



CATS

EDUCATION PACK

1981 - 2013

www.catsthemusical.com

WELCOME

CATS is a unique and inspirational musical; a blend of Andrew Lloyd Webber's music, T S Eliot's poems and the creative talents of Trevor Nunn, Gillian Lynne and John Napier. CATS first appeared on the London stage in 1981 and went on to become the longest running musical both in the West End and on Broadway.

The cats gather together for the Jellicle Ball, and one by one tell their stories for the entertainment of Old Deuteronomy. Despite interruption from Macavity, the mystery cat, the cats end their celebration with the journey of one of their number to the Heavyside Layer.

The magic of CATS makes it an ideal inspiration for classroom activity. This pack offers a range of activities to introduce your pupils to the story and characters of CATS before seeing the show, plus in-depth background information, follow up activity ideas and useful resources. The Pack is generally aimed at pupils from Key Stage Two and Three, but can be adapted for any age or ability. The Pack is fully photocopiable for classroom use.

The CATS Education Resource Pack was written by Su Newell, Head of Education & Outreach at the Liverpool Empire Theatre. With thanks to Keith Kenny, Tony Pinhorn, Sally Bayes and the cast and company of CATS.

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INTRODUCTION TO CATS

Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats – on which the musical CATS is based – was written by T S Eliot during the 1930's and first published in 1939 by Faber and Faber. Although Eliot generally intended his cat poems to be for children, they were also appealing and amusing to adults.

With a little adaptation Andrew Lloyd Webber used Eliot's poems as lyrics and set them to music to create the musical CATS. The inclusion of elements of Rhapsody on a Windy Night and some of Eliot's unpublished writings enabled the character of Grizabella the glamour cat to be used and so a storyline emerged that formed a shape for the poems and a basis for a musical.

A set was designed by John Napier – to cat scale – creating a place where the cats could congregate for the Jellicle Ball and dance pieces were choreographed by Gillian Lynne to enable the performers to move and express themselves as cats.

CATS first opened in May 1981 at the New London Theatre and went on to become a huge success throughout the world, influencing not only future musical theatre but also the development of future performers and creators of musicals.

Over sixty years after Eliot wrote his poems and twenty years after CATS first appeared as a musical the story and characters still hold immense appeal for audiences of any age or background. CATS takes you into a world of fascinating creatures, with stories to tell and journeys to take, expressed through music, song and dance.



SYNOPSIS

Midnight. Not a sound from the pavement. Suddenly an explosion of music and lights reveals a larger-than-life junkyard. Probing car lights tear across the darkened landscape of bottles and boxes, briefly catching the darting image of a running cat. Tonight is the one special night each year when the tribe of Jellicle Cats reunites to celebrate who they are.

They emerge singing of their unique abilities and special traits. The cats are at first suspicious and reluctant to allow the audience into their domain. They are proud, however, and in *The Naming of Cats* explain to their human visitors who they are and reveal that cats have three different names: the one the family uses daily, a more dignified name and, finally, a secret name. It is the contemplation of these secret names that keeps cats deep in thought.

Victoria, a young white cat, dances to signal *The Invitation to the Jellicle Ball*. Munkustrap, a large grey tabby, explains that the Jellicle Cats meet once a year to rejoice! They are waiting for their leader, the wise Old Deuteronomy, who will choose which one of the Jellicle Cats will journey to the Heavyside Layer to be 'reborn' into a new life!

Jennyanydots, *The Old Gumbie Cat*, sleeps and lounges all day long. 'She sits and sits and sits and sits, and that's what makes a Gumbie Cat!'

The Rum Tum Tugger is a contrary character that the female cats find extremely attractive, and who enjoys being the centre of attention.

Grizabella, the glamour cat, is shunned by the rest of the tribe despite being a Jellicle Cat. She left the tribe years ago to explore the outside world and now wants to return.

Bustopher Jones is a large 'twenty-five pounder', always clad in his signature white spats. He spends his time eating and eating in one of the many English pubs and clubs that he frequents.

Suddenly a thunderous crash, followed by the sound of police sirens and flashing red lights signals that the villainous cat Macavity is on the loose! The cats scatter, leaving an empty stage.

Two off-stage giggles signal the entrance of Mungojerrie and Rumpelteazer, a fun loving, frolicking team of pranksters who are always getting in trouble with the family with whom they live.

The entire tribe re-enters as their benevolent and wise

old leader Old Deuteronomy arrives. The cats adore and respect him. 'And now that the Jellicle leader is here, Jellicle Cats can all rejoice!'

They entertain him with a special show that Munkustrap narrates, *The Awefull Battle of the Pokes and the Pollicles* together with *The Marching Song of the Pollicle Dogs*. The cats dress up as the two rival dog factions who bark ceaselessly at each other until they are frightened away by the great Rumpus Cat, a sleek and powerful feline.

Yet another crash from the villainous Macavity is heard, which sends the cats scurrying. Old Deuteronomy soothes them as they come back one by one. It is time for *The Jellicle Ball*, the great annual dance in which all of the cats celebrate.

Grizabella appears once more, wanting to rejoin her family and be a part of the celebration. She is left to contemplate her Memory of the time before she left the tribe. She stretches out her hand behind her, hoping another cat will touch her. She is still not accepted and, disappointed, slinks off into the night.

Interval

After the Jellicle Ball, the cats rest and contemplate *The Moments of Happiness* before introducing more cats. Gus the Theatre Cat is an aged stage actor who worked with the greatest actors of his day. Gus tells of his greatest theatrical triumphs, and yearns to perform again.

Skimbleshanks the Railway Cat introduces himself. A friendly uncle to all of the cats, Skimbleshanks attends the trains he rides, and makes sure every detail is perfect.

A third crash interrupts the celebration, and this time the villainous Macavity appears. Two of his henchmen invade the proceedings and kidnap Old Deuteronomy. Demeter and Bombalurina sing of what they know of Macavity, whose evil deeds have resulted in his being dubbed 'the Napoleon of crime'.

Macavity returns, disguised as Old Deuteronomy, but he is exposed and battles with Munkustrap and the other male cats. Tired and almost defeated, Macavity rigs an electrical explosion that puts out all the lights, leaving the Jellicles in the dark.

But they still have to find Old Deuteronomy. The Rum Tum Tugger calls in Mr Mistoffelees, the conjuring cat, to use his magical powers to bring back their leader. Mistoffelees succeeds in reinstating the lights, locating Old Deuteronomy and showing off his magic tricks, including his infamous conjuring turn.

At last the time has come for Old Deuteronomy to make the Jellicle Choice and decide which cat will be reborn into a new Jellicle life. At that moment,

Grizabella reappears. Again she recalls her Memory of how things used to be. This time the cats accept her back into the tribe and it is she who is chosen to Journey to the Heavyside Layer and be reborn.

The Jellicle Ball has come to a conclusion, but first Old Deuteronomy instructs the human spectators in The Addressing of Cats. For all of their unique qualities and differences, he says, 'cats are very much like you'.



CATS

INTRODUCTION ACTIVITIES

Before taking your class to see CATS there are a number of Introduction Activities you can work through to introduce them to the story and characters, give them an understanding of Eliot's poems and also to allow them to discuss their ideas and expectations about the musical.

It is suggested that you select from the activities below those most suitable to the age and ability of your pupils. If you are working to a limited timescale then the activity introducing and exploring the story is most important – some of the other activities can be returned to after you have seen the show.

