



Unit study based on

Comet's Nine Lives

book by Jan Brett

unit prepared by Ginger A. and Wende

Language Arts

Cat Sayings and Phrases

The title of this book comes from the saying that every cat has nine lives. Is this true? No, but *Brewster's dictionary of Phrase and Fable* says that a cat is said to have nine lives because it is "more tenacious of life than many animals". Cats were considered to be sacred in the Egyptian culture. The number nine is a trinity of a trinity and so nine was probably chosen to reflect the sacredness of the cat by the Egyptians.

Below is a list of other cat phrases that would be interesting to talk about with your child. There are many more. An older child could make a booklet of cat phrases for his notebook or lapbook.

Cat Phrases and Sayings

Raining cats and dogs [it's pouring down rain]

Grinning like a Cheshire cat [from Alice's Adventures in Wonderland]

Catnap [just a little nap]

The cat's pajamas [something great]

Look at what the cat dragged in [someone who arrives somewhere looking messy]

Looking like the cat that swallowed a canary [appearing very pleased with one's self]

Cat got your tongue? [someone who is slow with a response to a question]

Acting like a cat on a hot tin roof [from the Tennessee Williams play]

Let the cat out of the bag [a secret that has been told]

Cat's cradle [a string game played by children]

Fat Cat [someone who is well off or has a lot of money]

When the cat's away, the mice will play [when no one is watching, people will get into trouble]

Cause and Effect

Use an example with your student to define cause and effect.

1. Bill forgot to turn off the water hose. The yard was soaking wet this morning.
2. Jane's birthday is tomorrow, so her mother decorated a birthday cake.

Make up other examples and have your child identify the cause and effect. Read

Comet's Nine Lives again. Try to determine the cause for losing each life.

Action Words

As your child listens to the story have him identify some of the action words that relate to Comet. Examples: trotted, flicked, staggered, jumped, pranced. Tell your child to demonstrate each action word. Go-along book about verbs: *Kites Sail High* by Ruth Heller

Handwriting

Let your child practice writing in wet sand with a stick. Let your child choose some interesting words from the story.

Left to Right [pre-reading skill]

Place a basket full of shells on the table toward the left of your child. Place an empty basket on the table toward the right of your child. Give your child a pair of tongs to hold with his right hand. Instruct him to pick up the sea shells using the tongs and move them to the empty basket

Poetry

This poem is easily memorized. You could also use it for copy work.

Ocean Shell

I found a great big shell one day [pretend to hold with both hands]
Upon the ocean floor
I held it close up to my ear [raise hand to ear]
I heard the ocean roar!
I found a tiny shell one day [pretend to hold in one hand]
Upon the ocean sand
The waves had worn it nice and smooth [pretend to stroke shell]
It felt nice in my hand.

Arts and Crafts

Knitting

Sailors were some of the first to knit. Originally knitting was considered to be a man's skill because it was used to create nets. Teach your child to cast on and

knit stitch. This is quite possible for a 5yo. *Kids knit: simple steps to nifty projects* by Sarah Bradberry is an excellent resource.

Knot tying

This involves problem solving and following directions. There are many books that teach this skill but I found that it is much easier to learn by watching someone. [I thought this would be too difficult for little ones, but I was wrong. A retired Marine officer worked with a group of boys in my home for about 2 hours teaching this skill. At the end of the lesson all the 5yo could tie a slip knot, figure eight and figure eight on a bight. The older boys learned about 6 knots.]

[Learn to make a sailor's bracelet](#)

Sand casting [paper weight]

1. Fill a dishpan almost full of damp sand.
2. Pack the sand down.
3. Press seashells into the sand to make indentions.
4. Mix plaster of Paris according to the directions.
5. Pour into the sand molds.
6. Let dry.
7. Remove the plaster seashells. Some sand will remain stuck to the shells.

Math

Ice Cream Shop Math

Use the page provided to determine how much each order cost.

Measurement/Geometry: Compass and Ruler

[Make a simple paper boat](#)

Plan to make a fleet of these because children seem to really enjoy this activity.

Ordinal Numbers

Discuss the ordinal numbers with your student (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.). Use the flap books to sequence the story and to learn the ordinal numbers, 1st-8th.

