's body positions:

- When the kids are throwing rocks at the cats
 - The little black kitty is crouching with his tail down
- When the little black kitty gets caught in the cage
 - He is crouched completely down with big eyes
- When the little black kitty is being held by the veterinarian
 - He has his tail up and his eyes closed

For each picture, invite the students to discuss with a peer the following questions and teach each other what they know about cat body language:

- What is happening to the little black kitty in the picture?
- How do you think the little black kitty feels?
- What do you notice about the little black kitty's body? What do you think that means?

After the peer-to-peer discussion, ask the students to share what they discussed with the rest of the class. Then as a class, demonstrate how cats can communicate using body language by pretending to be cats together.

Frightened and/or Angry: Get on the floor and cup your hands to your ears backward for ears back and arch your back. Explain that a cat that has his ears back and his back arched and rounded may be frightened and/or angry. Make a "hissing" sound. Explain that cats may hiss when they are angry as another signal to stay away.

Frightened/Nervous: When cats are scared or nervous, they slink lower to the ground and their eyes get big. Get on the floor on your hands and knees then pretend to see something that makes you nervous or scared. Slink low to the ground and make your eyes wide.

Relaxed: Lie on your back and make a “purring” sound and explain that this is a relaxed posture. Ask students to “purr” along with you.

Happy/Content: Cats knead or make biscuits with their front paws when they are happy and content. Pretend to make biscuits and knead bread like a cat might.

You may also have the students demonstrate their understanding of cat body language with drawing a picture.

Consider reading or using the illustrations from *How to Talk to Your Cat* by Jean Craighead George

C. 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. Students can also use a sketch sheet to draw what they observe.

D. Service Project

Create a community cat project with your class. For example, hold a blanket drive or food drive. You can do this by contacting your local shelter or search for a reputable organization and find out what their needs are. Make sure to follow any guidelines they might have regarding donations. As a class, set an attainable goal to collect the needed items – and ultimately help many cats in need. Upon reaching the goal, have a discussion. Questions in the discussion may include:

- How many cats will be helped using the items that the class donated?
(This information might be gathered by following up with the shelter or organization)
- How does it feel to know you made a difference?
- How do your feelings compare to the boy in the story, *Nobody’s Cats*? Do you feel similar or different?
- How do you feel about cats? Have your feelings changed since before reading *Nobody’s Cats* and completing the community cat project?
- How can you continue to help cats and other animals?

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?

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

Describe the animal and his or her environment:

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

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

What do you notice about the animal's body?

What do you notice about the animal's tail?

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