If possible you should try and see the show before embarking on these activities with your class (or at least watch the video or listen to some of the music on CD), so you have a clear idea of the story and content of the show and are able to tackle some of the questions your pupils may ask. This pack will also provide you with some of the answers.

Below is a list of suggested resources you may find useful when undertaking the Introduction Activities.

Suggested Resources

- Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats
- CD recording of CATS
- Poster and/or leaflet for CATS
- Video or DVD of CATS

(Full details of these resources can be found on page 27)

Introduction Activities

1. **Introducing the story and characters and CATS**
2. **Exploring Eliot's poems**
3. **Creating a CATS environment**
4. **Discussing CATS in the theatre**

1. Introducing the story and characters and CATS

Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats does not tell a single story, but the stories of many of the Jellicle Cats – each poem standing alone as an individual story. When creating the musical Andrew Lloyd Webber and Trevor Nunn felt it needed a narrative thrust, a way of linking the poems together so that the audience could fully engage with the characters and understand the environment they live in. A combination of the idea of the Jellicle Ball and the story of Grizabella (from an unpublished poem) and a fragment of an idea from Eliot about the Heavyside Layer came together to form the narrative thread Andrew Lloyd Webber and Trevor Nunn were looking for – that the cats gather together once a year for the Jellicle Ball, a chance to share stories and entertain one another, with the added inducement that one fortunate cat will be chosen to travel on to the Heavyside Layer. The audience have been 'allowed' in to witness this magical and secret ceremony in order that they will come to more fully understand the nature of cats.

It is a good idea to introduce your pupils to this before they see the show, to enable them to recognise elements of the story – and certain characters – so they can more fully enjoy and appreciate the performance, and also take more away from the experience that they can develop through the Follow Up Activities.

To introduce the story discuss with your pupils any cats they own as pets – what are their names, what personalities do they have, what do they imagine they get up to when they are out of sight? Introduce the character of Munkustrap to the class (see the CATS Character guide in the Appendix) and tell the story of the musical as if it were told by him (see Appendix for an example). Once the story is told have a discussion, raising any issues your pupils may not have understood, explaining Eliot's vivid imagination and, also, the historical context (Eliot was writing in the 1930's).

Keep a copy of Munkustrap's story on display in the classroom, at this point you may wish to ask your class to choose a character (see the CATS Character guide in the Appendix) and either write a short descriptive piece, illustrate their chosen character or write a short story about them before you do any in-depth work on the poems themselves.

Read and display your class' work and tell the story of the musical again at least once before your trip to the theatre to see the show.

2. Exploring Eliot's poems

It is important to introduce your pupils to some of Eliot's poems before seeing CATS as it will give them an opportunity to explore the stories, language, rhythms and structure of the poems leading to a familiarity with the songs and characters when they see the show.

Four poems have been selected, with linked activities for each one, but you can choose which poems you feel most suitable for your pupils to study and adapt the activities accordingly. Each activity begins with reading the poem and discussing the content, any language your pupils are not familiar with (Eliot often made up his own words to use in his poems!) and the characters described.

■ The Naming of Cats

Read the poem aloud and discuss any unfamiliar language.

The poem explains each cat has three names – the one used by their human owner, one of their own choosing and one secret name that no one ever knows.

Discuss with the class why names are so important, is there anyone who would change their name – to what and why? – do they think it is a good idea to have three names, especially if they can choose one of them themselves?

Ask them to work in pairs and choose one of the cat names from the poem, for example Alonzo, and write a short description together of the cat's appearance and character suggested by the name.

Read some of the descriptions aloud and display them all with the poem.

■ The Old Gumbie Cat

Read the poem aloud and discuss any unfamiliar language.

Ask your class to describe the two different sides to Jennyanydot's character – by day and by night.

Working in groups of five or six ask your class to improvise scenes depicting Jennyanydot's night time activities with the mice and cockroaches, or any other creatures they think she might discipline, like spiders or woodlice. They should think about Jennyanydot's character and how she gets the mice and cockroaches

to behave. After a short time share and discuss the improvisations – how do the depictions of Jennyanydots differ? Read the poem again and decide which is the most accurate.

■ Macavity: the mystery cat

Read the poem aloud and discuss any unfamiliar language.

As a class make a spider diagram of words and phrases on the board or a large sheet of paper that describe Macavity. What do your pupils think about Macavity – is he an exciting character or do they disapprove of him?

Make a second spider diagram of words and phrases to describe the character of a detective cat who could track Macavity down and capture him. Think of a name for the detective cat.

Using the spider diagram for ideas ask your class to each write a short story about the detective cat who hunts for Macavity. Use information from the poem about Macavity's crimes, and explain how, eventually, Macavity is caught.

Read some of the completed stories aloud and display them all with the poem.

■ Gus: the theatre cat

Read the poem aloud and discuss any unfamiliar language.

Discuss the types of roles Gus has played in the theatre, the performances he has seen or been in – and others he may have, such as Puss in Boots – with your class, remembering that Gus is a cat from Victorian times. Talk about the differences in theatre a hundred years ago, for example in the sets and lighting.

Gus' favourite character that he ever played – and his greatest triumph – was Fiorefirefiddle, the Fiend of the Fell. Ask your class to imagine who or what that character was and do an illustration of Gus as Firefirefiddle to accompany the poem.

Display the illustrations with the poem.

3. Creating a CATS environment

To encourage your class to think about cats and their many different ways and habits, create a CATS Environment in your classroom.

Collect together pictures of and books about cats to start a display and ask your pupils to bring in photos of their own cats and any newspaper or magazine stories or articles they may find.

There are many other cats in fiction (such as Six Dinner Sid, Orlando the Marmalade Cat, Gobbolino the Witches Cat, etc). Your pupils may enjoy searching the library for other stories and poems about cats, which can be added to the display and may be useful for your follow up work.

Any work that your pupils produce whilst you are working on CATS (especially from the previous activity) can also be added to the display. You can obtain posters and leaflets for the show from your theatre to put on your display.

4. Discussing CATS in the theatre

Before you see the show you may wish to discuss the visit to the theatre with your class.

Discuss - What they expect to see.

How they think the performers may be dressed or made-up.

What they think they might hear.

You can look at posters and leaflets advertising the show and listen to one or two of the songs on the CD (perhaps choosing the ones from Activity 2: Exploring Eliot's Poems). Is the music the same or different from what they expected?

Ask your pupils to write down their thoughts and feelings about CATS before they see the show, either as a collection of words, a letter to a friend or even a poem! You can then return to these after your trip to the theatre and discuss how their expectations were right or wrong.



BACKGROUND TO CATS

TS Eliot – his life and writings

Thomas Stearns Eliot is widely regarded as one of our greatest writers, whilst mostly noted for his poetry, he also wrote verse plays and a range of literary and social criticism. He received many honours and distinctions for his writing, including the Nobel Prize for Literature and a posthumous Tony Award for CATS (1983).

Eliot had a lifelong affection for cats, often sending letters and poems about his own cat to his godson, Tom Faber and making up unusual or outlandish names for cats for friends – and complete strangers! Practical Cats was originally going to include poems about consequential dogs as well and 'Mr Eliot's Book of Pollicle Dogs and Jellicle Cats' was advertised in Faber & Faber's 1936 Spring catalogue. Eliot felt, however, that it would be "impolite to wrap cats up with dogs" and the book became only about cats. The reason the book was eventually titled Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats, is that Possum was Eliot's alias amongst his friends.