Science

Hurricanes

Comet got caught by Hurricane Elmadore. Hurricanes are powerful, whirling storms. They form over the warm oceans close to the equator and can travel hundreds of miles. As the sun heats up the seas, warm water vapor rises into the air forming large thunderclouds. Wind causes the masses of clouds to whirl strongly. The hurricanes move across the ocean creating huge waves that can crash on the shore. Often times, the hurricane never makes it to land. When they do come to land, they bring high, destructive winds and heavy rains.

To learn more about hurricanes, read these informative books:

The Magic School Bus Inside a Hurricane by Joanne Cole

Hurricanes and Tornadoes by Norman S. Barrett

Or these picture books about children experiencing a hurricane:

Hurricane by David Wiesner

Time of Wonder by Robert McCloskey

Making Ice Cream: Salt and Ice

Comet had some problems in the ice cream shop. Do you know how ice cream is made? Why is salt put on ice when ice cream is made? What does the salt do?

Ziploc Ice Cream

1 gallon Ziploc bag

1 quart Ziploc heavy duty bag

4 cups ice

¼ cup salt

1 cup whole milk

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

2 Tablespoons sugar

cups and spoons

Steps:

1. Pour the milk, vanilla extract, and sugar into the small Ziploc bag. Squeeze as much air out as possible and seal the bag.

2. Place the small Ziploc bag down into the large bag. Cover with the ice and salt. Seal the large bag.
3. Shake ,toss, and flip the Ziploc bag for 5-10 minutes. Pass the bag around if it gets too cold. Don't open the bag to check the ice cream because it may reseal securely.
4. Open both bags and spoon the ice cream into a small cup.

Variations

1. Substitute other flavors for the vanilla.
2. Omit the vanilla and half the sugar. Add strawberry or chocolate syrup to the milk mixture.

Science Explanation:

Salt lowers the freezing point of water. The water gets colder than ice [about 28 degrees]. This super-cold water and ice mixture causes the liquid milk mixture to freeze and become solid.

Water Study: Absorbent and Nonabsorbent

It may be easier to do this activity outside at a kiddie pool, but your kitchen sink or bathtub would work just fine.

1. Experiment to determine whether an item is absorbent or nonabsorbent. Gather a variety of materials. [examples could include: cotton balls, sponge, aluminum foil, wash cloth, umbrella, plastic cup, piece of paper, sock, etc.] Explain the terms *absorbent* and *nonabsorbent* by testing one item of each kind. This way your child will see as well as hear your explanation.
2. Allow your child time to test each all the items. Group the items into piles. Count the number of items in each group. Use the prepared chart. It has a list of items.
3. Your child may find a few items that don't seem to fit either category. Tell him to decide a name for that group.

Water Study: Evaporation

This activity is a simple introduction to evaporation. The purpose is to help the child move beyond the idea that water just disappears.

On a warm day give your child a bucket of water and a clean paintbrush. Tell him that today he will use water to paint the house and mailbox [or any suitable

concrete/metal surfaces]. Observe how the pictures disappear after a while. Ask your child for an explanation. Use this opportunity to introduce the word evaporation. You could talk a little about the water cycle. Children are usually interested to know that we just keep using the same water over and over.

Water Safety Rules

Rules for Boating Safety

Know your boat -- each boat has its own purpose. Make sure you use your boat correctly.

Always wear a life jacket while riding on a boat.

Make sure an adult is operating the boat.

Don't stand while a small boat is moving

Don't sit on the gunwale or bow of a moving boat.

Also, it's a good idea to know your state's laws governing boating and fishing.

Rules for Swimming Safety

Learn to swim.

Always swim with a buddy.

Make sure an adult (or lifeguard) watches you.

If you can't swim, or if you are just learning to swim, wear a life jacket.

Don't use an inflatable air mattress or swim ring unless you know how to swim.

Don't swim in cold water-- it can cause dangerously low body temperature (hypothermia).

Never dive or jump into unknown waters.

Obey all "No Swimming" and other warning signs.

Cats

You may want to spend some time learning about cats this week. You'll find lots of information and free printables in the [Cats Lapbook](#).

Cat Napping Activity

Social Studies

Geography

Massachusetts –

Comet lived in Massachusetts. If desired, do a brief study of the state.

