

CATCH a spark!

Using children's literature to SPARK CREATIVITY



Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats

Written by T.S. Eliot, Illustrated by Edward Gorey
56 pages / Grades 2-8

Originally written in the 1930s, this book of poetry served as the inspiration for Andrew Lloyd Weber's legendary musical, CATS. Incredibly rich in language, each poem creates rich characters with unique personalities, fostering visualization and creativity. A look into a classic piece of literature fostering imagination and whimsy.

C Context

A rich look at **vocabulary**. Written in a style we don't often see anymore, Eliot blends rich vocabulary with unique word choice. A perfect mentor text to read slowly for meaning. Challenge students to consider why these poems work so well to foster imagination.

Each poem brings to life a cat with **strong character and strong personality traits**. Students will learn much about each cat simply in one poem when considering tone author's craft. The craft of **personification**.

A Arts

What is **Musical Theatre** and how did Weber see this book lending itself so well to the craft? There are multiple videos easily accessible into the way the book was brought to life.

Using **dance** to create the artistry of personality. This piece of theatre is unique to musicals in that it is strictly told through dance and poetry. Why do these two art forms lend themselves so well to this piece?

T Themes

Personality
Uniqueness
Artistry
Character

C Create

Choose a "cat" to analyze deeply and then challenge students to bring that cat to life through music (tone/style), costume, dance style and voice. After doing so, share the artistic choices of that cat from the musical. Play the soundtrack to each poem and let the words come to life through song. (There are many videos of most of the cats on YouTube)

Using Eliot's style, have students create a poem about their own cat or dog, bringing them to life.

H Heart Words

"The naming of cats is a difficult matter...it isn't just one of your holiday games."

After reading the various cats, students will naturally gravitate with one of the poems/cats. Within their chosen poem, have them identify their own heart words and explain their choice. It likely aligns with their reason for having that particular poems a favorite.

Note: For differentiation and younger readers, there are picture book versions of many of the single poems available. The titles of these books are the titles of the poems.