Most of the poems were written between 1936 and 1938. Many of the cats were modelled on other literary figures (Macavity is styled on Moriarty, the infamous villain who challenged Sherlock Holmes and Skimbleshanks on a work by Rudyard Kipling – The Long Trail) and some poems Eliot wrote with music in mind (The Marching Song of the Pollicle Dogs was written to the tune of 'The Elliots of Minto'). Grizabella, the glamour cat remained incomplete and unpublished as Eliot felt it was becoming too sad for his intended youthful audience.

Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats was first published in October 1939, with illustrations by Eliot himself on the cover, at 3 shillings and sixpence a copy. Today they are recognised as classics, and have been translated into many other languages. Macavity, the mystery cat was selected as number 66 in a BBC poll of the Nation's favourite poem in 1995, and the popularity of the musical CATS has sustained the worldwide interest in the original poems.

On the right is a timeline of T S Eliot's life, featuring key events and his most important writings.

Timeline

- 1888** T S Eliot born in Saint Louis, Missouri, US
- 1906-1909** Undergraduate at Harvard University
- 1909-1910** Post-graduate studies at Harvard. Early writing, including the beginning of Prufrock
- 1910-1911** Studied at the Sorbonne in Paris and in Germany. Completed Prufrock
- 1911-1914** Returned to study at Harvard
- 1914-1915** Further study in Germany interrupted by the First World War. Continued studying at Merton College, Oxford. Prufrock (verse) published in Chicago
- 1915** Married to Vivien Haugh-Wood
- 1915-1920** Settled in England and taught in two schools before working for Lloyds Bank and as a magazine assistant editor. Eliot continued to write whilst working for the bank. In 1917 The Love Song of Alfred J Prufrock (verse) was published in London.
- 1921-1922** Worked as a correspondent for 'The Dial'. Founded 'The Criterion', which he edited until 1939
- 1922** The Wasteland (verse) published, his most famous work.
- 1927** Confirmed in the Church of England and became a naturalised British Citizen
- 1930** Ash Wednesday (verse) published
- 1932** Selected Essays (literary criticism) published
- 1935** Verse play Murder in the Cathedral commissioned for the Canterbury Festival
- 1939** The Family Reunion (play), Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats (verse) and The Idea of a Christian Society (social criticism) published
- 1943** The Four Quartets (verse), generally regarded as his masterpiece, first published as a single work
- 1947** Death of Vivien, Eliot's wife after a long illness
- 1948** Received the Order of Merit – bestowed by King George VI. Awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature
- 1957** Married Valerie Fletcher
- 1958** The Elder Statesman (play) published
- 1965** January – Eliot died in London. There is a memorial to him in Poet's Corner, Westminster Abbey.

CONTEXT

In order to help understand some of the complexities that surround the musical CATS it is useful to explore the context and timescale of the journey from T S Eliot's poetry to the London stage.

T S Eliot was born in America in 1888 but became a British citizen in 1927 after twelve years of living in the United Kingdom. His writing would have been influenced by the different cultures he grew up with, the long years he spent studying at different universities and the political and social changes he experienced, including the First World War.

Eliot wrote *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* during the late 1930's and it was published in October 1939, just after the outbreak of the Second World War.

Eliot was writing of cats during a time when cats were owned to be useful – to keep down mice – as much as pets. A time when a different class system existed and when the pace of life was very different to the early 21st Century. His cat poems were mainly set in London, but one that we would not recognise, a London of theatre, gentlemen's clubs and public houses, telling of a bygone age with nostalgia and fondness. Gus the theatre cat mentions Henry Irving, a great actor in the Victorian era, Skimbleshanks travels on steam trains and Mungojerrie and Rumpelteaser live in a house with a cook and other servants to attend to their owners.

Andrew Lloyd Webber was born in 1948 and enjoyed reading Eliot's cat poems as a child. He began writing CATS in the late 1970's, after the success of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Evita*, on which he collaborated with Tim Rice. CATS opened in 1981, forty-two years after the poems were published and was a close collaboration with Trevor Nunn and Gillian Lynne, who had previously worked together at the Royal Shakespeare Company. All these different people, with their different backgrounds in the arts and various ideas had an influence when creating the show.

The current tour of CATS (2003/4) brings both the poetry and the musical to new audiences, over half a century since the poems were written and twenty-two years since the musical was first produced. Once again the attitudes and viewpoints of audiences has changed and it is the nature of the enduring quality and charm of both the poems and the musical that they still remain so popular today.

THE CREATIVE TEAM

CATS was the idea of Andrew Lloyd Webber, who composed the music to T S Eliot's poems. Once he had begun to create the show Andrew Lloyd Webber gathered a number of other people together to work on CATS, including Trevor Nunn and Gillian Lynne.

Andrew Lloyd Webber

Andrew Lloyd Webber has written some of the world's best-known musicals in the world, including *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Evita* and *Sunset Boulevard*. He has also composed film scores and a setting for a Latin Requiem Mass. He has won numerous awards for his work – from Tonys, Grammys and Laurence Olivier Awards to an Oscar and a Golden Globe. In 1982 he became the first person to have three musicals running simultaneously in the West End and on Broadway. In 1992 he was knighted and in 1996 received the Richard Rodgers Award for Excellence in Musical Theatre. In 1997 he was elevated to the peerage as Lord Lloyd Webber of Sydmonton.



Late in 1977 Andrew Lloyd Webber began setting the poems from T S Eliot's *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* to music. He knew the poems well from his childhood and wanted to attempt writing music to lyrics already set, rather than the other way around, which was his normal practise. Initially the idea was as much for his own interest as for public performance, although he did feel that it may form the basis for a concert piece. In 1980 some of the songs he had set to music were performed at his annual Sydmonton Festival. They were seen by Valerie Eliot, T S Eliot's widow, who generously gave access to many of his unpublished writings and enabled the creation of CATS to move on to a different level.

Creating a musical is a collaborative process and Andrew Lloyd Webber knew he had to have the right team working with him to make CATS work. He initially approached producer Cameron Mackintosh with the idea that CATS could form a double bill with *Variations* but it was soon decided that it should form a complete musical on its own. It was vital to find the right director and choreographer to work with Andrew Lloyd Webber and Trevor Nunn was approached as director, followed by choreographer Gillian Lynne who had collaborated with Trevor Nunn (at the RSC) and Cameron Mackintosh before.

Trevor Nunn

Trevor Nunn was Artistic Director of the RSC for eighteen years and his work there included a great number of Shakespeare plays, alongside Restoration Comedy and new writing. With his colleague John Caird, he co-directed *Nicholas Nickleby* and *Les Miserables*. He has also directed *Starlight Express*, *Aspects of Love* and *Sunset Boulevard* for Andrew Lloyd Webber and a number of operas for Glyndebourne and the Royal Opera house. He spent several years as Director of the Royal National Theatre, has directed many television productions and three films.

Trevor Nunn was intrigued by the premise of CATS but felt that some sort of narrative was vital to making the piece work. When Valerie Eliot sent the fragment of Eliot's poem *Grizabella*, the glamour cat to Andrew Lloyd Webber, Trevor Nunn felt it was the key to the whole piece and could be used to form a story that the other poems and dance would fit in to. He worked alongside Andrew Lloyd Webber creating the musical and even contributed lyrics – in the structure of the song 'Memory'. CATS was difficult to cast. At the beginning there was no script and few of the cat characters had names. Trevor Nunn knew Judi Dench from his work with the RSC and she expressed an interest – asking if there was a sleepy old cat that she could play. She was cast as the Old Gumbie Cat, and also as *Grizabella*, and gradually the rest of the cast came together, including Paul Nicholas as the Rum Tum Tugger. Initially rehearsals were spent working on the dancing and also improvisation and character development. Several days into rehearsals, after a lunch time spent in the pub, Trevor Nunn was able to come up with sixteen cat names (all from the poems) and allocate them to the different performers based on the improvisation work they had done, and so enable each cat to have a character and begin to tell their individual story.

