



APRIL 10 to MAY 6, 2012

Music by ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER
Based on *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* by T.S. ELIOT

Student Activity Guide

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STRONGER COMMUNITIES TOGETHER™

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A Note to Students and Teachers:

We are delighted that you have chosen to participate in Theatre Calgary's Student Matinee Series and be a part of the audience during our production of Cats.

If this is your first experience with Theatre Calgary, we hope that this is the beginning of a life-long love affair with theatre and drama. If this is not your first time, we welcome you back and thank you for your continuing support.

At Theatre Calgary, we believe that all students—and adults—should have the opportunity to experience great dramatic work presented live on stage by professional and committed actors. We hope that you will find this production to be an entertaining and memorable experience.

We also hope that you find the following learning suggestions for your students helpful. They are divided into activities to complete before, during and after attending a Theatre Calgary performance of Cats.

It is not necessary for students to complete all the activities. Consider only those that you believe meet the needs and interests of your students.

Feel free to post activities on D2L.

Enjoy.

“No child is fully educated or adequately prepared to live in an increasingly technological world without understanding the meaning and beauty transmitted by the arts.”

- J.P. Getty Trust “Beyond Creating a Place for Art in America's School, 1985”

I. BEFORE THE CURTAIN RISES

PREPARE TO ATTEND THE PERFORMANCE: THEATRE ETIQUETTE

Theatre etiquette —what is appropriate and not appropriate to do when you are in the theatre — is an important matter to consider before attending a play with your classmates.

In groups, generate as many theatre etiquette rules as you can, including both “dos” and “don’ts.” Give reasons for each as with the example below.

Rule	Reasons
a. Don’t text message during the performance	<i>The actors are not blind. This is rude to the actors who are working very hard to entertain you. It is also very distracting to everyone sitting in your vicinity.</i>

Here is a list of some important “Dos & Don’ts” for your reference once the exercise is complete.

DOS

- Arrive at the theatre early to ensure enough time to get to your seat before the performance starts.
- Stay seated with your feet on the floor.
- Turn off any cell phones, mp3 players, watch alarms or other electronic devices.
- Leave the talking to the actors on the stage.
- Eat your lunch or snacks in the lobby of the theatre before the performance or during intermission.
- Laugh, applaud, cheer and respond to the performance appropriately.
- Leave your cameras and recording devices at home.
- Feel free to share your thoughts about the performance with your teachers and fellow students after the performance.
- Make sure you thank the actors, crew and other theatre artists with your applause during the curtain call.

DON'TS

- Arrive late. Latecomers may not be admitted depending on the performance.
- Put your feet up on the chair or stage in front of you.
- Let your phone ring, send/receive text messages, or listen to your mp3 player during a performance.
- Talk or make any noise once the performance has begun.
- Eat your lunch or snacks inside the theatre.
- Shout, whistle or make comments during the performance.
- Take pictures or video during the performance.
- Share your thoughts about the performance while you are watching it.
- Leave the theatre prior to the conclusion of the curtain call.
- Make up your mind about how you feel about a performance before you’ve had a chance to see it.

PREPARE FOR THE “MEET THE ACTORS” SESSION

After each student matinee performance, audiences are invited to attend a Q&A talkback session with several actors from the performance.

From what you know of the play, which actors would you like most to talk with?

With a partner, generate at least three questions that you would like to ask these actors. The questions can deal with any of the following:

1. When and how they got into acting, singing and dancing
2. Their favorite roles in past performances
3. What they do to prepare for their roles in the performance
4. Their interpretation of the work or the role they play
5. Special challenges of their roles
6. Any other aspect of acting or of the musical that you are interested in

THE NAMING OF CATS

Do you own a cat? Or should we say, are you owned by a cat?

