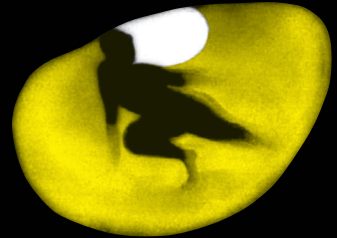
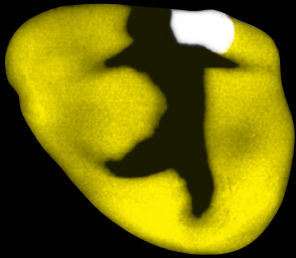


LET THE MEMORY LIVE AGAIN



CATS

EDUCATION MATERIALS
AUSTRALIAN TOUR
2025-26

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WELCOME TO THE EDUCATION MATERIALS

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The magic of **CATS** makes it an ideal inspiration for classroom activity. These comprehensive education materials give an overview and in-depth background information of the show. It includes activities for students prior to and after viewing the production, as well as additional resources. These materials cover the subject areas of English, Drama and Art/Design and are generally aimed at students from Year 3 to Year 9 but can be adapted for any age or ability.

SCHOOL BOOKINGS

See the 40th Anniversary Production of **CATS**:

Sydney: Theatre Royal Sydney, 108 King St, Sydney NSW 2000; where it first premiered in Australia

Adelaide: Her Majesty's Theatre, 58 Grote St, Adelaide SA 5000

Perth: Crown Theatre, Great Eastern Hwy, Burswood WA 6100

Melbourne: Hamer Hall, Arts Centre Melbourne, 100 St Kilda Road, Southbank VIC 3004

Brisbane: Lyric Theatre, QPAC, Melbourne St, South Brisbane QLD 4101

One free teacher ticket for the first 20 students booked. After the first 20 students, one teacher per additional 10 students can access the student rate of \$59.90 per ticket.

The above schools rate applies only for mid-week and Sunday evening performances.

For further booking information visit:
catsthemusical.com.au/education



INTRODUCTION TO CATS

Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats – on which the musical **CATS** is based – was written by TS Eliot during the 1930s and first published in 1939 by Faber & 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 The inclusion of elements of *Rhapsody on a Windy Night* and some of Eliot's unpublished writings enabled the character of Grizabella the Glamour Cat to be used. As a result, 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. 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.



CATS

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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 Heaviside 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 Rumpleteazer, 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!'

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. At Old Deuteronomy's behest, the cats allow Gus to relive an old role by all participating in a reenactment of 'The Awefull Battle of the Pekes and the Pollicles', dressing up as 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 played by Gus.

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 must 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 for 'The Journey to the Heaviside Layer' and be reborn.

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



BACKGROUND OF 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, during a time when cats were owned to be useful – to keep down mice – as much as just pets. This was a time when a different class system existed and when the pace of life was very different to the present day.

Eliot's cat poems were mainly set in London, but one that we would not recognise. Many of the cats were modelled on other literary figures (Macavity is styled on Moriarty, the infamous villain who challenged Sherlock Holmes, and Skimbleshanks is inspired by Rudyard Kipling's *The Long Trail*) and some poems Eliot wrote with music in mind. *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.

TS ELIOT TIMELINE – HIS LIFE AND IMPORTANT WORKS

1888	TS Eliot born in Saint Louis, Missouri, US.
1906-1909	Undergraduate at Harvard University.
1909-1910	Post-graduate at Harvard. Early writing, including the beginning of <i>Prufrock</i> .
1910-1911	Studied at the Sorbonne in Paris and in Germany. Completed <i>Prufrock</i> .
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. <i>Prufrock</i> (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, <i>The Love Song of Alfred J Prufrock</i> (verse) was published in London.
1921-1922	Worked as a correspondent for The Dial. Founded The Criterion, which he edited until 1939.
1922	<i>The Wasteland</i> (verse) published – his most famous work.
1927	Confirmed in the Church of England and became a naturalised British Citizen.
1930	<i>Ash Wednesday</i> (verse) published.
1932	<i>Selected Essays</i> (literary criticism) published.
1935	Verse play, <i>Murder in the Cathedral</i> , commissioned for the Canterbury Festival.
1939	<i>The Family Reunion</i> (play), <i>Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats</i> (verse) and <i>The Idea of a Christian Society</i> (social criticism) published.
1943	<i>The Four Quartets</i> (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	<i>The Elder Statesman</i> (play) published.
1965	January – Eliot died in London. There is a memorial to him in Poet's Corner, Westminster Abbey.