Massachusetts is part of what are called the “New England States”, located in the northeastern part of our country. Have student locate Massachusetts on the US map. Your child may be familiar with the state, having learned in the past about the Mayflower landing at Plymouth in 1620, the Boston Tea Party, the Midnight Ride of Paul Revere, or maybe the Salem Witch Trials. Well Massachusetts was also among the first states to experience rapid city growth, and today is one of America’s most urbanized and industrialized regions. Massachusetts has been the home to many famous people including John Adams, our second president, and his son, John Quincy Adams, our sixth president. The state flower is the Mayflower, and the state bird is the chickadee. Looking at a map of Massachusetts, have your child locate the capital, Boston, as well as Nantucket, where Comet lived.

Nantucket – Comet lived in Nantucket, a small island off the south east coast of Massachusetts. While Nantucket is now used mostly as a summer vacation spot, during the 1800’s it was a very prosperous whaling village. By 1835, large fleets of ships were sent out from Nantucket to as far away as the Pacific Ocean off the coast of Alaska to hunt whales. These voyages often lasted three or more years. Most of the people living in Nantucket in some way depended on the whaling industry for their livelihood. The whales were used to meet the high demand of whale oil, the chief illuminant of the day. As the sale of petroleum-based oils took the place of whale oils, whaling greatly decreased. Nantucket is still rich in nautical history, with stately captain’s houses and fishing shanties, and it was depicted in Herman Melville’s classic novel *Moby Dick*.

[Hunt for treasure on Nantucket Island \(Nantucket, MA\)](#)

Land Form: Island

An island is a piece of land surrounded by water. Is your student familiar with any other islands? Point some out on a map. Which continent is an island?

Rabbit Trails

American Lighthouses

Efforts are being made by many historical preservation societies to preserve these landmarks. *Keep The Lights Burning Abbie* by Peter and Connie Roop is a wonderful read. Reading Rainbow 's video for this book is great.

Research various Native American Tribes

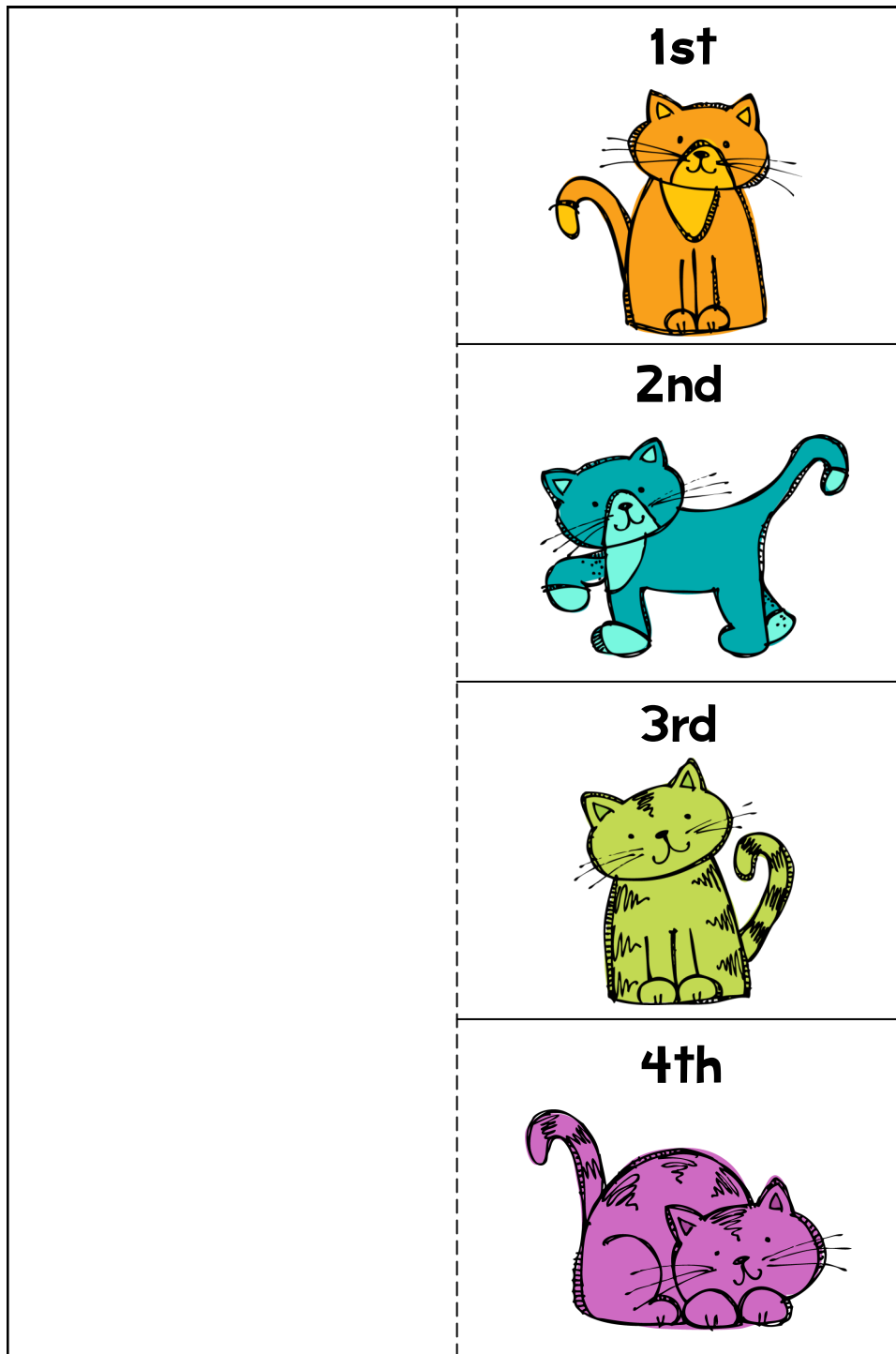
The internet is full of sites on Native Americans. However, I think a book from the library would be better.