If so, you will agree with Eliot that the naming of a cat is a serious matter. According to Old Possum, cats need three names with each one having a different criterion. Here's what he has to say about the matter of naming cats:

*When I tell you, a cat must have THREE DIFFERENT NAMES.
First of all, there's the name that the family use daily,
Such as Peter, Augustus, Alonzo or James,
Such as Victor or Jonathan, George or Bill Bailey--
All of them sensible everyday names.
There are fancier names if you think they sound sweeter,
Some for the gentlemen, some for the dames:
Such as Plato, Admetus, Etcetera, Demeter--
But all of them sensible everyday names.
But I tell you, a cat needs a name that's particular,
A name that's peculiar, and more dignified,
Else how can he keep up his tail perpendicular,
Or spread out his whiskers, or cherish his pride?
Of names of this kind, I can give you a quorum
Such as Munkustrap, Quaxo or Coricopat
Such as Bombalurina, or else Jellylorum
Names that never belong to more than one cat
But above and beyond there's still one name left over
And that is the name that you will never guess
The name that no human research can discover
But the cat himself knows and will never confess
When you notice a cat in profound meditation
The reason, I tell you, is always the same
His mind is engaged in rapt contemplation
Of the thought, of the thought, of the thought of his name
His ineffable, effable, effanineffable
Deep and inscrutable singular name*



In your own words, what are Old Possum's criteria for naming cats?

It is now your turn to name a cat according to these criteria. If you own a cat, you can rename it. If you do not own a cat, rename a cat belonging to someone you know such as a friend or neighbour.

Begin by listing the cat's personality and typical behaviour. Then give the cat three names according to the above criteria. NOTE: According to Eliot, a cat's third name is kept private from both cats and humans. For the purposes of this exercise, you can share your cat's secret name!

Attach a picture of your renamed cat to a piece of unlined paper and artistically identify your feline by name and personality traits. If you do not have a picture of your cat, find one that is similar on the internet. Post the pictures around the room.

CAT TALES

One of the major appeals of Eliot's poems and Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Cats* is the fact that the felines are so much like us.

Create a short simple narrative or poem in which you tell a story about a cat but do so in terms that you would usually use to talk about people.

Do not reveal that you are talking about a cat until the last sentence.

FOCUS ON CHANGE

In groups, compile a list of at least five people (or fictional characters) you believe have shown dramatic changes brought about by age, conflicts or circumstances.

In your list, you can include:

- people that you personally know (friends, family, etc.)
- historical figures or people currently in the news
- fictional characters from feature films and other literature you are familiar with.

Once you have compiled your list,

- describe how any THREE of the individuals in your list used to be and then indicate the ways in which they have changed.
- identify as many specific forces of change as you can for ONE of the persons in your list
- identify also how his or her dominant emotions or attitudes towards life and the future have changed.

As you watch the Theatre Calgary performance of *Cats*, look for the characters who have undergone or expressed dramatic character changes.

READ THE ORIGINAL T.S. ELIOT POEMS

To maximize your enjoyment and appreciation of the Theatre Calgary production of *Cats*, read or reread the original poems found in *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*. Many internet sites, including this [one](#), feature the poems. As you read the poems, try to imagine the ways in which the actors will bring the Old Possum's cats to life on stage.

As a start, check out the dramatic readings of

[Gus the Theatre Cat](#)

[Macavity the Mystery Cat](#)

[Skimbleshanks: The Railway Cat](#)

EVERYONE LOVES CATS – Geography Activity

Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Cats* has literally been staged all over the world to extremely enthusiastic audiences. Individually, or as a class, locate on a map of the world, all the different cities that *Cats* has played. You can start with the following cities, states and countries:

Adelaide	Knoxville	San Jose
Amsterdam	London	São Paulo
Brisbane	Los Angeles	Singapore
Budapest	Madrid	South Korea
Bulgaria	Manila	Stockholm
Calgary	Massachusetts	Sydney
Dominican Republic	Mexico City	Taiwan
Hamburg	New York	Tokyo
Helsinki	Oslo	Toronto
Hobart	Paris	Vienna
Hong Kong	Perth	Warsaw
Huntsville	Rio de Janeiro	Zurich
Israel	Rome	

CATS IN FOLKLORE AND SUPERSTITION

Throughout history, and in many cultures, cats have had an important place in mythology, superstition, folklore and legends. Research at least three particular historical legends or beliefs about cats and share this information with your class.