Gillian Lynne

Gillian Lynne has been involved in over fifty West End and Broadway shows as either director or choreographer, as well as working extensively in film and television. She was instrumental in the development of *Jazz Dance* in Great Britain and is recognised world-wide for her groundbreaking choreographic style.

Gillian Lynne was asked to go and see Andrew Lloyd Webber regarding a new project based on Old

Possum's book of *Practical Cats*. She had never read the poems, so quickly bought a copy to read on the train on her way to the meeting. He played her some of the music he had composed and she was instantly very excited by it and became involved in the creative process. She worked with a small team (dance assistant, dance captain and one boy and one girl dancer) and put together ideas for movement and choreography for three quarters of the show, which was then presented to Andrew Lloyd Webber and Trevor Nunn. She observed her own cats in developing the dances, often creating completely new steps and movements and helped Andrew Lloyd Webber develop some of the music, especially for the *Jellicle Ball*, as he had never written music purely for dance before. Once rehearsals began, she worked with the cast, alongside Trevor Nunn developing the piece and making sure all the dancers were of the same standard, fit and flexible enough to cope with a show that demanded two and a half hours of exhausting dancing. There were only five weeks available for rehearsal and when they began there were still some songs incomplete and constant changes to the music. Many characters were developed through the way that they moved, with constant reference back to the poems.

As rehearsals progressed the show began to come together more. It was a challenging time for everyone – a show like this had never been seen before and there was great scepticism about whether it would work – even to the extent that the New London Theatre, chosen as the venue, had to be persuaded not to pull out at the last moment. Then disaster struck when Judi Dench snapped her Achilles tendon during rehearsals and had to go into hospital. An anxious wait to see if she would recover in time ensued, but when she returned to rehearsals she fell off the stage and injured herself again and it was obvious she would have to be replaced. Elaine Paige, who had starred in *Evita*, agreed to save the day and, with minimal rehearsal, was ready for the first preview, even though the song she has become famous for – 'Memory' – wasn't. The show continued to be changed and developed throughout the previews but was receiving a favourable response from the audiences. On opening night CATS was well received by the critics and soon queues began to form at the box office. Broadway producers expressed an interest and CATS went on to become a world-wide phenomena, changing opinions and ideas about musical theatre along the way.

THE DESIGN

Once the New London Theatre, previously used as a television studio, had been chosen as the venue for CATS London opening, a designer had to be found to transform it into a unique setting for CATS.

John Napier

John Napier has designed Starlight Express, Les Miserables, Miss Saigon, Sunset Boulevard and the recent revival of Jesus Christ Superstar. He has created numerous other designs for theatre and the Steven Spielberg movie Hook.

John Napier came on board due to his long working relationship with Trevor Nunn. He found the concept of the musical a strange idea and had the unique challenge of designing a show with no script to work from. Trevor Nunn wanted him to create an 'environment' for the cats to exist in, and he was inspired by seeing a derelict site, with a fallen billboard and scrapped cars, which formed a wasteland that could be a playground for cats. He was also aware he needed to produce designs featuring a flat open space for dancing and lots of different levels and places where the cats could hide away or appear from. He decided to scale everything up, so that the human performers would appear as cat sized, and have items around on the rubbish dump that could be used as props or costumes for performing the different poems. The New London Theatre itself influenced the design, the stage is virtually in the round, there is no proscenium arch and the stage has a revolve, so all of this was incorporated in to the design, so the whole theatre became part of the cats environment not just the stage.

The theatre and the design itself threw new challenges at Gillian Lynne as there were no wings or sides of the stage where the dancers could easily go on or off and regroup for different numbers. This was especially difficult in the Jellicle Ball, which is nearly fifteen minutes long. The choreography had to be tailored to work within the design, so one group of cats would dance to take the focus of the audience off another group of cats while they rested or regrouped on another part of the stage.

John Napier became very involved in the collaborative process of the show alongside everyone else. Many of the costume designs were influenced by watching rehearsals, the dancers in their motley collections of dance wear, leg warmers and gloves, the way certain characters moved – for example Bustopher Jones'

walk influenced the design of his coat – and also elements of the cats names suggested the colours and textures of their costumes. Every cat had to have a wig as well as a costume and make-up was used to unify the two and support the personality and character of the cat. John Napier's involvement extended to doing everything, especially in the final run up to the first preview – cutting wigs, spraying costumes and demonstrating to the performers how to apply their make-up, often working all night to get everything right.

John Napier's designs have had to be adapted and developed for different theatres around the world, especially when the show goes on tour and must travel from theatre to theatre in six forty-foot trucks. CATS has now appeared in all types of theatre, including proscenium arch and thrust stage and each time the same magical environment is created, enabling the musical to come alive.



CREATING A CAT

How Jemima came to be...

Creating a cat is a long process involving an individual, dedicated performer and a great many other people besides.

The process begins with auditions. Sally was lucky – hers were all on one day – some cast members had up to three separate auditions. Sally was called by her agent and asked to go along to a dance audition. The next day she auditioned alongside about fifteen other dancers. They were taught the opening of a dance number from the show by Chrissie Cartwright (who would be recreating the show for the tour). They danced a number of times all together and then in pairs. Chrissie gave them notes on their performance and then they tried again. Next they had to summon up the energy to sing. Sally had prepared a song in the style of the musical and was then asked to sing bits from the classic 'Memory'. She was asked to go back that afternoon and sing again for the Musical Director and other people. They obviously liked her, as the very next day she was offered the role of 'Jemima'.

The next stage is rehearsals. Only four weeks to memorise all the songs and dance routines and have everything ready for opening night. Rehearsals were led by Chrissie and the musical director, with the support of the resident director and dance captain, and began in London. On the first day everyone was introduced by name and what their role on the production would be. Chrissie then told the story of the show and talked through exactly how the show would work in minute detail. The next step was for all the performers to learn the vocals – the lyrics, music and harmonies of the songs – this comes first as many of the dance routines are based on the content of the songs. Once the vocals are learnt then comes the choreography. Also by the end of the first week they had to learn the Jellicle Ball – a gruelling fifteen-minute long piece of dance that appears before the end of act one. Week two involves continuing to learn dances and also blocking the show (setting the positions of the cast on stage at each point throughout the show), to make sure everyone understands the sequence of events. At the end of week two there is a

run-through of act one and act two is run by the end of week three. In week four rehearsals moved to Plymouth, where the tour would begin. The rehearsal space at Plymouth is the same size as the stage, so that rehearsals can take place in as 'real' an environment as possible. This last week is spent working on run-throughs and going over and over any parts of the show that aren't working. Time must also be found for costume and wig fittings and for the performers to be instructed how to apply their make-up.