Seashells

What lives inside shells? Research and find out!

Cooking

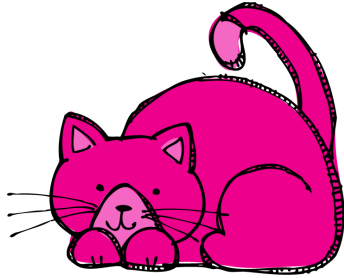
Make Boston baked beans or New England clam chowder.



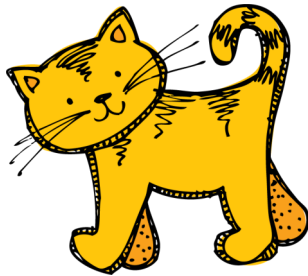
Directions: Cut on solid lines. Fold on dotted.

Cut and paste the corresponding pictures under the flaps. Use these books for your student to retell the story. You can also use it for ordinal number review.

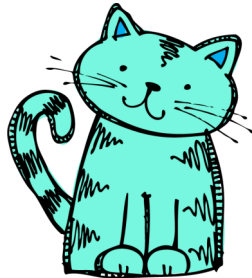
5th



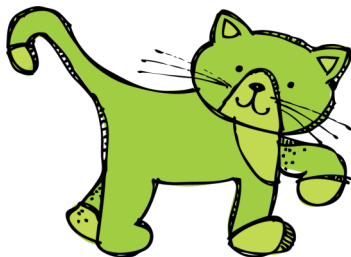
6th



7th



8th





Directions: Cut shapes out. Stack together with cover on top and staple on the left side.

raining like cats and dogs

catnap

Cat Sayings



let the cat out of the bag

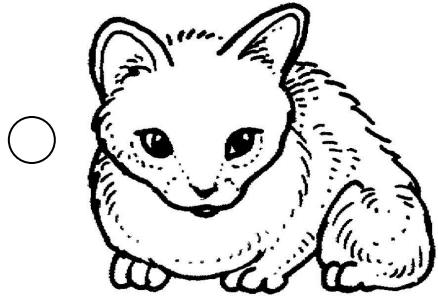
Directions: Cut shapes out. Stack together with cover on top and staple on the top.

When the cat's away, the
mice will play.

