

## T. S. Eliot



**Thomas Stearns Eliot** (September 26, 1888-January 4, 1965) was an American poet, playwright, and literary critic, arguably the most important English-language poet of the 20th century.

*Macavity the Mystery Cat* came from a collection of poems written by TS Eliot called - *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*. This is a collection of whimsical poems about feline psychology and sociology. Its contents are widely known as the basis for the record-setting musical *Cats*.

The poems themselves were written during the 1930s and included by Eliot, under his assumed name 'Old Possum', in letters to his godchildren. They were collected and published in 1939 with cover illustrations by the author, and quickly re-published in 1940, illustrated in full by Nicolas Bentley. An edition was published in 1982 that featured illustrations by famed illustrator Edward Gorey.

Week 1

## Macavity the Mystery Cat

Macavity's a Mystery Cat: he's called the Hidden Paw -  
For he's the master criminal who can defy the Law.  
He's the bafflement of Scotland Yard, the Flying Squad's despair:  
For when they reach the scene of crime - *Macavity's not there!*

Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like Macavity,  
He's broken every human law, he breaks the law of gravity.  
His powers of levitation would make a fakir stare,  
And when you reach the scene of crime - *Macavity's not there!*  
You may seek him in the basement, you may look up in the air -  
But I tell you once and once again, *Macavity's not there!*

Macavity's a ginger cat, he's very tall and thin;  
You would know him if you saw him, for his eyes are sunken in.  
His brow is deeply lined with thought, his head is highly domed;  
His coat is dusty from neglect, his whiskers are uncombed.  
He sways his head from side to side, with movements like a snake;  
And when you think he's half asleep, he's always wide awake.

Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like Macavity,  
For he's a fiend in feline shape, a monster of depravity.  
You may meet him in a by-street, you may see him in the square -  
But when a crime's discovered, then *Macavity's not there!*

He's outwardly respectable. (They say he cheats at cards.)  
And his footprints are not found in any file of Scotland Yard's.  
And when the larder's looted, or the jewel-case is rifled,  
Or when the milk is missing, or another Peke's been stifled,  
Or the greenhouse glass is broken, and the trellis past repair -  
Ay, there's the wonder of the thing! *Macavity's not there!*

And when the Foreign Office find a Treaty's gone astray,  
Or the Admiralty lose some plans and drawings by the way,  
There may be a scrap of paper in the hall or on the stair -  
But it's useless to investigate - *Macavity's not there!*  
And when the loss has been disclosed, the Secret Service say:  
'It *must* have been Macavity!' - but he's a mile away.  
You'll be sure to find him resting, or a-licking of his thumbs,  
Or engaged in doing complicated long-division sums.

Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like Macavity,  
There never was a Cat of such deceitfulness and suavity.  
He always has an alibi, and one or two to spare:  
At whatever time the deed took place - **MACAVITY WASN'T THERE!**  
And they say that all the Cats whose wicked deeds are widely known  
(I might mention Mungojerrie, I might mention Griddlebone)  
Are nothing more than agents for the Cat who all the time  
Just controls their operations: the Napoleon of Crime!

Week 1

<u>Unknown Word</u>	<u>Dictionary Definition</u>

Week 1

Questions relating to Macavity the Mystery Cat

1. What poetic feature does Eliot use in the line '*He sways his head from side to side, with movements like a snake*'?

..... (1 mark)

2. What is the rhyming structure of the poem? (e.g. ABAB, ABBA)

..... (1 mark)

3. What does the poet mean by 'For he's the master criminal who can defy the Law'?

.....  
.....  
..... (2 marks)

4. What does the line 'There never was a cat of such deceitfulness and suavity' tell us about the character of Macavity?

.....  
.....  
.....  
..... (2 marks)

4. Find three adjectives that the poet has used to create a strong image in the reader's mind.

.....  
.....  
..... (3 marks)

5. What is the overall tone of the poem?

.....  
.....  
..... (2 marks)

Did you like the poem? Why/Why not? Give reasons.

