



TEACHERS' RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Lower primary
(ages 3–5 years)

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English
- **General capabilities:** Intercultural Understanding; Ethical Understanding; Literacy; Critical and Creative Thinking
- **Cross-curriculum priorities:** Sustainability; USA

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- A powerful magic realism story by an award-winning Australian author

THEMES

- Individuality
- Humour

PREPARED BY

Penguin Random House Australia

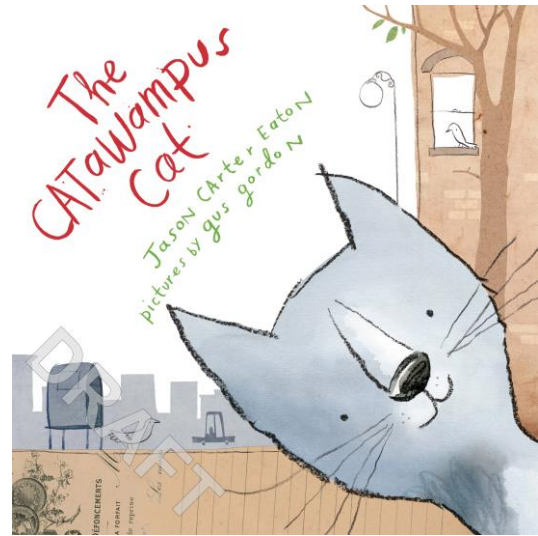
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The Catawampus Cat Gus Gordon

PLOT SUMMARY

A tilted tale about a cat who sees the world from an unusual point of view, written by the hilarious Jason Carter Eaton (*How to Train a Train*) and illustrated by the award-winning Gus Gordon (*Wendy, Herman and Rosie, Somewhere Else*).

catawampus (cat-a-wam-pus) n. 1. Diagonal or at an angle. 2. Askew, awry.

The catawampus cat walks with a slant. And his skewed point of view has everyone in town looking at everything with fresh eyes. Even Bushy Brows Billiam who never notices *anything*, including what time class is over, spots the catawampus cat, and now he's a star student! And when the town librarian sees the catawampus cat, she pulls the "wrong" book from the shelf, sending her into a life of adventure. The catawampus cat is in town and *everything is about to change*.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jason Carter Eaton has written several children's books including *Great, Now We've Got Barbarians*; *Bubble Trouble*; *How to Train a Train*, and *How to Track a Truck*. He also wrote the story for the film, *Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs*. He lives with his family in New York.

ILLUSTRATOR

Gus Gordon is an internationally acclaimed illustrator and author. He has illustrated and written over 80 books for children. His illustrations are known for their loose and energetic line work, mixed media and humour. His writing is always anthropomorphic. He attributes this to his love of Kenneth Grahame's *Wind in The Willows*.

Gus's first picture book, *Wendy*, was a Notable Book in the 2010 Children's Book Council of Australia (CBCA) Picture Book of the Year Awards.

His second picture book, *Herman and Rosie*, now published in twelve countries, has been internationally acclaimed and awarded. *Somewhere Else* has been published internationally and received critical acclaim.

UNDERSTANDING THE WRITTEN AND VISUAL NARRATIVE

This book models for young readers how active they need to be as readers, as not everything is spelled out for them. It is perfect for encouraging inferential reading, and exploring the idea of metaphoric stories. If they look closely at the illustrations, they will realise that the words only tell some of this story. The style of telling prompts them to explore their own interpretations. Told in direct prose and dialogue, the written narrative allows the illustrations to supply the tone and mood, add much context not referred to in the written text, and so prompt questions that open up interpretations.

Ideally, this rich picture book would be read aloud with a small group so that they can look closely at the words and images.

There are moments in the story ideal for pausing the reading for predictions. This will deepen understanding and prompt young readers to think about the decisions the writer and the illustrator have made, and about what is happening.

WRITING STYLE

1. What is the book's writing style? How effectively does this contribute to the story?
2. How is humour used in the text and in the illustrations to tell the story?
3. What did you think of the ending? Was it the best ending for this particular story? Why/Why not?
4. How does the book's title relate to its content?

Activities

1. Choose an incident in the story and write it from one of the townspeople's perspective.
2. Write an alternate ending.
3. Write the story from before the Catawampus cat arrived. Where was he before this?

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Look at the cover design – what do you think the front cover might reveal about the story? What kind of emotion is it evoking?
2. What does the title say about the book?
3. Examine the importance of the back cover blurb in captivating the reader. Do you feel it has been successful in peaking your interest? Why? Why not?
4. How do the endpapers add to the story?

THEMES

Illustration

Questions

1. Do you think the illustrations complemented the book's writing style? How effectively did they contribute to the story?
2. How does the setting of this story affect the characters and the events that take place?

Activities

1. Innovating on the text: Write and/or draw what you think will happen after the Catawampus left the town?
2. Write and/or draw where you think the cat was before it came to town. Your images must tell more than the words show.



Individuality

When the Catawampus comes to town the people don't at first notice it has arrived. But slowly, slowly, as they take in the cat's aspect, things change; one might say they even become radical! It's amazing what life a-kilter can reveal.

Questions

1. What is the main effect the Catawampus has on the townspeople?
2. How does the Catawampus cat show the people how to think differently and be individual?
3. How do you interpret the ending? What do you think happens to the town and its people?

Activities

1. Ask the children to look at something in a different way. Perhaps get them in groups and

ask them to describe the playground their way to school. Then get them to compare notes and see how each individual notices different things about the playground/their surrounds.

FURTHER READING ON INDIVIDUALITY

- Gus Gordon – *Wendy; Herman & Rosie, Somewhere Else*
- Aaron Blabey – *Pearl Barley and Charlie Parsley; Sunday Chutney*
- Jiri Tibor Novak – *Puffy*
- Tohby Riddle – *Nobody Owns the Moon; The Singing Hat*



ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
The Catawampus Cat	Gus Gordon	9780143785583	Pre-2	\$24.99		
Somewhere Else	Gus Gordon	9780670078851	Pre-2	\$24.99		
Herman & Rosie	Gus Gordon	9780143507277	Pre-2	\$14.99		
Wendy	Gus Gordon	9780143504658	Pre-2	\$14.99		
TOTAL						

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