THE DEVELOPMENT OF CATS

THE IDEA

CATS began its life when composer Andrew Lloyd Webber was looking for a new challenge. In late 1977, he started thinking about one of his favourite books from his childhood, TS Eliot's *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, written for the poet's godchildren in the 1930s. Lloyd Webber had a great affection for the poems and he also wanted to reverse his usual working method; instead of collaborating with lyricists and having them write words to his music, he wondered if he could compose music to already existing lyrics. TS Eliot's poems have distinctive rhythms of their own and so could be said to have a musical feel on the page; Lloyd Webber describes them as being "frequently of irregular and exciting metre and ... very challenging to a composer".

At first, he thought of creating an anthology of the piece in concert form and, in 1980, he performed ten of the pieces at the Sydmonton Festival with the help of Gemma Craven, Gary Bond and Paul Nicholas. As fate would have it, TS Eliot's widow, Valerie, was in the audience, liked the songs and gave Lloyd Webber unprecedented access to some unpublished verse, unfinished fragments and letters by her late husband. Among them was *Grizabella, the Glamour Cat*, considered by Eliot to be potentially too sad for a children's book, but it was this poem of just eight lines that made the composer feel there could be much more to the idea than just a song cycle.

FINDING THE STORY

With producer Cameron Mackintosh on board, he approached the Royal Shakespeare Company director Trevor Nunn. Nunn was most concerned about the lack of any distinguishable narrative line. But it was he who made the breakthrough. Amongst the poems Valerie Eliot had provided was one about a man in a pub who meets someone who tells him about the various types of cats. They end up in a cat world. This inspired the idea of having no humans at all in the piece, creating a completely cat-centred universe, physically and in every other way. Now the storyline fell into place: the cast of cat characters would come together for the Jellicle Ball, with the master of ceremonies being their wise leader, Old Deuteronomy. The climax of the proceedings would be the selection of one cat to receive an extra life, a second chance as it were, and this chosen one would ultimately ascend to the Heavside Layer. By this time, Trevor Nunn was completely on board with the project, although when word began to spread about the concept, he recalls, people "had trouble disguising their amusement at the seeming badness of the idea". Between them, Lloyd Webber and Nunn found many references to cats in Eliot's writing which they were able to use; with the help of Richard Stilgoe, Nunn created the opening poem, while the most famous song from the show, 'Memory', was adapted from the poem *Rhapsody on a Windy Night*.

A PLACE TO PLAY

Finding a venue for the show was another interesting conundrum and the creative team, now including designer John Napier, realised that they would not be able to use any existing theatre space, but would need to create a unique environment.

Lloyd Webber happened to be in the New London Theatre one day and thought that might just be the place. As Nunn recalls: "Not for us the tailoring of our show to a theatre; we had to be tailoring a theatre for our show." The New London had a revolving stage area in the round and flexible seating. Seats got relocated and surprise entrances and exits were planned in, so Napier could create "a world for cats that would not only achieve a greater degree of intimacy with the audience than is possible in most conventional theatres but would also point out the humour of the show, and its occasional wackiness". The auditorium had to be dismantled then rebuilt bit by bit and, eventually, no seat was further than 60 feet from the performance area. The playground/rubbish dump set had to feature huge versions of items that might be thrown away, such as empty toothpaste tubes and old Christmas decorations, some of which the characters would use to improvise costumes, as well as providing a suitable dance space. The combination of character and dance ability also had to be reflected in the costumes and make-up.

DANCING THROUGH

Probably the most unusual aspect of the show (amongst many!) is the fact that **CATS** is a show that is 'danced through'. The whole show is one nearly uninterrupted dance sequence. Lloyd Webber had been a pioneer of 'sung through' musicals for many years, such as *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* and *Evita*, but with **CATS** he was breaking new ground. Apart from Old Deuteronomy (played by Brian Blessed) and Grizabella (played by Elaine Paige), the entire cast of the show was made up of experienced dancers who, for the most part, played two characters each, which meant that the entire show needed to be expertly choreographed.