The rehearsal period is very intensive, with lots of new things to learn and absorb. A number of the cast have been in CATS before, but it was a totally new experience for Sally. Particular attention was paid to getting into behaving and thinking like a cat, often a whole morning or afternoon of rehearsal would be dedicated to this. They would begin by lying on the floor with their eyes closed whilst Chrissie talked to them about the different sensations of being a cat, for

Sally Bayes

Sally is from Melbourne, Australia. She made her professional debut in Scrooge and has since appeared in Mame, Fame – the Musical and Mamma Mia in Australia. She has also appeared in Neighbours on TV. CATS is her British stage debut.

instance how it feels to have fur all over your body. They would then begin to physicalise this, thinking about movement, the changes in posture and body shape and the different viewpoint and perspective a cat has. This was developed by using improvisation, looking at how cats respond to one another when they meet, with Chrissie providing different scenarios for them to work to. Sally feels mentally being a cat

has become second nature – she finds herself doing everyday tasks like cooking and cleaning in her cat character 'Jemima'. The addition of costume and make-up also help and the fact that she is surrounded by other people pretending to be cats every night.

Rehearsals also involve preparing the understudies (each main character has two understudies and there are four 'swings' who have to cover the parts of those who understudy main roles) so that by the time they reach the second venue of the tour they can have a full run-through for all the first cover understudies. Understudies and swings must always be ready to go on at a moment's notice, so regular rehearsals keep them fully prepared at all times. Once the tour has begun the resident director and dance captain will regularly watch performances to make sure the show is

running smoothly and everybody is performing their roles correctly. Occasionally they may call a clean-up rehearsal to work on sections of the show that aren't looking right.

When the rehearsal period is over, creating a cat becomes the full responsibility of each individual. They must remember everything they have been taught and perform to a high standard eight times a week, usually for three or four weeks in each different theatre. Sally arrives at the theatre about three hours before the show begins. Her first task is to apply her make-up, a coloured base with detail painted on, following the diagram of the make-up specially designed for her character. Her eyes are accentuated and cat features added and her ears and neck must be made up to blend in the gaps between wig and costume. One and a quarter hours before the show begins everyone comes to the stage for the warm-up, some already have their costumes or wigs on but most are casually dressed in comfortable dance gear. Technical checks are going on around them as the warm-up commences with the vocal warm-up led by the musical director. He will demonstrate what he wants them to do, using a keyboard to give them a note – usually they hum, la-la or yah-hah up and down scales to relax and warm their voices. After about fifteen minutes the physical warm-up begins, led by the dance captain. He will lead the cast through a series of exercises to stretch and flex their muscles, preparing them for two and half hours of energetic dancing. As the sound of the orchestra warming-up begins to interrupt the music for the physical warm-up most of the performers return to their dressing rooms to continue getting ready.

The technical team have made all their checks, including all the cast's microphones, which are delivered to their dressing rooms, water and ice packs are on standby and the dressers have prepared the costumes for quick changes – enabling cats to transform into cockroaches or dogs and back again in the blink of an eye. In the dressing room Sally adds the final details to her make-up – a good fixing of powder and a final coat of mascara. She then slips into her costume – a lycra cat suit, dyed and painted in 'Jemima's' colours, with gloves and legwarmers to add texture, matching jazz shoes and a tail that slips through a loop on the back of the cat suit and ties around her waist. The battery pack of her microphone is concealed in her costume and the wire runs across her head, with the microphone on her forehead. She fixes her hair with pins and a stocking cap before going

off to the wig room to have her wig fitted. The wigs are cared for and fitted by members of the wig department. Each one is individually made from yak hair, strong enough to withstand the dyeing and backcombing needed to make Sally look more like 'Jemima'. The wig is pinned on and fine netting around the face is glued into position, Sally then blends her makeup over the net, so there are no gaps.

Suddenly the five minute call goes out – beginners to the stage. The 'cats' collect in the wings, stretching their bodies to keep supple and singing snatches of their songs to make sure their voices are warm. In the background is the sound of the audience chatting, final adjustments are made to costume and make-up, the lights go down and the overture begins. All the long hours of preparation are over and now 'Jemima' goes on stage and sings, dances and entertains. Soon it's all over and the curtain falls. The 'cats' and crew go home, ready to begin the process all over again the very next day.



CATS

CATS FACTS

Since 1981

The London Box Office used 1,179,800 envelopes, 772,200 paper cups and 31,875 headache tablets!

The crew replaced over 6,124 seats, added 96,525 new screws, used over 36,625 posters and 356 gallons of varnish to cover the floor, replaced the wood for the star trap 6 times a week and used 3 litres of cleaner a week (2,316 litres).

The sound department used 30 new microphones a year (450 in total), 50 new aeriels a year (750 in total) and 50 batteries a week (39,000 in total).

Stage Management used 1,000 plastic cups a month, 2,000 elastic bands a year, 50 painkillers a week and 449,280 throat lozenges in total. They used a pint of milk a day (not for the cats) and over 200 loo rolls a week – for everything but the loo!

The wardrobe department replaced 5 pairs of shoes a week (3,900 pairs), sewed on six knee patches per night. In total they sewed 3,450 costumes for 262 different performers, using 11,954 lbs of wool and 2,825 miles of cotton.

The stage electronics department changed 23,166 bulbs in the London auditorium (there are 1,166 bulbs in total, 30 are changed per week and each has been changed roughly 12 times) and used 22,405 feet of cabling.

The make-up department used 10,800 sponges and 72 batches of each eyeshadow, pencil, blusher, lipstick and mascara per year. Cast members get through a box of tissues each every week.

'Memory' was aired on radio and television in the United Kingdom 46,875 times and over a million times in the USA (if you listened to the song non-stop 1 million times it would take five years!). There have been over 100 different versions and recordings of the song.

The current tour of CATS will visit over thirty theatres around the United Kingdom, entertaining audiences of over one million people. The show requires six forty-foot trucks to move it from theatre to theatre, transporting the sets, musical instruments, and sound system, together with hundreds of costumes and wigs and over one hundred lamps for the lighting rig. A team of at least twenty people will work around the clock to construct the set at each theatre.

REVIEWS OF CATS

CATS IS SURE TO SET YOU PURRING

These are surprisingly sociable cats, since they are attending the annual Jellicle Ball, at which one of them will ascend into the Heavyside Layer and be awarded a further set of nine lives.

And apart from the cats' individual and independent stories, that's basically all the plot there is in this feline fantasy.

T S Eliot's poems might seem an unlikely subject for a musical, but they guarantee intelligent, witty lyrics.

As a spectacular dance show it's critic-proof.

The auditorium is festooned with coloured lights, and the set is an immensely imaginative rubbish dump, the items larger than life-size to be in scale with the posse of personal pussies – even the boot hurled to curtail the caterwauling. And the high voltage choreography, with its leaps, spins, taps, rolls, crawls, struts and tumbles, is not overburdened with the sinuous movements of real cats.

All the moggies grab their moment of glory – Grizabella the nicely raddled glamour puss, acrobatic clowns and cat burglars Mungojerrie and Rumpelteazer, the never satisfied Rum Tum Tugger, the elegant cat about town Bustopher Jones, the mysterious Mr Mistoffeles, the even more mysterious Macavity, Skimbleshanks the railway train guardian, the quietly ga-ga theatre cat Gus, patriarchal Old Deuteronomy, the Gumbie Cat who sits all day and only becomes active at night, and battered Growltiger making his last stand. Favourites all.

It's a triumph of presentation and theatrical panache masking a lack of substance, and the second half is better than the first, but patrons left the theatre feeling like the cat that got the cream.

Bill Stone

Plymouth Evening Herald

LONG-RUNNER IS JUST PURRFECT!

