

Guided reading

SECTION

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Introducing the book

Before reading the book ask the children to share with you anything they know about Anne Fine. She was Children's Laureate from 2001–3. What does that mean? Why do the children think she was chosen? You may wish to visit her website www.annefine.co.uk to look at her bibliography and use the information there to kick start a discussion about the types of stories she writes. Have the children read any of her other books such as *Bill's New Frock*? Do they notice any patterns about the titles of her books?

Return to the text and look at the front cover. Why is the idea of a diary by a cat unusual? Ensure the children understand what a diary is. Remind them that a diary is a personal record of events. Explore the concept of point of view, and help the children to understand that one person's experience of an event is different to another's. What do the children think a cat might write about? Collect ideas from the children.

What about the image of the cat? Can the children think of words to describe the cat – *Where is he looking? What kind of cat is he? Why are his claws out?* What do the children think about the name Killer Cat? Do the children think it is the cat's real name? What does the name imply about the cat's personality?

Read the blurb on the back of the book. Who are the main characters in the book? What do the children think this book will be about? What are the first impressions the children have of these characters? Some children may have read or have had *The Diary of a Killer Cat* read to them before, so explain that during these sessions they will be exploring the book in greater detail and thinking about the characters and story in many different ways.

Monday

Anne Fine starts the story with a powerful characterisation of Tuffy, the Killer Cat. She sets his brazen wild manner in opposition to Ellie's soft nature, as well as his antagonistic relationship with Ellie's father. Use this first

chapter to consider how Tuffy presents himself. Is he a gangster cat, a cool cat, a wild cat or a house cat loved by a little girl?

Read the opening paragraph and ask the children to say what their initial thoughts are about Tuffy. What is he describing? Is he really innocent of killing the bird – did it 'throw itself into his mouth'? Introduce the idea of bias. Collect the words in italics throughout the chapter and discuss why they have been used. Model speaking the sentences stressing the words in italics and then repeat without the stresses. What job do the italics do?

Look at the pictures across pages 2 and 3 and explore how they interact with the text. What extra information are we given? Can the children describe the expressions on the different characters' faces? What is dad thinking? Draw the children's attention to Tuffy's name – why does it suit him? Does it describe what he looks like or his tough manner? What about his other name, Killer Cat? Why does that suit him?

Tuesday and Wednesday

Give the children time to read these two chapters. Afterwards ask them, in pairs, to find evidence about Tuffy's Killer Cat personality. Can they find clues that show he is not as mean as he makes out? Is Tuffy deliberately misleading the family? (The mouse was already dead.) How does the author set up the idea of miscommunication between Tuffy and the family? Explore this by looking at how Tuffy cannot tell Ellie that the mouse was already dead and he didn't kill it. Why would Tuffy bring the mouse into the house.

Read the second paragraph on page 6 starting, "Go away," Ellie's father hissed at me'. What is Tuffy communicating by flicking his tale and giving the 'blink'? Encourage the groups to think of how Tuffy and Ellie's dad might communicate their exchange as cats, without words but with sounds and actions, and then try the same conversation as people.

What does the group think that Ellie's dad and Tuffy really feel about each other? Review the evidence that the children have collected about

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