Based on one superstition or story, script a video or live public service announcement (advertisement) as if these beliefs were true today and the general public should be told about the benefits or dangers of cats.

REVIEW THE REVIEWERS

By the time you are scheduled to attend *Cats* at Theatre Calgary, the local papers and magazines will have printed reviews of the musical.

Find and read at least two of these reviews.

You can start by checking out the [Calgary Herald](#) and the Calgary Sun ([Canoe.ca](#)) entertainment sections.

What did the reviewers think of the performance?

What did the reviewers like or dislike about the production?

What important information did you learn about the musical and the characters by reading the reviews?

Based on the reviews, what are you looking forward to seeing in the performance of *Cats*.

II. WHILE THE CURTAIN IS UP – QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

PLOT AND CHARACTER

- The musical *Cats* is based on a book of separate and unrelated poems about human-like cats. No narrative structure is provided in T.S. Eliot’s collection of poems. The narrative structure, or plot, was created by Andrew Lloyd Webber.

To what extent did Webber succeed in creating a coherent plot?

In your own words and in a short paragraph, summarize the plot of *Cats*.

- According to Shakespeare, “Action is eloquence.” What this suggests, in context of the theatre, is that actions – what a person does - often speak louder than words.

Identify three examples where what the character did on stage in terms of acting or dancing was more important in terms of revealing or developing character than what he or she said?

Identify what the actors movements on stage revealed in terms of character traits or emotions being expressed.

- In your opinion, which cats were most realistically or effectively brought to life on the stage?
How did the acting or the direction enable this to occur?
- Create a brief character sketch of Old Deuteronomy or Grizabella.
When you do so, write about them in human terms and be sure to identify important personality traits, values, beliefs, attitudes, dominant emotions, strengths, weaknesses, etc. and for each aspect of character, provide supportive evidence from the musical.
- Which character (cat) did you like the best? Explain why.

In what ways is this character similar to yourself or to someone you know?

SETTING AND MOOD

- What were your first impressions of the set? In what ways was it interesting and multi-functional?
- What did you think of the costumes and make-up used in the Theatre Calgary performance of *Cats*?
What did the costumes and make-up reveal or emphasize about the personalities of the various cat-characters in the play.
- In small groups or as a class, discuss how sound, music and lighting effects were used effectively during the performance.
Focus on at least three specific scenes and the varying moods, atmosphere and effects the use of sound, music and lighting helped to create.
- The song “Memory” has been recorded by over 150 different artists. One reason why the song is so popular is that it evokes such strong emotions. In other words, it creates an effective mood or atmosphere.
Try your best to put into words the *ineffable* emotions being expressed through the lyrics of the song and the melody. (*ineffable* is a word which describes that which cannot be described in words!)
- Many other musicals contain numbers that have gone on to become extremely popular songs. As a class, generate a list of such songs and the titles of the musicals they came from.
Students may have to talk to their parents to complete this assignment.

THEME

- Ultimately for a theatrical work to succeed, it should have something to say to a wide audience.
Even though *Cats* is set in a junkyard, features characters who are all cats, and contains numerous references and allusions from the late Victorian period to the 1930s, it can be said that the characters and conflicts within the story are universal.
Do you agree? What significant things does this musical have to say to us today in Alberta? Explain.
What obvious choices (in casting, costumes, set, props, sound, acting, etc.) has the director made to ensure that this play appeals to a wider audience?
- Both Eliot and Webber have stated that cats are a lot like humans. The show’s first director, Trevor Nunn also suggested that audiences find themselves being attracted to the cat/characters because “in a mysterious way, they allow us more clearly to see ourselves.”
Is this true? In what ways are the cats similar to people that you know?
In what significant ways are they different?