Feline fanatics rejoice! Cats is back, after an absence of several years, with over £1m in box office bookings and several shows already sold out.

If you've ever read Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats by T S Eliot to your kids, you may have wondered, as I did, how on earth anyone could make a musical out of so slight a piece of writing.

Hats off then to both it's composer Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber and director Trevor Nunn, who did just that and created the most successful and longest-running musical in the world.

Natalie Angelsey

Manchester Evening News

PURRFECT SHOW

Memory, the show-stopping highlight of Cats, performed by former glamour cat, Grizabella, is probably my all-time musical favourite and Chrissie Hammond touches the necessary nerve in her rendition of this incomparable song.

Pathos apart, I spent most of the performance with a smile on my face, not unlike the cat that got the cream, in appreciation of the exuberance, vitality – and ultimately the uniqueness – of this wonderful show.

Diane Leach

Rochdale Observer

JUST PURRFECT FOR 21ST ANNIVERSARY

But the success of the show, which in this latest incarnation opened in Plymouth at the start of a two-and-a-half-year tour, is down to more than glitteringly impressive special effects, which include a stairway to the stars.

There's the fantastic feline costumes and make-up too but, more than that, the performance of the members of the cast and musicians.

They are just the cat's whiskers when it comes to perfecting the movements, moods and mannerisms of cats through song, dance and music.

Sue White

Herald Express

MAGICAL MOGGIES BRING A CAPITAL SHOW

And this is certainly a show not to be missed.

How they do it, I have no idea – just the thought of all the warm-ups the cast must subject themselves to before the show is enough to make your eyes water. Maybe it's got something to do with yoga.

But once they hit the stage they are the sinuous, graceful, and highly flexible embodiment of cats made human. Moving in perfect unison, they leap around the set with enough agility and enthusiasm to keep a real-life moggy on its toes.

Prowling around the audience right from the opening number, the 'cats' dominate the theatre throughout the show. That gives you the chance to see close up the amount of work that goes into giving each actor their own unique cat personality.

Helen Tither

Manchester Metro News

CATS PROVES TO BE A PURRFECT NIGHT OUT

Totally and outrageously camp and OTT, but fantastic, Cats is a magical night out, a theatrical treat that has justifiably just about sold out for its three week run in Plymouth.

The whole production is of the highest calibre and no single feline can be singled out for extra petting. The orchestra, although hidden throughout the show, were a driving force with their big arrangements, and were still playing as the audience left the theatre.

Elaine McFadyen

BBC Online

'CATS' REVIEW

None of that matters; what does matter about this production of Cats is the talent of those in the cast, and the design and direction: all are first class.

The real strokes of genius about the show were the decision to turn the poems of T S Eliot into a musical in the first place – and then to make it work so well that it's packed in the punters ever since.

Pam Guyatt,

Plymouth Extra

FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES

These activities are intended to develop your pupils' ideas and knowledge about CATS after you have seen the show. They are divided into subject areas –

English
Drama
Dance
Art / Design

plus ideas for a project inspired by poetry.

English

Poetry writing

Poetry writing can be tackled in many different ways depending on the age of your pupils, their previous experience of poetry writing or a particular poet or style of poetry you may be studying. The activity below outlines creating a class or group poem and can use whatever poetry style you choose.

With your class (or set this as a group task) make a spider diagram of words describing cat behaviour, cats' appearances and the way cats move. Use the words as inspiration and ask your class to write three or four lines of poetry in pairs in your chosen style. You can allow as much time for this as you like, developing the use of language and redrafting as you wish. Once everyone is happy with their lines of poetry, ask them to select their favourite line. Write each favourite line down on the board or a large sheet of paper. Once all the lines are written down, work with your class to edit one collective poem that everyone has created and display it in the classroom.

Writing reviews

Refer back to the activity in Introduction Activities (page 5) that explored your pupils' expectations of CATS. Discuss the thoughts and ideas they recorded in preparation for writing a review; you may also wish to read them the extracts from newspaper reviews above (page 14). Writing a review of the performance will give your pupils a permanent record of what they saw and how they responded to it. It will also enable them to begin to judge and assess different productions and use this to inform their own performance skills. Whilst at the theatre they should begin to complete the review worksheet (see Appendix), finishing it as soon after the performance as possible. It is also useful for them to do a quick spider diagram of words and phrases to represent their emotional response to the performance. They should write a more formal review, including a brief outline of the story and a description of how well performed and presented they thought the show was a few days later, once they have had time to reflect.

Writing a character study

Using Eliot's poems as a starting point, this activity looks at writing a character study.

Choose one or two of Eliot's poems (for example Rum Tum Tugger or Bustopher Jones). Begin by discussing with your class what you are looking for in a character study – what the character looks like, their personality, lifestyle and surroundings. Read the poems together, making sure everyone understands any unfamiliar vocabulary. Then ask your class to plan their character study, reading and re-reading the poem and making notes. They should look for specific descriptions in the poems but also less obvious clues to character the poems may give away. Once they have completed their notes your pupils should write up the studies. Read some of the studies aloud and discuss any similarities and differences.

If you wish the character studies could then be used as a basis for writing a monologue, as if the character is describing themselves and their life. The monologues can then be performed.

Writing stories

Eliot's poems tell stories about lots of different cats and can be used as inspiration for story writing. Begin by reading Macavity, the mystery cat to your class. Discuss some of the things Macavity gets up to, both in the poem and during the musical, and write various ideas up on the board. The aim of the activity is to create a new story about Macavity and a crime he has committed. Give your pupils an opening or closing line for their stories (see examples below) – depending on how much you want to challenge them. Ask them to plan their stories, planning a clear beginning, middle and end and following their plan whilst they write. Once the stories are written read them aloud or display them in the classroom.

Opening line –

"Macavity dodged behind the dustbins, quietly tucking his tail around his feet, out of sight of the..."

Closing line –

"Despite everything the Inspector had done, he had no proof and Macavity was released from Scotland Yard."

Drama

Always begin a drama session with warm-up exercises and games.

Poems as inspiration

Eliot's poems can be used as inspiration for improvisation in many ways; for example

- Use the opening line of a poem as the opening line of an improvised scene.
- Improvise other events in the lives of the cat characters in the poems.
- Choose a cat character from the musical (one who doesn't have a poem) and improvise a story for them.
- Collect words and phrases from the poems that will challenge and inspire your class and use them as a basis for improvisation.

All of these ideas can be used simply in a one off drama session as a follow up to seeing a performance of CATS or as a beginning to developing ideas for script writing or devising a performance.

Perform a poem

As proved in the musical Eliot's poems make an ideal basis for drama and can be performed in many ways. Select which poem you wish to work with and divide your class into groups. Read the poem with your class and discuss the story of the poem. Allocate a part of the story to each group and ask them to think of a way to perform it; they could use a narrator and mime, write a short script and act it out or use movement and sound to tell the story. Once all the groups have had a short time to practise they should all perform for each other. Discuss the different performance styles and interpretations of the poems and decide the best way of developing it into a performance that tells the whole of the poem and uses as many of the pupils as possible. You may wish to add to the performance by creating masks or other simple costumes to demonstrate the characters. Once you have rehearsed your performance, find an audience to perform it for. Discuss the creative process with your class and compare it with what they have learnt about how CATS was created.