Elaine Paige was not the first Grizabella to be cast. Judi Dench was the original choice for the Glamour Cat, but suffered two accidents during rehearsals, and Elaine Paige came in at the last minute, after the opening night had to be delayed. The dancing cast included Paul Nicholas as Rum Tum Tugger and Wayne Sleep as Mister Mistofelees. Choreographer Gillian Lynne famously observed that cats were "at once aloof, hyper-sensual, cold, warm, completely elastic and very mysterious", and set out "to translate TS Eliot's words in an exciting, theatrical, witty yet feline way".

Lynne fell in love with Lloyd Webber's music at once and began the long and arduous process of choreographing the entire show. Dancing in the round always presents quite a few challenges, and even more so in this case – because there were no wings in the performance space, there was nowhere to reassemble, so every moment had to be choreographed. On the plus side, Lynne felt that the immediacy of the space meant that the audience would be in touch with the energy of the performers from the very start.



THE DEVELOPMENT OF CATS

She described “trying to do justice to the variety of TS Eliot’s characters in a wide variety of dance styles” as “a fascinating and frightening task”, but one she ultimately considered one of the most rewarding of her career.

ON ITS WAY

CATS opened at the New London Theatre on 11 May 1981, but it very nearly did not open at all! Andrew Lloyd Webber had already re-mortgaged his property in Sydmonton to finance the project, and a group of film executives he hoped would invest in the show were not impressed when he played them the score. In the end, three quarters of the £450,000 capital required was raised from small investors, at £750 a unit. While one cast member invested and then changed his mind, another kept the faith and went on to earn more than £40,000!

So, finally, the show was out there, and against all the odds, this groundbreaking gamble of a musical was a success with audiences and critics right from the start, winning the Olivier Award for Best Musical in 1981. It opened at the Winter Garden Theatre on Broadway in October 1982 and the following year won seven Tony Awards, including a posthumous award for TS Eliot. Back in London, eight years after its premiere, and 3,358 performances later, **CATS** became the longest-running musical in the history of British theatre. The show spearheaded a new golden age of British musicals and for two decades London, rather than Broadway, was the capital of new musicals. It had more far-reaching consequences too, as producer Cameron Mackintosh observed: “We broke the mould with it and did something that no one had ever done before. With a logo and marketing and sending off dozens of productions around the world, we set the trend for the global blockbuster. The success of it gave us all the freedom to go and do other shows.”

In 1996, **CATS** became the longest-running musical in the history

of West End theatre and, the following year, it also became the longest-running musical on Broadway. The show has since been presented in more than 20 countries and translated into ten languages, although the title itself has never been translated. Andrew Lloyd Webber’s score, too, has taken on a life of its own. The original cast recording won a Grammy in 1982, while the unforgettable ‘Memory’ has been recorded by a staggering number of artists, from Barbra Streisand to Liberace. Barry Manilow’s version gave him a Top 40 hit in America, and a techno-dance version by Natalie Grant topped the European dance charts. After almost 9000 performances at the New London Theatre, **CATS** closed on its 21st birthday, 11 May 2002. However, it continues to be a worldwide phenomenon and has been seen by upwards of 50 million people. Not bad for a show that was considered as verging on suicidal when it opened over 40 years ago.

AFTERLIFE

In September 2011, **CATS** added more to its reputation by becoming one of the few shows of its stature to be released for performance to academic schools and colleges in the UK. If the show was a challenge to the professionals in its complexity of staging, it will be even more so for amateur performers and creatives, although of course, one of the first pieces Lloyd Webber wrote, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* (with Tim Rice), was originally written for a school performance.

When the show closed in London over ten years ago, Cameron Mackintosh said: “We didn’t want to keep it running until it became a poor, unloved old moggy”, but the last word on the subject should perhaps go to Andrew Lloyd Webber: “Obviously, I am very sad but, by my calculations, 21 years is a great age for a cat and, after all, it does have eight lives left.”



2024-2025 International Tour Company. Photo by: Xiadong

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THE CREATIVE TEAM

CATS was the idea of Andrew Lloyd Webber, who composed the music to TS Eliot's poems. Once he had begun to create the show, Andrew Lloyd Webber gathered a few other people together to work on **CATS**, including Trevor Nunn and Gillian Lynne.

ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER



Andrew Lloyd Webber has composed the scores of some of the world's most famous musicals. His shows have run continually in the West End for 50 years and on Broadway for 43.

When the original *Sunset Boulevard* joined *School of Rock*, **CATS**, and *The Phantom of the Opera* in 1994, Lloyd Webber equalled Rodgers & Hammerstein's record of four shows running simultaneously on Broadway. He is also one of the select group of artists with EGOT status, having received Emmy, Grammy, Oscar, and Tony Awards.

Lloyd Webber owns six London theatres including the iconic London Palladium and Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. Reopened in July 2021, the latter was completely restored and renovated at a cost of over £60 million. It was one of the biggest projects ever undertaken by a private theatre owner in recent times. His mantra is that every penny of profit made from his theatres is ploughed back into the buildings.

Lloyd Webber is passionate about the importance of musical education and diversity in the arts. The Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation provides 30 performing arts scholarships every year for talented students with financial need and supports a range of projects such as the Music in Secondary School Trust and commissioning research into diversity in theatre.

Lloyd Webber has composed music for globally significant moments, including Olympic ceremonies and World Cup celebrations. He has also been asked to compose for many royal occasions, the most recent being "Make a Joyful Noise", an Anthem for the Coronation of King Charles III.

Lloyd Webber was knighted in 1992, created an honorary life peer in 1997, and made a Knight Companion of the Most Noble Order of the Garter by King Charles III in 2024.

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 Misérables*. He has also directed *Starlight Express*, *Aspects of Love* and *Sunset Boulevard* for Andrew Lloyd Webber and several operas for Glyndebourne and the Royal Opera House. He spent several years as Director of the Royal National Theatre, and 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 to create 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 both the Old Gumbie Cat and 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, 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 enabled each cat to have a character and to 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 Jellie 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

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THE CREATIVE TEAM

of the same standard and were 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 constant changes to the music and some incomplete songs. Many characters were developed through the way that they moved, with constant reference back to the poems.

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.

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, to the extent that the venue, the New London Theatre, 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 worldwide phenomenon, changing opinions and ideas about musical theatre along the way.



2024-2025 International Tour Company. Photo by Xiadong

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THE DESIGN FROM THE ORIGINAL WEST END PRODUCTION

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

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 for 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; all of this was incorporated into the design, so the whole theatre became part of the cats' environment, not just 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 dancewear, leg warmers and gloves, and the way certain characters moved, for example Bustopher Jones' walk influenced the design of his coat. Elements of the cats' names also 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.



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PRE-SHOW MULTI-DISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

INTRODUCTION

Before taking your class to see **CATS**, there are a number of Pre-Show Multi-Disciplinary 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 most suitable for the age and ability of your students. 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 teachers have a clear idea of the story and content of the show and are able to tackle some of the questions your students may ask. These materials will also provide you with some of the answers.

Below is a list of suggested resources you may find useful when undertaking the Pre-Show Multi-Disciplinary Activities.

Suggested Resources:

- *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*
- CD recording of **CATS**
- Poster and/or leaflet for **CATS** – there is a downloadable group booking flyer on the Education site – catsthemusical.com.au/education
- Video or DVD of **CATS**



2024-2025 International Tour Company. Photo by: Xiadong

CATS

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MULTI-DISCIPLINARY ACTIVITY

INTRODUCING THE STORY, 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 stands 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, the story of Grizabella (from an unpublished poem) and a fragment of an idea from Eliot about the Heaviside Layer came together to form the narrative thread Andrew Lloyd Webber and Trevor Nunn were looking for: the cats gather together once a year for the Jellicle Ball, where they share stories and entertain one another, with the added inducement that one fortunate cat will be chosen to travel on to the Heaviside Layer. The audience have been 'allowed' in to witness this magical and secret ceremony to fully understand the nature of cats.

To introduce the story, discuss as a class who owns a cat as a pet – what are their names, what personalities do they have, what do they imagine they get up to when they are out of sight? Your teacher will introduce the character of Munkustrap to your class (see the Character Guide) and will tell the story of the musical as if it were told by him (see Munkustrap's Narration for an example). Once the story is told, have a discussion as a class to raise any questions, to explain Eliot's vivid imagination and the historical context (Eliot was writing in the 1930s).

