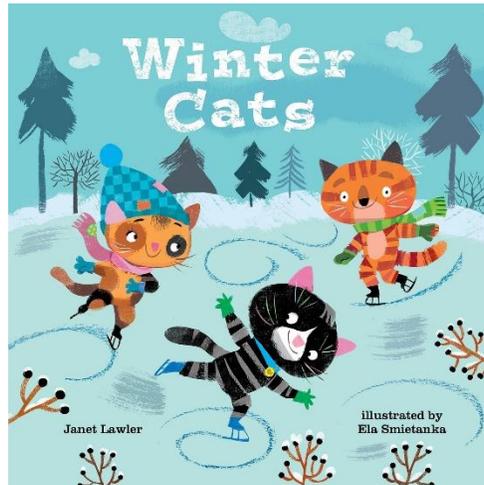


# *Winter Cats*

By Janet Lawler

Illustrated by Ela Smietanka

Published by Albert Whitman & Company



## *Curriculum/Parent Guide*

[relevant Common Core Standards are noted]

### **ABOUT THE BOOK**

Willy is an indoor cat who's never been outside. His mom wants him to stay cozy at home and his dad tells him outdoor cats are weird and wild. But Willy is curious and ventures out one frosty morning. He is greeted by friendly cats and enjoys a day of winter carnival fun, including careening on bark sleds, sliding down icicles, ice skating, and building snowball cats. That afternoon, Willy has the courage to invite his new friends home, and his parents see that they are polite and playful. Over a shared snack, everyone looks forward to continuing friendships.

Ela Smietanka's adorable, colorful illustrations complement Janet Lawler's upbeat, rhyming text. Amid all the winter seasonal fun, Willy's story encourages inclusiveness.

Winter Cats can serve as an enjoyable read-aloud and/or as a tool for developing literacy and math skills. These skills can also be developed in the context of multiple curriculum content strands. Below are some suggested approaches for sharing/teaching this book in K–2 grades.

## **FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS**

Text provides many opportunities for understanding: print; spoken words, syllables, rhymes, and sounds; phonics awareness; and vocabulary in context.

[*ELA.RF.K.1–4; ELA.RF.1.1–4; ELA.RF.2.3–4* ]

Text and activities suggested below provide many opportunities to teach and reinforce Language standards (conventions).

[*ELA.LS.K.1–5; ELA.LS.1.1–5; ELA.LS.2.1–5* ]

## **PRE-READING DISCUSSION**

Show front cover and read title.

Show back cover.

What do you think this book is about?

What season is it? How do you know?

Have students name author and illustrator and discuss their roles.

[*ELA.RL.K.6; Math.K.MD.A.1*]

## **SUGGESTED APPROACH TO TEXT**

### **Comprehension (Key Ideas and Details)**

Read the story. Have students ask and answer questions, such as:

Who is the main character?

Why don't Willy's parents want him to go outside?

Why do you think Willy goes outside that morning?

What winter activities does Willy do with the outdoor cats?

What do the cats use for eyes on the snowball cats they build?

What invitation does Willy make to the outdoor cats as the sun sets?

What do Willy and the outdoor cats do at Willy's house?

Are Willy and the outdoor cats friends at the end? How do you know?

[*ELA.RL.K.1–3; ELA.RL.1.1–3 ELA.RL.2.1–3*]

[*ELA.SL.K.2; ELA.RL.1.2; ELA.SL.2.2*]

### **Craft and Structure**

Discuss any unfamiliar words, such as *crouched, careening, entwined, poof, acorn, calico, flair*.

Use illustrations to assist with comprehension.

[*ELA.RL.K.4*]

Discuss common types of text. This picture book is a story, but it is also a poem.

[*ELA.RL.K.5*]

Choose a couplet of text to re-read out loud and analyze the beats, alliteration, and rhyme in text; ask students to do/discuss the same with another couplet.

[ELA.RL.2.4]

Explain story structure and ask students to discuss events of beginning, middle, and end.

What is Willy’s problem at outset?

What events take place in the middle?

What events take place at the end?

What have Willy and his parents learned by the end?

[ELA.RL.2.5]

### Relationship of Text and Illustrations

Pick a spread (2 facing pages) and ask students what the illustrations show. Read the text and discuss relationship between illustrations and the story. Discuss how story/plot can be conveyed by illustrations alone, text alone, or both. For example:

Read text on the “winter carnival” spread (“So Willy crouched and tiptoed out the open kitchen door. He longed to join their festive games—he had to see some more.”) Point out how illustrations can give you more information. Winter carnival game details are in the illustrations, not the text. Can you find Willy in this busy spread? What games and activities do you see on these two pages that look like winter fun?

[ELA.RL.K.7; ELA.RL.1.7 ELA.RL.2.7]

## WINTER CATS WRITING ACTIVITIES

### About the Book

Have each student write a review about *Winter Cats*:

- \* the title and a summary of the story.