Character development

Choose one of Eliot's poems to use as a basis for character development work. Ask your class to work in pairs and use the poem to gain as much information about the cat as possible (you may wish to link this to the Writing a character study activity above). They should then begin to improvise and develop different

scenes from the cat's life to give a clearer picture of how their character was formed. They should also explore the movement and physicality of the character, especially considering how to portray themselves as a cat, maybe using some of the ideas Chrissie Cartwright used in rehearsals. Keep stopping the work and sharing different pairs ideas to enable everyone to discuss different ideas and develop their own work.

Hot-seat Grizabella

As a follow up to the above activity it is interesting to particularly explore the character of Grizabella. Eliot never completed his poem about her, but it can be found in CATS, the Book of the Musical (see Resources for further details). The character and story of Grizabella were used by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Trevor Nunn as a basis for the narrative of CATS, so her character is very important. By taking on the character of Grizabella yourself (or choosing one of your pupils to do it) you can set up a situation where Grizabella can be questioned by the other cats about her life, her experiences outside of the Jellicle tribe and why she now wishes to come back. You may also wish to explore what she expects to find when she travels to the Heavyside Layer. You may find it interesting to discuss the role of Grizabella within the musical, how she is performed and costumed and how the other cats react to her.

Dance - warm-ups

It is important to begin every practical dance session with a warm-up. It is a useful activity for your pupils to create a warm-up in pairs; they can then be used at the beginning of each session

Ask your pupils to put together a 15-minute dance warm-up. They should work in pairs and create a number of structured exercises that include: general stretching, exercises to focus on specific areas, (for example abdominals, legs, arms), combination exercises for strength and grace. They should select different pieces of music for their warm-up, choosing styles and tempos to suit the exercises they have chosen. Once the warm-ups have been put together the pairs should take it in turns to lead the rest of the class in their warm-up at the beginning of each session. This will also help them learn the language of the exercises and movements they have used and how to communicate their ideas to others.

Cat movement

This activity aims to explore the different ways a cat moves and how this can be used as inspiration for movement and dance work.

Begin by discussing with your class (and using pictures if you have them) the range of movements associated with cats, for example – cats sleeping, cats washing, angry cats, affectionate cats, cats playing.

Ask your class to sit in pairs and explore some of the ideas, using their heads, arms and upper bodies to begin with. Discuss some of the difficulties in making a human body move like a cat's. It might help to put some suitable music on in the background to make your pupils more relaxed. Ask some of the pairs to share their ideas with the rest of the class.

The next stage is to ask the pairs to use all of their bodies to explore cat movements. It might be easier if you give them a starting point, for example – a cat waking up – and ask them to especially consider the way the movements flow into each other. When they have had plenty of time to develop their ideas, share and discuss them with the whole class.

Cat choreography

This activity explores how CATS the musical, pictures of cats, cat poetry or ideas from the activity above can be used to create a complete dance.

To begin you must decide what your initial stimulus or inspiration will be (this will depend on the age of your pupils and their experience of creating dance). You should also choose a piece of music at this stage, either one of the instrumental pieces from CATS or another piece that fits with the ideas you wish to develop.

Set up a discussion with your class to talk about the dance piece. Present them with your ideas and listen to the music. Collect together their ideas and talk about the ways they think a dance piece could be created.

Your class should then be divided into groups of four or five and asked to create a motif (a series of movements that are a starting point for movement development). The group should discuss ideas based on words and moods associated with the stimulus or inspiration and what it means to them, what their emotional response is. They should then move on to decision making - considering

■ Content

What is the movement about? How have they interpreted the stimulus?

■ Movement

How have their ideas led to the qualities and dynamics of the movement?

With whom – how will the group work? As pairs, individuals or as an ensemble?

They will need time to rehearse (keep playing the music in the background) and try out their movement ideas. Their motif should be complete, so that it begins and ends with the same pose or frozen image – moving away from it and back to it again. Once the groups are confident in performing their motifs, share them with the whole class.

You then need to decide on a structure and order of events for your dance piece. You may wish everyone to dance one motif together to begin the dance (unison) or for one motif to recur through the dance (repetition) or for some of the motifs (or movements within them) to be performed by a single group, mirrored and followed by other groups (canon). Spend plenty of time structuring your dance, considering entrances and exits and how the piece will start and finish. Once the structure of the dance is complete and you have rehearsed it, perform it for an audience. You may also wish to discuss with your class how you could notate the dance so others could learn it, and possible ideas for costume for performance.

Art / Design

Illustrate a poem

As a follow up to seeing CATS ask your class to illustrate their favourite poem, either using their imagination from the poem alone or drawing on ideas presented by seeing the show. If you wish they could plan their illustrations or experiment with different media (such as collage, pastels or paint) before attempting their final piece of work. Their illustrations should convey a sense of the poem and the story it is telling as well as an image of the central character. Once the illustrations are complete, display them in the classroom.

Design

There are a number of different design tasks you could set for your pupils, exploring set, costume, make-up or poster design.

Discuss the set design after you have seen the musical and read the section of the Pack that explores how John Napier arrived at his design. He describes it as an 'environment' for the cats to exist within and it forms a backdrop to the show as well as providing props to help tell the various stories. Imagine you are going to create a whole show based around one of Eliot's poems and ask your pupils to design a set that would

Project

work as an 'environment' for that particular cat, as well as providing items that could be used to tell the story. Once the set designs have been completed then begin to look at costume and make-up design. The costumes in CATS were very important, not only in suggesting the characters but also in reflecting the way that they move, so helping the performers. The make-up was the final element that transformed the human performers into cats and it dramatically alters their looks and makes them more believable for the audience. Divide your class into pairs and ask them to work together, so one designs the costume and one the make-up for different characters. (It may help to provide them with a basic outline of a face or body for them to design on.)

The last element is to design posters to advertise your imaginary show. Look at the posters used to promote CATS and discuss what information and what design elements they contain. Ask your class to design their own posters, paying particular attention to a strong graphic image that conveys a message about the content of your show.



This Project aims to use a number of different elements in order to create a piece of performance inspired by poetry. You can divide the project up into different sections, depending on how much time you have available and on whom you wish to perform the final piece for.

The first step is to select a poem, for example for Key Stage Three pupils – Preludes by T S Eliot, or for Key Stage Two pupils – Cats by Phoebe Hesketh. (There are other suggestions in Resources.)

Section One

Use some of the ideas from the Introduction Activities or the English and Drama activities above to introduce the poem to your class and give them a good understanding of its content and meaning. Once your pupils are familiar with the poem, decide how you wish to construct your performance. Spend time writing and using improvisation and dance or movement to develop character and a narrative. Put your pupils into groups to develop their ideas and regularly share and discuss their ideas to help their creativity and self assessment.

Section Two

Whilst you are developing the structure of your performance you may also wish to add some elements of design to give your performance a professional look. Pick ideas from the activities above to help your pupils develop designs for costume, make-up and sets. Discuss the time and money you have available for such elements and make a class decision about what costumes and sets you will actually create. You may wish to give a small group of students the responsibility for developing the ideas and creating the actual costumes and sets.

Section Three

When you have all the elements of your performance in place then spend time rehearsing it so everyone is familiar with their role. Organise a date for the performance and create posters and programmes. The performance could be part of assembly or an end of term show. Once you have performed take the time to discuss with your pupils the process of creating the performance and anything they feel they would change or develop.

RESOURCES

CATS Resources

Highlights from CATS – CD
CATS – video / DVD
CATS – the Book of the Musical
T S Eliot Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats
Programme and Brochure – available from theatre

Really Useful Records
Really Useful Films (Polygram Video)
Harvest Books
Faber & Faber

Websites

www.catstour.co.uk
www.reallyuseful.com

For T S Eliot sites use your search engine

Books

The Nation's Favourite Poems
(Includes T S Eliot's Preludes and The Love Song of Alfred J Prufrock)

BBC Books

Other Cat Poems...