EXPLORING ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

We cannot help but relate to the characters and situations in *Cats* because the work poses many basic, essential questions about life.

For example, here are some of the essential questions posed in the musical:

Can bad people change for the better?

Is it ever too late to change?

What is happiness?

What happens to people who do something that disappoints family and friends?

What would people do if they had a chance to start their lives all over again?

Why do so many older people spend their time living in the past?

Choose any of the above essential questions to focus on as you are watching the musical.

After the performance, complete any **TWO** of the following activities:

- a. Write a brief composition discussing what the musical has to say about one or more of the essential questions.
- b. Create a poem (or series of poems) in which you share your thoughts and feelings on the show's treatment of any of the essential questions.
- c. Create a promotional poster advertising a performance of *Cats*.
The poster should draw people's attention to the fact that the musical deals with one or more of the important essential questions listed above.
- d. Write a letter to T.S. Eliot, Andrew Lloyd Webber OR to the director of the play and share your thoughts and feelings about how the essential questions of the musical are dealt with in the performance.
- e. Write at least three other essential questions that you think the musical deals with.

III. AFTER THE CURTAIN FALLS – POST-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES

REFLECT ON PRE-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES

What pre-performance information and activities best prepared you for the musical?

What else could you have done or wished you had done to have better prepared you for your viewing of *Cats*?

REFLECTIVE WRITING ON THE LIVE THEATRE EXPERIENCE

Now that you have seen the Theatre Calgary performance of *Cats*, reflect back on the experience through personal writing. You may use the following prompts to get you started:

Consider the reasons why so many people prefer attending a live sporting event such as a football or a hockey game over watching the same event on TV.

Now consider the ways in which attending a live theatre performance could be preferable to watching a feature film on the big screen or a DVD at home.

What did you enjoy most about being part of the audience attending Theatre Calgary and seeing *Cats*?

Based on this experience, are you looking forward to attending another play or musical in the near future? Explain.

CREATE AN ADDITIONAL MUSICAL NUMBER

Andrew Lloyd Webber, in creating his musical adaptation of *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, did not use all the poems in the book. One poem he did not include was the following:

Cat Morgan Introduces Himself

*I once was a Pirate what sailed the 'igh seas -
But now I've retired as a com-mission-aire:
And that's how you find me a-taking' my ease
And keepin' the door in a Bloomsbury Square.*

*I'm partial to partridges, likewise to grouse,
And I favour that Devonshire cream in a bowl;
But I'm allus content with a drink on the 'ouse
And a bit o' cold fish when I done me patrol.*

*I ain't got much polish, me manners is gruff,
But I've got a good coat, and I keep meself smart;
And everyone says, and I guess that's enough:
"You can't but like Morgan, 'e's got a kind 'art."*

*I got knocked about on the Barbary Coast,
And me voice it ain't no sich melliferous horgan;
But yet I can state, and I'm not one to boast,
That some of the gals is dead keen on old Morgan.*

*So if you 'ave business with Faber - or Faber -
I'll give you this tip, and it's worth a lot more:
You'll save yourself itme, and you'll spare yourself labour
If jist you make friends with the Cat at the door.*

MORGAN.

In small groups consider how the above song could be turned into a new number for the musical *Cats*.

To do so, you will need to:

- decide what kind of music would be most suitable
- determine how and where in the plot, the song would fit
- design a costume and hairstyle for the cat
- decide which cat would introduce Morgan. (What Webber did in adapting Eliot's poetry was change the pronouns in the beginning verses of each song from "I" to "he" or "she" and then have other cats sing those lines as if they were introducing that cat.)
- decide which lines should be spoken by Morgan and which lines should be dealt with by the introducer

TWEETING AND TEXTING CATS

Do you “tweet” on Twitter? Are you an obsessive texter?