fat cat

the cat's pajamas

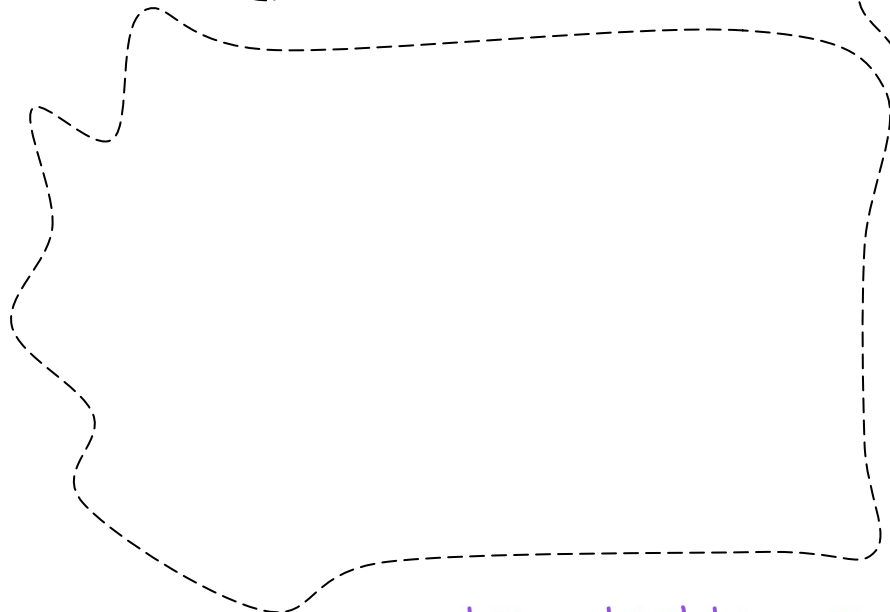
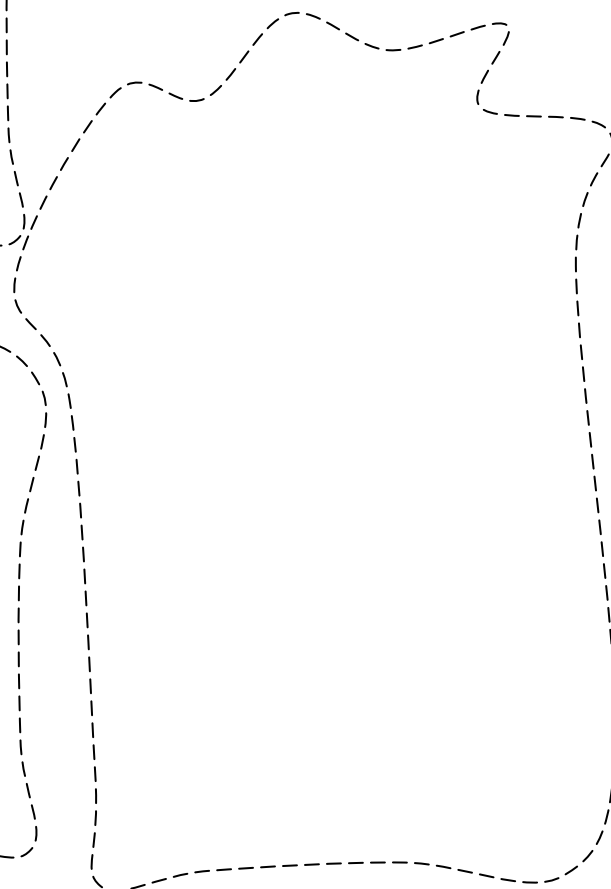
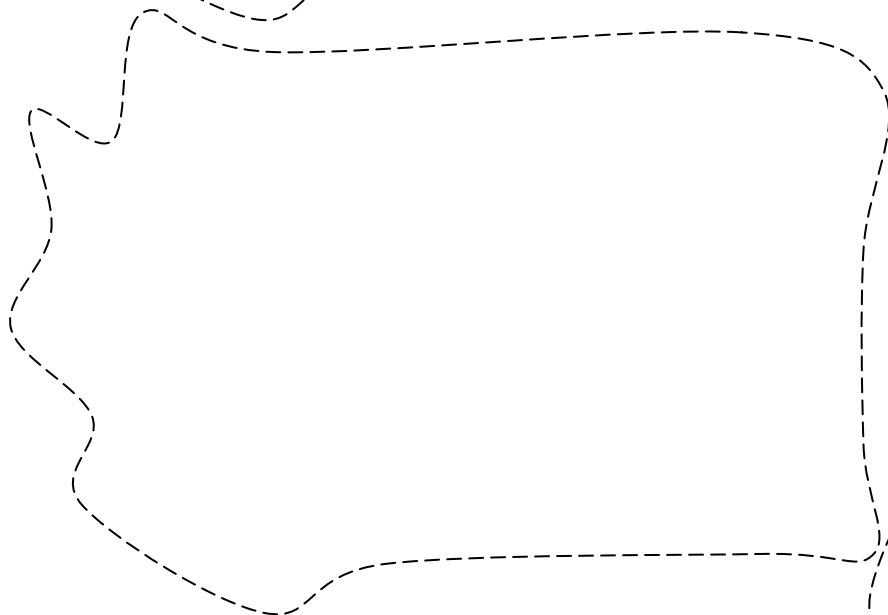