.....  
.....  
.....  
..... (3 marks)

Week 1

## Questions relating to Mcavity the Mystery Cat- Answers

1. What poetic feature does Eliot use in the line;

*"He sways his head from side to side, with movements like a snake"*

*imagery, simile*

..... (1 mark)

2. What is the rhyming structure of the poem? (ABAB, ABBA)

*AABB, AABBCC* ..... (1 mark)

3. What does the poet mean by 'For he's the master criminal who can defy the Law'?

*He is a good thief because he always manages to escape being caught despite doing lots of things that are against the Law*

..... (2 marks)

4. What does the line 'There never was a cat of such deceitfulness and suavity' tell us about the character of Macavity?

*There has never been a cat that is so cunning/deliberately misleading/dishonest but also sweet/graceful/polite*

..... (2 marks)

5. Find three adjectives/adjectival phrases that the poet has used to create a strong image in the reader's mind.

*Ginger, eyes sunken in, brow deeply lined, highly doomed head, dusty coat, uncombed whiskers, movements like a a snake,*

..... (3 marks)

**6. What is the overall tone of the poem?**

*ideas should include reference to the poem being either humorous, teasing, story-like/biographical*

..... (2 marks)

**7. Did you like the poem? Why/Why not? Give reasons.**

*ensure that the reason(s) given are appropriate and not simply of the kind 'I didn't like it'* .....

(3 marks)

Week 1

## Macavity Annotation Sheet

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Week 1

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**Macavity Review**

**Macavity**

**Background information**

**Review**

**Rating:**

①

②

③

④

⑤

Week 1

## Features that poets might use for effect

- **Alliteration** - a phrase where adjacent or closely connected words begin with the same phoneme (sound), e.g. stormy sea.
- **Simile** - a simile describes something by comparing it to another thing using **like** or **as ... as**  
e.g. The fish scales glistened *like* diamonds.  
She was *as* slippery *as* an eel.
- **Metaphor** - a metaphor is a word or a phrase used to describe something as if it were something else  
e.g. A wave of terror washed over them.  
The terror isn't actually a wave, but a wave is a good way of describing the feeling.
- **Rhyme** - This is where words with the same final sound are used at the end of lines, or **internal rhyme** where the rhyme takes place in the middle of the line, e.g. *in mist or cloud, on mast or shroud...*
- **Personification** - poets often give human feelings and actions to objects or ideas, e.g. The *friendly rain* fell gently over the fields.
- **Imagery** - poets use powerful language to create a vivid image.
- **Onomatopoeia** - a type of word that sounds like the thing it is describing, e.g. bang, pop, smash, crunch, click.
- **Repetition** - the same word is repeated for extra impact.
- **Word play** - where the poet changes the order of words or the meaning/spelling of a word to create humour or other effect.

## Cat Poems by Andrea Shavick

### Cat Myths

-  
I've never smothered a baby  
Or needed letting out of a bag  
I've never been near a hot tin roof  
Do you think I'm totally mad?

I've never been the least bit curious  
About what the mice do while I'm away...  
I'm no nosy, meddlesome snoop  
And if I was, would it kill me? No way!

I've never been seen amongst pigeons  
Such smelly, flea-ridden brutes\_  
I can grin, but I'm not from Cheshire  
And I'm far too cool to wear boots

I've never been out when it's raining dogs  
Clever cats stay indoors  
Just how many lives do you think I've got?  
Certainly not nine, for sure!

And as for being swung around  
Just to see how much room there might be  
What is wrong with a ruler?  
All I can say is MEOW IS ME!

*Andrea Shavick*

Weeks 1 & 2

## Cat Myths original poem in development

Possible titles:

CAT MYTHS

HUMANS SAY STUPID THINGS

STUPID HUMANS

CAT FICTION

IT ONLY RAINS DOGS

MEOW IS ME!