The cats in Eliot’s poetry and Webber’s musical are all very human. As such, they too could easily become users of the social media tools of tweeting and texting.

With a partner, conduct a Twitter exchange or texting dialogue between two specific characters from *Cats*.

In the messages, elements of the plot or character should be dealt with.

CREATE FACEBOOK PAGES FOR CAT CHARACTERS

Choose a character from *Cats* and create a detailed Facebook page for that individual.

You can use the “Image Search” function on your browser to find graphics to include on the Facebook page as photos. Each “photo” should have a caption and you should include information (the URL) as to where you found the graphic.

Then visit each other’s Facebook page and indicate whether you (acting as the character) like the page and if you would like to be a “friend” if you are already not listed as a friend.

You may also submit comments to that Facebook page from your own character’s point of view.

ABOUT WHOM ARE THEY SPEAKING?

Read the quotes from the musical in Column A and identify from the list in Column B the character about whom the speaker is talking.

Column A	Column B
<p>1. _____ and _____ were a very notorious couple of cats. As knockabout clown, quick-change comedians, tight-rope walkers and acrobats They had extensive reputation.</p>	Bustopher Jones
<p>2. _____ is a Curious Cat: If you offer him pheasant he would rather have grouse. If you put him in a house he would much prefer a flat, If you put him in a flat then he'd rather have a house. If you set him on a mouse then he only wants a rat,</p>	Deuteronomy
<p>3. 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 _____ not there!</p>	Grizabella
<p>4. Her coat is of the tabby kind, with tiger stripes and leopard spots. All day she sits upon the stair or on the steps or on the mat; She sits and sits and sits and sits--and that's what makes a Gumbie Cat!</p>	Gus
<p>5. _____ is not skin and bones-- In fact, he's remarkably fat. He doesn't haunt pubs--he has eight or nine clubs, For he's the St. James's Street Cat!</p>	Jennyanydots
<p>6. His coat's very shabby, he's thin as a rake, And he suffers from palsy that makes his paw shake. Yet he was, in his youth, quite the smartest of Cats-- But no longer a terror to mice and to rats. For he isn't the Cat that he was in his prime;</p>	Macavity
<p>7. You can play no pranks with _____! He's a Cat that cannot be ignored; So nothing goes wrong on the Northern Mail When _____ is aboard.</p>	Mr. Mistoffelees
<p>8. He's a Cat who has lived many lives in succession. He was famous in proverb and famous in rhyme A long while before Queen Victoria's accession.</p>	Mungojerrie
<p>9. She haunted many a low resort Near the grimy road of Tottenham Court She flitted about the No-Man's Land From "The Rising Sun" to "The Friend at Hand" And the postman sighed as he scratched his head "You really had thought she ought to be dead"</p>	Rum Tum Tugger
<p>10. He can pick any card from a pack, He is equally cunning with dice; He is always deceiving you into believing That he's only hunting for mice.</p>	Rumpelteazer
	Skimbleshanks

WRITE A REVIEW

Write a review of the performance of *Cats* that you have just seen.
Read several newspaper or magazine reviews to get a better idea of the style and structure of typical drama reviews.

A good central source for reviews can be found at:

<http://www.curtainup.com/goingall.html>

Make sure that you do not follow any one review too closely.
Your review should reflect your personal perspective and evaluation of the performance.

WRITE A LETTER TO THE DIRECTOR

Write a letter to the director commenting on what you enjoyed or did not enjoy about the production.

Focus on how elements such as casting choices, use of lighting, sound and music, costuming and acting contributed to your enjoyment of the production.

REPRESENTING CHARACTER, CONTEXT AND THEME

Create a poster by finding (or creating) a series of graphics, photos or illustrations, and words that you think serve, in significant ways, to illustrate or bring to life the characters, the situations, the themes or messages of the musical.