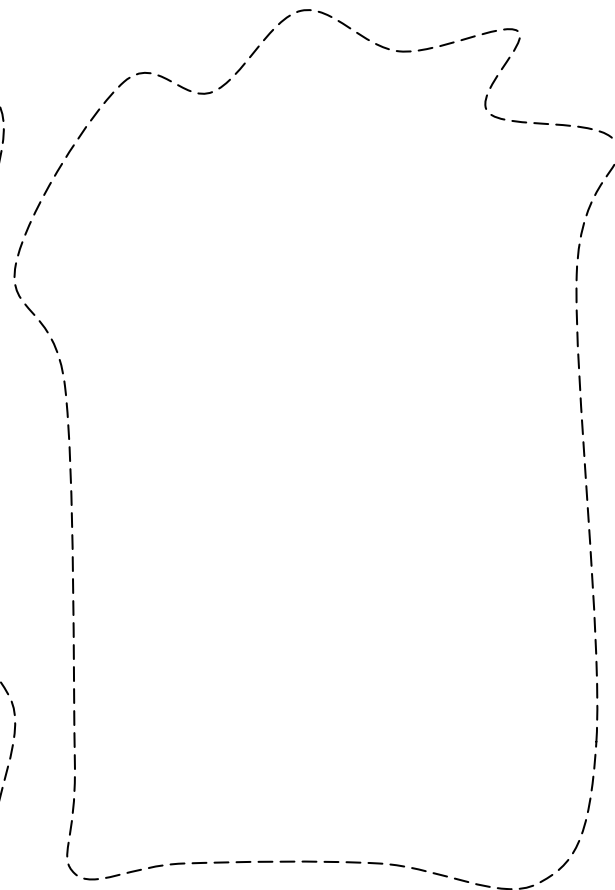
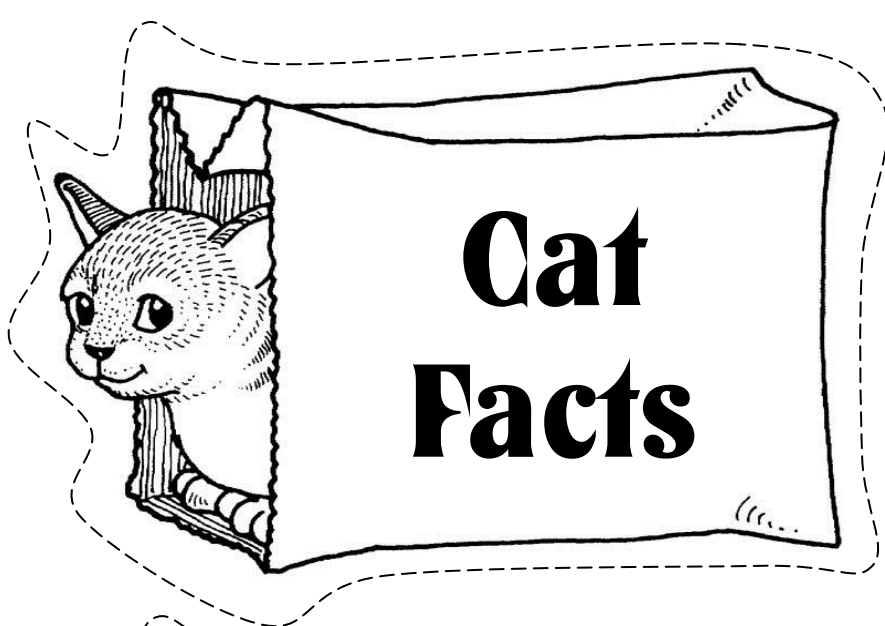
looking like a cat that
swallowed a canary