- \* an opinion about whether or not student liked or disliked the story and why.

[ELA.W.K.1; ELA.W.1.1; ELA.W.2.1]

### Writing with Support from Text

Create one or more questions for students to answer by reference to text, such as:

What was the first outdoor activity that Willy tried? Did he do it alone?

Were the outdoor cats polite and nice? How do you know? (a tabby invited Willy to sled; they took turns on icicles; a calico held out paw and warned about slick ice; cats apologized for puddles and helped mop up)

Discuss sequencing and have students tell or write about key story events. Have students list, in order, the activities Willy tried while outside (sledding, playing on icicles, building snowball cats, making snow angel cats, and ice skating).

[ELA.W.K.3; ELA.W.1.3; ELA.W.2.3]

## Winter Cats Writing Workshop

Ask students to think about other possible stories related to the characters, events, and themes of *Winter Cats*. Ask students to write a new story with a beginning, middle, and end.

Model/brainstorm an example, or, for younger students, brainstorm a class-created story and write the story as students develop details. Prompts might include:

*Willy gets invited to go to one of the outdoor cats' homes:* Where might that cat live? What would that house be like? What if they got lost on the way there? Would that cat have a family? Parents? Brothers or sisters? What if they disagreed about what games to play?

*Willy and his friends start a summer carnival:* What games and activities might there be? Cat swimming? Kitty golf? What if Willy or one of the other cats is scared? What if one of them gets stuck at the top of a tree in a high-climb game? How does a rescue happen?

Have students revise and re-write with supervision. Have students create a title for their story and illustrate a cover.

[*ELA.W.K.3; ELA.W.1.3; ELA.W.2.3*]

## WINTER CATS MATH ACTIVITIES

### Basic Counting

Look at the cover. Count how many cats are skating. (3)

Look at the spread with cats playing on icicles. How many icicles are hanging? (9) Count how many icicles have cats on them. (3)

Look at the snow angels spread. Count how many birds are watching. (4)

Look at the final page. Count how many cats friends are holding hands in a circle. (10)

[*Math.K.CC.B.4a-4c*]

### Winter Cats Counting Cards

Create a sheet of paper with six sections. Have students draw a cat in each section.

Have students cut sheet into six cards (or use two sheets to have 12 cards for greater challenge).

### Addition and Subtraction

Have students use their set of six (or 12) cards to undertake simple addition and subtraction problems. Have students write problems out with numbers, such as:

3 cats + 1 cat = 4 cats; 5 cats – 2 cats = 3 cats; etc.

[*Math.K.OA.A.1-5*]

### More Practice in Pairs

Pair up two students. Have students use both sets of cards to count together up to 12 or 24. Give students a list of other numbers to count to. Have students write down how many cards are left over each time they count out a number.

Using their cards, have each student create counting, addition, and subtraction problems for their partner to solve.

[*Math.1.OA.C.6*]

### Winter Cat Math Word Problems

Create cat math word addition and subtraction problems. Have students illustrate and show numeric solution. For example: Willy made three snowball cats. One melted. How many were left?  $3-1=2$ .

[*Math.K.OA.A.2*]

For students doing multiplication, create problems such as:

Willy had two new friends. He wants to give each one three cookies.

How many cookies must he bake?

$2$  (friends)  $\times$   $3$  (cookies) =  $6$  cookies

[*Math.2.OA.C.3*]

## FURTHER WINTER CATS EXPLORATION

### Writing Informational Text

Have students draw/dictate/write text explaining the steps necessary to build a snowman (or a snowball cat).

[*ELA.W.K.2; ELA.W.1.2; ELA.W.2.2*]

### Citizenship/Community/Inclusiveness

What do Willy's parents think about outdoor cats at the beginning of the story?

Would Willy have made friends with the outdoor cats if he had stayed inside?

What does Willy tell his mother about the outdoor cats when he brings them home?

At the end of the story, have Willy's parents changed their ideas about what outdoor cats are like? How do you know?

How do you make new friends?

### Fiction/Non-fiction

Discuss differences between fiction and non-fiction texts. Is *Winter Cats* fiction or nonfiction? (clues: cats are talking and wearing scarves, hats, ice skates; Willy's father sits in a regular chair, holding a TV remote; cats doing human activities; etc.)

Examples of cats nonfiction:

*Kids Top 10 Pet Cats* by Dana Meachen Rau (Enslow, 2015)

*How to Speak Cat: A Guide to Decoding Cat Language*, by Aline Alexander Newman and Gary Weitzman, DVM, MPH (Nat'l. Geo., 2015)

*CATS* by Seymour Simon (Smithsonian, 2004)

*Cat Tales: True Stories of Kindness and Companionship with Kitties* by Aline Alexander Newman (Nat'l. Geo., 2017)

### Art/Writing Activity

Create a Winter Carnival wall or bulletin board. Give each student a sheet of paper outlined like a carnival activity/game tent (b/w and color templates attached). Have each student draw an illustration of a favorite outdoor winter activity and write a sentence or paragraph about why they love it. Post all tents on the wall or bulletin board.