I've never smothered a baby,

Or got into a bag,

Or worn boots.

I've never been on a hot tin roof with any smelly pigeons

Or cared about what games the mice play while I'm away

I've never been killed by curiosity,

Or been thrown down a well.

Having said that, I can grin

And no, I'm NOT from Cheshire!

But as for being swung around

Just to see how much room there might be

Just how stupid are humans?

MEOW IS ME!

ps. For your information, it only rains dogs

*Andrea Shavick*

Weeks 1 & 2

## A DIFFERENT HUNGER

Powerful cougar, mountain cat  
Leaping, sprinting, jumping  
Eats any animal it can catch  
Loves hunting

Fragile cougar, Big Cat House  
Caged from January to December  
Eats for an audience at 3 o'clock  
But remembers

*Andrea Shavick*

## THE PUSSY CAT HOKEY-COKEY

You put your right paw in  
Your right paw out  
In out, in out  
Shake it all about

You make some meowing noises  
'Till your human shouts  
That's what it's all about

Meow! I'm so annoying  
Meow! I'm so annoying  
Meow! I'm so annoying  
Claws out, back arched  
Purr!  
Purr!  
Purr!

*Andrea Shavick*

Weeks 1 & 2

## ACCIDENT PRONE

You've climbed up trees and couldn't get down  
You've splashed through puddles and nearly drowned  
You've dodged big buses, bikes and vans  
You've fled from the clutches of the cat-snatcher man  
You've been attacked by wiggling fleas  
You been chased by dogs and stung by bees  
You've slept by the fire and singed your fur  
You've meowed so much you've lost your purr

So from this moment on, to save you from harm  
I'm keeping you here - snuggled up in my arms...

Oh dear...you're annoyed. How dare I confine you?

Well go if you must - but shut the cat-flap behind you!

*Andrea Shavick*

## Cat Poems by Celia Warren

### Cat

does not kill for food  
nor yet for sport.

It is the soul of bird  
he kills for:  
to fly freely, to sing,  
his fur is feathered in wishes.

It is the soul of mouse  
he kills for:  
to scurry and nestle.  
His eyes are green.

Impossible dreams  
twitch his sleep,  
ripple his paws like wings,  
fever the creamy Cheshire grin  
of Egyptian gods.

*Celia Warren*

Weeks 1 & 2

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## Camouflage

In the jungle lurks a secret:  
it glides in precise silence -  
each graceful hindfoot's step  
set in the forepaw's track. It weaves  
its way, where even the driest leaves  
won't dare to crackle or snap.

In the jungle lurks danger:  
it languishes high in the trees,  
ready to drop in a split second.  
Those softly silent paws  
now sharp with claws  
are fearsome flesh-tearing weapons.

In the jungle lurks beauty:  
its shining tangerine fur  
is smooth and spotted with black rosettes -  
broken lights and shades  
conceal the elegant shape  
of the cleverest predator - leopard.

*Celia Warren*

Weeks 1 & 2

## Jungle Majesty

Jungle cruiser

Sunshine snoozer:

Lion looks demure

Silent walker

Antelope stalker:

Lion's stifled roar

Neck breaker

Prey taker:

Lion's happy growl

Gazelle lifter

Carcass shifter:

Lion on the prowl

Jungle scarer

Flesh tearer:

Lion enjoys a feast

Jungle creeper

Sunshine sleeper:

Lion - majestic beast.

*Celia Warren*

Weeks 1 & 2

## Feline Riddle

My first is in cool and also in race,  
My second's in head but not in face,  
My third is in forest and jungle, too,  
My fourth is in me but not in you,  
My fifth is in tail but never in claw,  
My sixth is in heard and also in saw,  
My seventh's in this and also in that,  
My whole is a springy, speedy cat.

Answer: cheetah

*Celia Warren*

Weeks 1 & 2

## Cat Images



Week 1

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Week 2

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## Creating Poetic Lines



Week 2

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