

# Batcat

AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR  
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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower to Mid Primary



## SYNOPSIS

Batcat loves being all alone in their home on Spooky Island. Up in their treehouse, they pass the time playing video games and watching TV. But when Batcat suddenly finds themselves haunted by an annoying, ice cream-stealing ghost, they visit the local Island Witch for a spell to remove their ghastly guest permanently!

With their Ghost-B-Gone spell in hand, Batcat travels across Spooky Island to gather ingredients, to the Cavernous Caves where the bats tell them they're too round to be a bat, and to the Whispering Cemetery where the cats will help only if they commit to being a true cat. But Batcat is neither and that's what makes them special, right?

## ABOUT THE CREATOR

Meggie Ramm (they/them) is a non-binary cartoonist from Michigan. They spent their twenties teaching comics to kids in Oakland, California, and it was the best job in the whole world. They've had work in the *New Yorker*, *Everyday Feminism*, and *Silver Sprocket*, and have a limerick-based comic strip called *The Littlest Dungeon Guard* distributed through Sunday HaHa. They love rhymes, reading gay sci-fi and fantasy, and comics.

## STUDY NOTES

- Answer the following comprehension questions after reading *Batcat*. These prompts can be used to facilitate whole group discussions, small group discussions or individual written responses. They are designed to draw the students attention to elements of plot, character, theme and narrative conventions used in *Batcat*.
  - What happens on pp 4–6? How does Batcat respond?
  - On p 8, Batcat goes to visit the witch. Why does Batcat like the witch?
  - On p 25–26 and pp 39, 40–41 Batcat is being questioned about what they are. How does this make Batcat feel? (see pp 47 and 61)
  - Consider pp 36–7, 60 and 73. Consider the text in the yellow boxes. Who is Batcat talking to? Should Batcat be talking to them? Why/why not?
  - What do Bonsey and Billy teach Batcat?
  - What do the griffins teach Batcat?
  - What does Batcat learn at the end of the story?
- As a class, discuss the following questions after reading the *Batcat*.
  - Is Bat Cat a bat or a cat?
  - What parts of Batcat make them a cat?

- What parts of Batcat make them a bat?
- Can Batcat be both? Why? Why not?
- Who decides what Batcat gets to be?
- If Batcat was only a bat, what things couldn't they do anymore?
- If Batcat was only a cat, what things couldn't they do anymore?
- Is Batcat a boy or a girl? How do we know?
- Consider what Batcat likes to do and eat. If Batcat was a boy or a girl, would they do different things?
- Does it matter that Batcat is non-binary?

## ENGLISH

- Allocate the students a collective noun from the list below or have them discover a collective noun of their own.
  - A murder of crows
  - A fleet of ships
  - A pack of wolves
  - A pride of lions
  - A colony of ants
  - A gaggle of geese
  - A rhumba of rattlesnakes
  - A crash of rhinoceros
  - A herd of elephants
  - A school of fish
  - A shiver of sharks
  - A flock of birds.

Ask the students to do a drawing demonstrating their collective noun. Then, have the students place their collective nouns on the wall to create a collage of collective nouns.

- As a class, look at p 43. What do they notice about it? What happens just before and after p 43? What can they deduce from the surrounding pages?
  - Have the students use their imagination to add to the story by filling in what happened on p 43.

## ART

- Ask each student to draw an animal. Then, pair each student together and ask them to combine their animals to make a new half-and-half animal. Ask them to label their new animal, identifying the parts they used from each animal.
- Look at the title page of *Batcat*. What has the illustrator done to the word 'BATCAT'? What effect does this have?
  - Using the creature they created from the drawing exercise, create a piece of art using the name of your creature.

## PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT/HEALTH

- This exercise encompasses four parts designed to examine the students' latent attitudes towards gender stereotypes.

### Part One—Hobbies and Pastimes

- Have the students write down a hobby or pastime they enjoy.
- Collect their response.
- Write 'female' and 'male' on the board.
- Have the students gather around the board. Read out each hobby/pastime and have the students stand under the female or male heading they believe that hobby/pastime belongs under.

### Part Two—Jobs

- Have the students write down a job—it may be one that their caregiver does or a profession they hope to be in in the future.
- Collect their responses.

- Write 'female' and 'male' on the board.
- Have the students gather around the board. Read out each job and have the students stand under the female or male heading they believe that job belongs under.

### Part Three

- After completing both exercises, repeat the exercise but add 'Both' to the board, giving students a third option.

### Part Four

- Discuss the following questions:
  - Did your responses change when you did the exercise a second time? Why?/ Why not?
  - Why did you think an activity should be female/male?
  - Why does it matter that you are female or male? What attributes make that gender better/worse at that hobby/pastime or job?
  - Who makes the rules that say a female or male can or can't do that job?
- Ask the students to select a character from the book. Have the students create a profile of this character using the following prompts:
  - Name
  - Likes/dislikes
  - What they are good at?
  - Anything special about them.

## SCIENCE AND HISTORY

- Lots of animals have superpowers. In pairs, allocate the students one of the following animals:
  - Lyrebirds
  - Geckos
  - Octopus
  - Salmon
  - Bees
  - Bombardier beetles
  - Platypus
  - Alpine Ibex Mountain Goat
  - Elephant
  - Dung Beetle
  - Plumed basilisk

Ask each pair of students to select and research an animal and discover the incredible things that animal can do, then ask them to present their animal, its superpower and how it uses it, to the class.

- Batcat is a half-half creature. They meet a griffin in the book, which is also half-half. There have been many mythical half-half creatures in mythology. In pairs, allocate the students one of the following mythical creatures:
  - Mermaid
  - Minotaur
  - Centaur
  - Mandrake
  - Satyr
  - Selkie
  - Werewolf
  - Sphinx.

Have each pair of students research each half-half creature and create a pros and cons list. What is positive about being this creature? What might be some of the drawbacks about being this creature? They may add an 'undecided' column to their list.