Your teacher will keep a copy of the Character Guide and Munkustrap's story on display in the classroom. They will ask you to choose a character (see the Character Guide) and either write a short descriptive piece, illustrate your chosen character or write a short story about them before you do any in-depth work on the poems themselves. Your teacher will ask to present some of them and display your work.



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 Heaviside 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 and her coat is worn and tatty. She was 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 likes nothing more than to eat and be seen in all the best places.

MUNGOJERRIE AND RUMPLETEAZER – naughty, cockney twins, always up to mischief and all sorts of tricks. They look so alike their family never knows which one 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.

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.

MR MISTOFFEELEES – a small black cat who seems to be quiet and shy but 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

GRIDDLEBONE

JELLYLORUM

JEMIMA

TANTOMILE

CATS

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CATS: MUNKUSTRAP'S NARRATION

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 Heaviside 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 Rumpleteazer, 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.

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. Old Deuteronomy asks him to perform an old role, so we'll all take part in a reenactment of 'The Awefull Battle of the Pekes and the Pollicles'. 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. Skimbleshanks is next; he's a railway cat, a friendly uncle to all of us cats and carefully looks after the trains he rides.



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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, it's 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 Heaviside 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

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MULTI-DISCIPLINARY ACTIVITY

EXPLORING ELIOT'S POEMS

It is important to be introduced to some of Eliot's poems before seeing **CATS**. This will give you an opportunity to explore the stories, language, rhythms and structure of the poems leading to a familiarity with the songs and characters when you see the show. Four poems have been selected, with linked activities for each one below. Each activity begins with reading the poem and discussing the content, any language you may not be familiar with (Eliot often made up his own words to use in his poems!) and the characters described.

THE NAMING OF CATS

1. As a class, read the poem aloud and discuss any unfamiliar language.
2. 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.
3. Discuss as a class why names are so important. Is there anyone who would change their name – to what and why? Does the class think it is a good idea to have three names, especially if you can choose one of them themselves?
4. As a pair, 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.
5. Your teacher will ask to read some of the descriptions aloud and display them all with the poem.

THE OLD GUMBIE CAT

1. As a class, read the poem aloud and discuss any unfamiliar language.
2. Describe the two different sides to Jennyanydots' character – by day and by night – as a class.
3. Working in a group of five or six, improvise scenes depicting Jennyanydots' nighttime activities with the mice and cockroaches, or any other creatures you think she might discipline, like spiders or ants. You should think about Jennyanydots' character and how she gets the mice and cockroaches to behave.
4. After a short time, share and discuss the improvisations as a class. How do the depictions of Jennyanydots differ? Read the poem again and decide which is the most accurate.

MACAVITY: THE MYSTERY CAT

1. As a class, read the poem aloud and discuss any unfamiliar language.
2. Make a spider diagram of words and phrases on the board or a large sheet of paper that describe Macavity. What do you think about Macavity – is he an exciting character or do you disapprove of him?
3. 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.
4. Using the spider diagram for ideas, 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.
5. Your teacher may read some of the completed stories aloud and display them all with the poem.

GUS: THE THEATRE CAT

1. As a class, read the poem aloud and discuss any unfamiliar language.
2. 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 – 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.
3. Gus' favourite character that he ever played – and his greatest triumph – was Fireforefiddle, the Fiend of the Fell. Imagine who or what that character was and do an illustration of Gus as Fireforefiddle to accompany the poem.
4. Your teacher may display the illustrations with the poem.



MULTI-DISCIPLINARY ACTIVITY

CREATING A CATS' ENVIRONMENT

To encourage thinking about cats and their many different ways and habits, create a cats' environment in your classroom.

Bring in photos of cats or your own cat (if you have one) and any newspaper or magazine stories or articles they may find about cats.

There are many other cats in fiction (such as Six Dinner Sid, Orlando the Marmalade Cat, Gobbolino the Witch's Cat, Warrior Cats, etc.). You may search 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 you 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 the display.



MULTI-DISCIPLINARY ACTIVITY

DISCUSSING CATS IN THE THEATRE

Before you see the show, your teacher may wish to discuss the visit to the theatre.

DISCUSS:

1. What you expect to see.
2. How you think the performers may be dressed or made-up.
3. What you think you 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 the activity Exploring Eliot's Poems). Is the music the same or different from what you expected?