Cat	Alan Brownjohn
I had a Little Cat	Charles Causley
Explorer	Alan Brownjohn
Why	Peter Dixon
Cats	Phoebe Hesketh
Fish	John Cunliffe
The Owl and the Pussy Cat	Edward Lear
The Duel	Eugene Field
Jubilate Agno	Christopher Smart
The White Cat of Trenarren	A L Rowse
Wind Cat	Robert Westall
Cats	Eleanor Farjeon
The Kitten at Play	William Wordsworth
Magic Cat	Peter Dixon

All from Read Me – A Poem a Day

Macmillan Children's Books

MUNKUSTRAP'S STORY

I'm Munkustrap, a tabby cat, a member of the Jellicle Tribe. It's all quiet and dark now but soon all the other cats will begin to arrive. Tonight is the one special night each year when the tribe of Jellicle Cats reunite to celebrate who we are. We sing about our unique abilities and special traits.

You are very lucky to be allowed to witness this special occasion, we don't let just anyone in. Did you know that all cats have three different names, here are some of them now: Demeter, Bill Bailey, Tantomile and Victoria. Those are their everyday names, given to them by humans but cats choose their own – more dignified names – and also a secret name, that we like to sit and contemplate. Victoria is a young white cat (she's very pretty) and she dances to signal the invitation to the Jellicle Ball. We are waiting for our leader, Old Deuteronomy, who will choose which of us will journey to the Heavyside Layer to be 'reborn' into a new life.

Let me introduce you to some more of the Jellicle Cats. Here is Jennyanydots, the Old Gumbie Cat. She sleeps and lounges all day long but at night it is a different matter as she keeps the mice and cockroaches in order. The Rum Tum Tugger is a different cat altogether. He is a very contrary beast, who can never make up his mind but he's very, very popular with the female cats – I can tell you. I'm not sure why ...

Another cat appears. Who's that? Oh it's Grizabella. We used to call her the glamour cat but you wouldn't think it to look at her now. She left our tribe years ago to explore the outside world. Now she thinks she can come back and join us again but she's not welcome and I'll see that the other cats don't accept her either. There, she's gone now, and here comes Bustopher Jones. He's a very large cat (he likes his food) but he always looks smart in his white spats and has the impeccable manners of a true gentleman. What's that? Did you hear that terrible noise? Crashing and banging and police sirens? I bet it's that Macavity on the loose; he's always up to no good. Where has everybody gone? Oh, I can hear laughing. It must be Mungojerrie and Rumpelteazer, they're a right pair, always getting

into trouble with the family with whom they live. They may be cheeky, but they're all right really!

Here's everybody back now – they're such a bunch of scaredy cats! At last Old Deuteronomy has arrived, he's our leader, a very wise old cat but we love and respect him. We're going to perform a special show to entertain him – The Awefull Battle of the Pekes and the Pollicles together with The Marching Song of the Pollicle Dogs. You wait until you see all the cats dressed up as dogs, barking away at each other. And as for the Great Rumpus Cat – well! I hope they all remember what they are supposed to do.

Yikes – it's that Macavity again. Old Deuteronomy soon calms everybody down, so we all dance together at the Jellicle Ball. There's that Grizabella back – she's certainly got some memories of past times but she'll go off into the night soon. She's not welcome here.

After the Jellicle Ball we rest and contemplate the moments of happiness. Then Gus appears. He's old now but in his day he was a marvellous stage actor, who appeared in many a performance and had many theatrical triumphs. Skimbleshanks is next; he's a railway cat, a friendly uncle to all of us cats and carefully looks after the trains he rides.

Look out – here's Macavity. Two of his henchmen have got Old Deuteronomy – they've kidnapped him! Demeter and Bombalurina have many tall tales of Macavity and his criminal activities. Oh, wait, its alright, Old Deuteronomy is back. Thank goodness. Hang on a moment – no – it's Macavity in disguise. He's asked for it now, come on boys, we'll get him. Phew, that was a bit of a fight. Macavity cheated though, he caused an explosion and put out all the lights. The Rum Tum Tugger has called Mr Mistoffelees, he'll soon put us back to rights. He's a conjuring cat and can do all kinds of magic tricks – including making Old Deuteronomy re-appear.

Now it's finally time for Old Deuteronomy to make his choice about who will be 'reborn' into a new Jellicle life.



Grizabella has come back; some of the kittens think she deserves another chance. Maybe, yes, maybe now it's time to welcome her back into the tribe. Old Deuteronomy chooses her and she travels beyond us to the Heavyside Layer.

So, that's this year's Jellicle Ball over already – another whole year before we all come together and celebrate again. Before we go Old Deuteronomy just wants to tell you about the addressing of cats – because really, you know, for all our unique qualities and differences, we cats are very much like you.



CATS CHARACTER GUIDE

Munkustrap - a large, grey tabby, Munkustrap is a guide and protector of the other cats and acts as a kind of narrator, helping to tell the story.

Victoria - a young white cat, Victoria is very curious about Grizabella.

Old Deuteronomy - a very old, very wise cat, the leader of the Jellicles, respected and loved by all the cats, he will decide who journeys up to the Heavyside Layer.

Jennyanydots - the Old Gumbie cat, also a tabby but more brown and gold in colour. By day she sits and sleeps but by night she organises the mice and the cockroaches.

Rum Tum Tugger - a sleek and playful cat who likes a joke, is difficult to satisfy and is adored by the female cats.

Grizabella - the glamour cat, no longer glamorous now she is old, her coat is worn and tatty. She is rejected by the other cats for seeking a life outside; but now she longs to return.

Bustopher Jones - a very large black cat with white feet who like nothing more than to eat and be seen in all the best places.

Mungojerrie and Rumpelteazer - naughty, cockney twins, always up to mischief and all sorts of tricks. They look so alike their family never knows who to blame.

Gus - the theatre cat, real name Asparagus. He is old, thin and shabby with shaky paws but has many wonderful tales to tell of his life in the theatre.

Growltiger and Griddlebone - Growltiger has an eyepatch and a missing ear and is a bit the worse for wear after his many battles, whilst Griddlebone is a white Persian cat.

Skimbleshanks - the railway cat. A ginger cat with white legs and chest and bright green eyes. He works on the railway making sure all is in order on the mail trains that travel at night.

Macavity - the mystery cat. A scruffy ginger cat, with crumpled whiskers and dusty fur. He is a wicked criminal who always gets away with it because he is never caught at the scene of the crime.

Quaxo - or Mr Mistoffelees. A small black cat who seems to be quiet and shy but actually has amazing magical powers.

There are many other Jellicle cats who appear on stage (often as mice, dogs or cockroaches) to help tell the stories of the different characters. Here are their names –

Admetus
Alonzo
Bill Bailey
Bombalurina
Carbucketty
Cassandra
Coricopat
Demeter
Electra
Etcetera
George
Jellylorum
Jemima
Tantomile
Victor

THEATRE REVIEW WORKSHEET

Production:

Date:

Theatre:

Your expectations:

STAGE AND AUDITORIUM

Kind of stage:

How was the stage design important in making particular scenes or moments telling ones?

MUSIC, SONG AND DANCE

How were music, song and dance used in the production?

CATS