action words

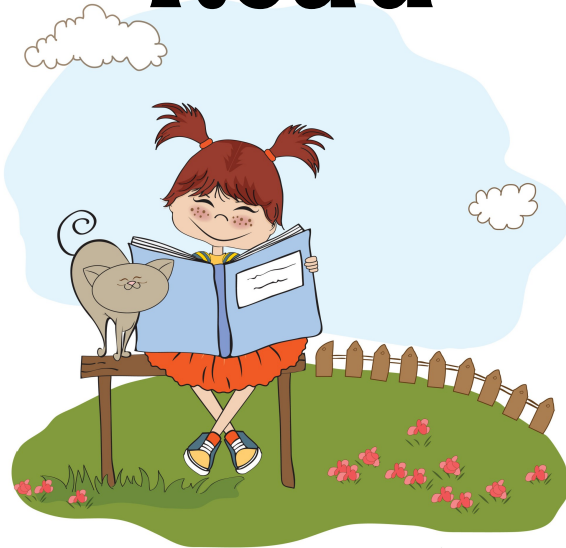


Directions: Print on cardstock. Cut out shapes.
Stack together with cover on top and secure with a brad.



Cut out top portion as one piece. Cut out long rectangle with an exacto knife. Cut out bottom portion as one piece. Cut on orange lines. Roll up bottom portion and stick them through the rectangle on the top portion. Video to help- http://www.liveandlearnpress.com/movies/000_0441.mov

Books We Read




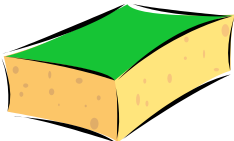
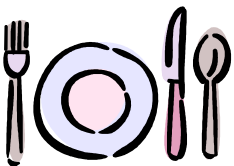


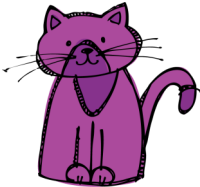

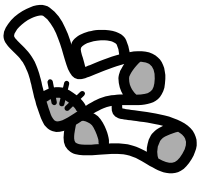


OCEAN SHELL

I found a great big shell one day
Upon the ocean floor
I held it close up to my ear
I heard the ocean roar!

I found a tiny shell one day
Upon the ocean sand
The waves had worn it nice and smooth
It felt nice in my hand.

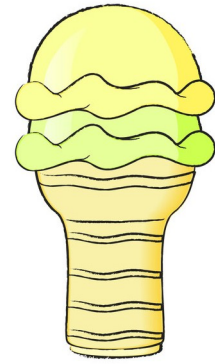
Is it Absorbent?

Item		Absorbent	Nonabsorbent
cotton			
sponge			
fork			
wash cloth			
toy			
cat			
paper bag			
sock			

Ice Cream Shop

Ice Cream Cone Prices

1 scoop \$1
additional scoop(s) 50¢ each

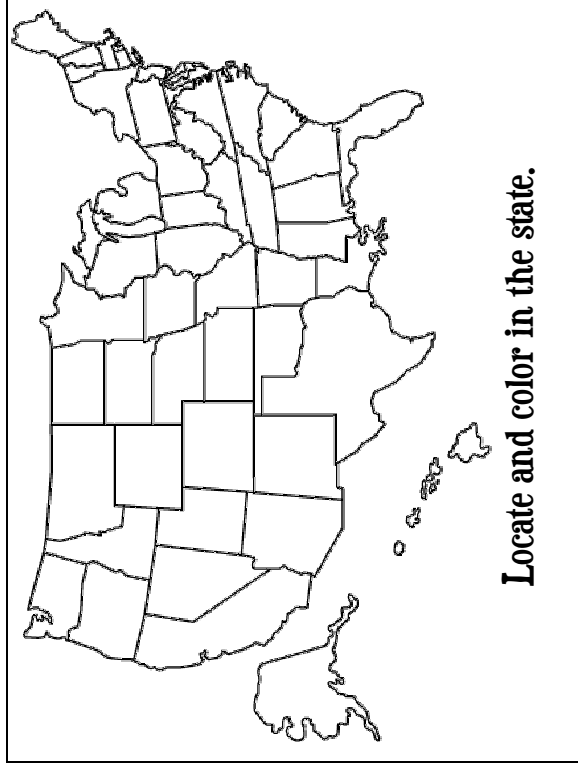


Massachusetts

**Where in the
United States**



is...



Locate and color in the state.

Cut out book as one piece on solid lines. Fold on dotted lines.
Cut out map on solid lines and glue under shutters.