Write down your thoughts and feelings about **CATS** before you 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 it aligned with your expectations and how it deviated from them.



ACTIVITIES BY SUBJECT

INTRODUCTION

These activities are intended to develop your students' ideas and knowledge about **CATS**. They are divided into subject areas:

English • Drama/Dance • Art/Design

Plus, ideas for a multi-disciplinary project inspired by poetry.



ENGLISH ACTIVITY

POETRY WRITING

The activity below outlines creating a class or group poem and can use any type of poetry style.

As a class, make a spider diagram of words describing cat behaviour, cats' appearances and the way cats move. Use the words as inspiration to write three or four lines of poetry in pairs in your chosen style. Once everyone is finished writing their lines, select your favourite line that your pair wrote. Write your favourite line down on the board or a large sheet of paper along with the rest of your class. Once everyone's favourite line is written, work as a class to edit one collective poem and display it in the classroom.



ENGLISH ACTIVITY

WRITING REVIEWS

Refer back to the activity in Pre-Show Multi-Disciplinary Activities that explored your expectations of **CATS**.

Discuss the thoughts and ideas you recorded in preparation for writing a review; you may want to use the global reviews below to reference in undertaking this activity. Writing a review of the performance will give you a permanent record of what you saw and how you responded to it. It will also enable you to begin to judge and assess different productions and use this to inform your own performance skills. Whilst at the theatre, you should begin to think about how you would critique the show. Once back in the classroom, you should complete the review worksheet (see below), finishing it as soon after the performance as possible. It is also useful for you to do a quick spider diagram of words and phrases to represent your emotional response to the performance.

You should write a more formal review, including a brief outline of the story and a description of how well performed and presented you thought the show was a few days later, once you have had time to reflect.

REVIEWS OF CATS

THEATRE: LLOYD WEBBER'S 'CATS'

The New York Times

8 October 1982

Excerpt of review by Frank Rich

There's a reason why "Cats," the British musical which opened at the Winter Garden last night, is likely to lurk around Broadway for a long time - and it may not be the one you expect.

It's not that this collection of anthropomorphic variety turns is a brilliant musical or that it powerfully stirs the emotions or that it has an idea in its head. Nor is the probable appeal of "Cats" a function of the publicity that has accompanied the show's every purr since it first stalked London 17 months ago. No, the reason why people will hunger to see "Cats" is far more simple and primal than that: it's a musical that transports the audience into a complete fantasy world that could only exist in the theater and yet, these days, only rarely does. Whatever the other failings and excesses, even banalities, of "Cats," it believes in purely theatrical magic, and on that faith it unquestionably delivers.

CATS REVIEW

The Sydney Morning Herald

21 December 2015

Excerpt of review by Cameron Woodhead

The dance is extremely skilled and exciting to watch. Almost everything clicks: the demanding balletic solos of Mr Mistoffelees (Christopher Favaloro); acrobatic duets from Mungojerrie (Brent Osborne) and Rumpleteazer (Dominique Hamilton); the delightful, genuine triple threat of Ross Hannaford's Skimbleshanks, and of course the dynamic and characterful mass choreography from the all-feline cast performing in unison.



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
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ENGLISH ACTIVITY

WRITING A CHARACTER STUDY

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

Read one or two of Eliot's poems as a class selected by your teacher (for example *Rum Tum Tugger* or *Bustopher Jones*). As a class, discuss the elements of a character study – what the character looks like, their personality, lifestyle and surroundings. Then plan your character study by reading and re-reading the poem and making notes. You should look for specific descriptions in the poems but also less obvious clues about the characters the poems may give away. Once you have completed your notes, you should write up your character study. Your teacher may read some studies out loud and discuss any similarities and differences.

As an additional activity, 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.



ENGLISH ACTIVITY

WRITING STORIES

Eliot's poems tell stories about lots of different cats and can be used as inspiration for story writing. The aim of the activity is to create a new story about Macavity and a crime he has committed.

Begin by reading *Macavity, the Mystery Cat*. As a 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. Your teacher will give you an opening or closing line for your story (examples below). Plan your story by outlining a clear beginning, middle and end and follow your plan whilst you write. Once everyone's stories are written, read them aloud or display them in the classroom.

EXAMPLE OPENING LINE:

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

EXAMPLE CLOSING LINE:

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



DANCE/DRAMA ACTIVITY

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, as a class, that are challenging and inspiring and use them as a basis for improvisation.

