

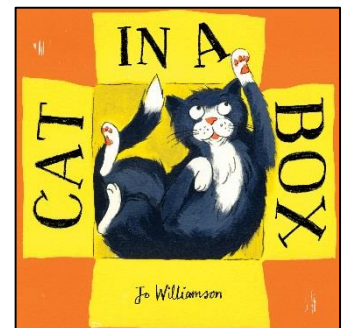


Cat in a Box

Written and illustrated by Jo Williamson

1 – Introducing the book

- Before showing children the book, start by placing a cardboard box in front of you. You can either put a cat soft toy inside, or keep the box empty and do the activity through mime. Keep looking inside the box, and give children one or two clues to describe what you see inside it. For example, you might say “it feels very soft” or “it’s black and white”. Play 20 questions, inviting children to ask you questions in order to try and guess what the object in the box is, reminding them that you can only answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’. See if they can work out that the object is a cat.
- Now reveal the title of the book, and look together at the illustrations of the cats on the inside pages. What do you think this cat is like? Is he lazy or playful? Is he friendly or a bit standoffish? What about this one? Ask children if any of them have a cat as a pet and if so, how it behaves. Does it have any particular habits or things it likes to do such as chasing birds or sleeping in a particular spot?
- Explain that in this story, a cat describes how he likes to ‘look after’ his family at different times of the day. Invite children to suggest ideas for how the cat might ‘help’ at breakfast time, or when the children in the story are doing their homework or watching TV, at bath time and at bed time. Do you think the family would be pleased that he is helping them in this way?



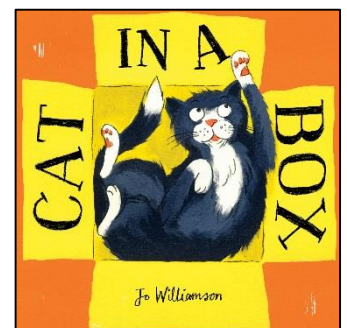


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1 – Introducing the book

- Children could read and then order simple sentences which describe daily routines. Encourage them to retell the routines to a partner using sequential language: 'first.... then... next..' etc.
- Choose selected illustrations from the book as a focus, and together write some speech or thought bubbles. For example, what might the father be thinking when the cat decides to sit on his head? How does the cat feel when he's sitting in the washbasin?



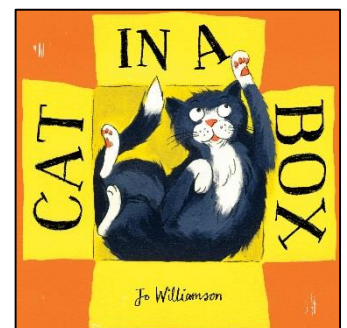


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2 – Boxing clever

- Re-read pages 8-9 where the cat describes how he likes to use a box. Provide a range of different boxes, and encourage children to come up with ideas for what they could turn them into. This activity could become a game with children taking turns to mime with their box while their classmates try to guess what the box has become, for example, it's a boat, it's a backpack, it's a bed for a baby etc.
- Help children to make their own jack-(cat)-in-the-box. Provide the net for a box that has already been cut and scored so children can see how the net folds up to make a cube. They can glue the sides together and then paint or add stickers to decorate. Children could make a simple cat face from card and decorate with googly eyes, foam shapes for ears and nose and pipe cleaner pieces for whiskers. Provide two long strips of paper (for example the length of a piece of A4 paper and around 3 cm wide). Show children how to glue one end of one strip to the end of the other strip at right angles, and then alternately fold one strip over the other until all the strips are used up to make the spring. Fix one end of the spring to the cat and one to the box to complete.



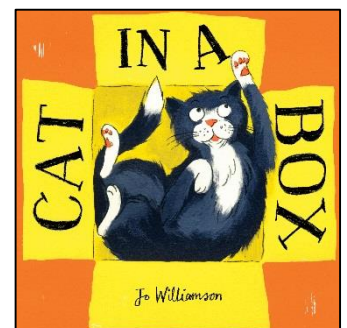


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2 – Boxing clever

- Put a range of different objects of various textures inside a large cardboard box which has holes in the side for children's hands to fit through. Encourage them to describe how the objects feel and guess what they think they are.
- The cat in the story likes to curl up in the box for a snooze. Children could work in small groups using a range of materials to make a special garden or an animal home in a box.





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3 – Let's play cat-ch

- In the story, the cat 'helps' grandma with her knitting – in other words gets completely tangled up in all the wool. Help children to make their own cat toy from wool. Blow up balloons part-way and secure with a knot at the top. Provide balls of wool and help children to unravel lengths at a time, paint with diluted p.v.a. glue using a large brush and then wind around the balloon. Continue until you have lots of wool wrapped all across the balloon. Leave the wool to dry out, and then burst the balloon. You should be left with a wool 'ball' which a cat would enjoy rolling or running after. Children too could practice throwing and catching.
- Play a game of 'cat and mouse: All the children should stand in a circle holding hands, apart from two who will take on the roles of 'cat' and 'mouse'. The mouse starts in the centre of the circle while the cat remains outside it. The aim of the game is for the mouse to get outside the circle and avoid being caught by the cat, but the mouse must keep moving at all times, even if that means running or jumping on the spot. The mouse can go back inside the circle at any time, and inside the circle he is safe from the cat which is not allowed inside the circle – it can only reach in. The mouse can only stay in the circle for up to ten seconds.
- The children holding hands can lift their arms to help the mouse enter the circle, and can stand in the cat's way. Once the mouse is caught, the mouse becomes the cat, and another child is chosen to be the mouse. NB This game works best if a time limit of two minutes is set so that each child gets a turn at playing.