Complete your representation on poster paper.

On the back side of the poster, briefly explain why you chose the graphics you did.
In other words, what do each of your visuals represent?

Please note that the explanation of the graphics on the back of your poster is not an essay or a formal piece of writing.

CREATE A KEEPSAKE SCRAPBOOK

We hope that you enjoyed the experience of visiting Theatre Calgary and seeing a performance of *Cats*. As a permanent keepsake and record of this experience, we encourage you to create a scrapbook/journal which includes artifacts, assignments, and reflections.

Artifacts could include items such as theatre reviews from local newspapers, ticket stubs and a program.

You could also include the assignments and activities that you completed in preparation for your visit to Theatre Calgary as well as the “After the Curtain Falls” activities.

Here are some other ideas that you may wish to consider for inclusion:

- journal entry commenting on your opinion of the actors and how they brought their characters to life
- a published review of the musical
- photographs taken before and after the performance (Remember that you are not allowed to take pictures during the performance.)
- drawings or sketches of the set
- questions you would like to ask the author, actors or director
- journal entry dealing with your thoughts and impressions of being a part of a live theatre audience
- graphics found on the internet relating to *Cats*. Be sure to credit sources.
- colourful cover and a detailed table of contents
- anything else that you think will make your scrapbook/journal worth going back to several years from now

Once your scrapbook/journal is complete, you may choose to share it with your teacher and classmates.

You may even choose to share it with the staff at Theatre Calgary.

To do so, you should contact Ryan Bump and he will ensure that it gets shown to the right people.

Ryan Bump can be reached at 294-7440 ext.1391 or by email at:

rbump@theatrecalgary.com

ANSWER KEY – “ABOUT WHOM ARE THEY SPEAKING

Column A	Column B
<p>1. _____ and _____ were a very notorious couple of cats. As knockabout clown, quick-change comedians, tight-rope walkers and acrobats They had extensive reputation.</p>	<p>Mungojerrie and Rumpelteazer</p>
<p>2. _____ is a Curious Cat: If you offer him pheasant he would rather have grouse. If you put him in a house he would much prefer a flat, If you put him in a flat then he'd rather have a house. If you set him on a mouse then he only wants a rat,</p>	<p>Rum Tum Tugger</p>
<p>3. 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 _____ not there!</p>	<p>Macavity</p>
<p>4. Her coat is of the tabby kind, with tiger stripes and leopard spots. All day she sits upon the stair or on the steps or on the mat; She sits and sits and sits and sits--and that's what makes a Gumbie Cat!</p>	<p>Jennyanydots</p>
<p>5. _____ is not skin and bones-- In fact, he's remarkably fat. He doesn't haunt pubs--he has eight or nine clubs, For he's the St. James's Street Cat!</p>	<p>Bustopher Jones</p>
<p>6. His coat's very shabby, he's thin as a rake, And he suffers from palsy that makes his paw shake. Yet he was, in his youth, quite the smartest of Cats-- But no longer a terror to mice and to rats. For he isn't the Cat that he was in his prime;</p>	<p>Gus</p>
<p>7. You can play no pranks with _____! He's a Cat that cannot be ignored; So nothing goes wrong on the Northern Mail When _____ is aboard.</p>	<p>Skimbleshanks</p>
<p>8. He's a Cat who has lived many lives in succession. He was famous in proverb and famous in rhyme A long while before Queen Victoria's accession.</p>	<p>Deuteronomy</p>
<p>9. She haunted many a low resort Near the grimy road of Tottenham Court She flitted about the No-Man's Land From "The Rising Sun" to "The Friend at Hand" And the postman sighed as he scratched his head "You really had thought she ought to be dead"</p>	<p>Grizabella</p>
<p>10. He can pick any card from a pack, He is equally cunning with dice; He is always deceiving you into believing That he's only hunting for mice.</p>	<p>Mr. Mistoffelees</p>