### REVIEWS of WINTER CATS

“...it will fit nicely into many storytimes with its bouncy rhyme and *Everykitten* characters...*Feline aficionados (and others) will not be left cold.*” –Kirkus Reviews

### COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS KEY:

Standards for Kindergarten (K), First Grade (1), and Second Grade (2):

English Language Arts (ELA)

Reading: Foundational Skills (RF)

Reading: Literature (RL)

Writing (W)

Language Standards (L)

Speaking and Listening (SL)

Math (Math)

Counting and Cardinality (CC)

Operations and Algebraic Thinking (OA)

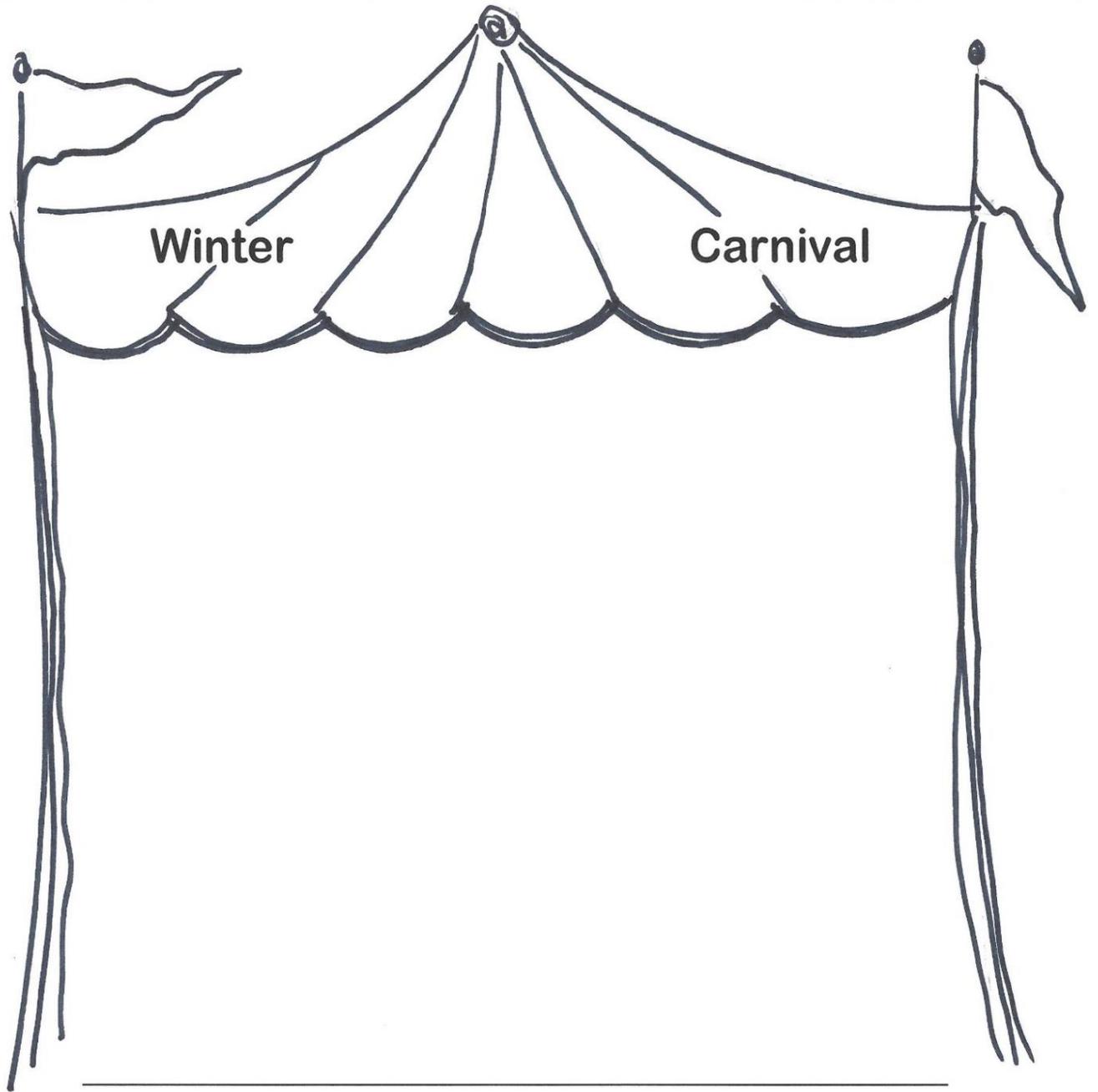
Measurement and Data (MD)

(Example: ELA.RL.1.1–3 is: English Language Arts: Reading: Literature. First Grade: standards 1–3)

*Winter Cats*

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Winter

Carnival

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