All 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.



DANCE/DRAMA ACTIVITY

PERFORM A POEM

As proved in the musical, Eliot's poems make an ideal basis for drama and can be performed in many ways. Your teacher will read one of the poems and, as a class, discuss the story of the poem. You will be allocated to a group and given a section of the story. As a group, think of a way to perform it; you could use a narrator and mime, write a short script and act it out, or use movement and sound to tell the story. Once you've had a short time to practice, all the groups will perform for each other. As a class, 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 your classmates 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. As a class, discuss the creative process and compare it with what you have learnt about how **CATS** was created.



DANCE/DRAMA ACTIVITY

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Your teacher will choose one of Eliot's poems to use as a basis for character development work. Work in a pair and use the poem to gain as much information about the cat as possible. You should then begin to improvise and develop different scenes from the cat's life to give a clearer picture of how your character was formed. You should also explore the movement and physicality of the character, especially considering how to portray yourselves as a cat. Your teacher may pause you as you work for different pairs to share their ideas to enable everyone to discuss different ideas and develop your own work.



DANCE/DRAMA ACTIVITY

HOT-SEAT GRIZABELLA

As a follow-up to the above activity, it is interesting to explore the character of Grizabella in particular. 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. You or another classmate can volunteer to be Grizabella. 'Grizabella' can then be questioned by the other 'cats' (classmates) about her life, her experiences outside of the Jellicle tribe and why she now wishes to come back. As a class, you may also wish to explore what she expects to find when she travels to the Heaviside Layer. Your class may discuss the role of Grizabella within the musical, how she is performed and costumed and how the other cats react to her.



DANCE/DRAMA ACTIVITY

DANCE WARM-UPS

It is important to begin every practical dance session with a warm-up. This activity involves the creation of a warm-up in pairs that can then be used at the beginning of each session.

In your pair, put together a 15-minute dance warm-up. You should create a few structured exercises that include general stretching, exercises to focus on specific areas (for example abdominals, legs, arms) and combination exercises for strength and grace. You should select different pieces of music for your warm-up, choosing styles and tempos to suit the exercises you have chosen. Once the warm-ups have been put together, each pair should take it in turns to lead the rest of the class in their warm-up at the beginning of each session.



DANCE/DRAMA ACTIVITY

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 as a 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.

You will then sit in a pair and explore some of the ideas by using your head, arms and upper body to begin with. Discuss some of the difficulties in making a human body move like a cat. Your teacher may decide to put music on in the background to help inspire movement. Some pairs can then share their ideas with the rest of the class.

The next stage is using your whole body to explore cat movements. Your teacher may give you a starting point, for example – a cat waking up. Consider the way the movements flow into each other. Once all pairs have developed their ideas, share and discuss them with the whole class.



DANCE/DRAMA ACTIVITY

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, your teacher will decide what your initial stimulus or inspiration will be. Your teacher will 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 will develop.

As a class, listen to the music and talk about the ways they think a dance piece could be created. You will 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). Your group should discuss ideas based on words and moods, associated with the stimulus or inspiration; what it means to you and what your emotional response is. You should then move on to decision making, considering:

CONTENT

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

MOVEMENT

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

WITH WHOM?

How will the group work? As pairs, individuals or as an ensemble?

You will be given time to rehearse (the music will keep playing in the background) and try out your movement ideas. Your 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 all groups are confident in performing their motifs, each will share with the whole class.

As a 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 as a class, perform it for an audience. Following the performance, discuss as a class how you could notate the dance so others could learn it, and possible ideas for costume for performance.



ART/DESIGN ACTIVITY

ILLUSTRATE A POEM

As a follow-up to seeing **CATS**, you will illustrate your favourite poem, either using your imagination from the poem alone or drawing on ideas presented by seeing the show. You could plan your illustrations or experiment with different media (such as collage, pastels or paint) before attempting your final piece of work. Your 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, they will be displayed in the classroom



ART/DESIGN ACTIVITY

DESIGN

There are several different design tasks your teacher may set for you, such as exploring set, costume, make-up or poster design.

As a class, discuss the set design after you have seen the musical and read the section of the materials 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 design a set that would 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, 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. As a pair, work together so one designs the costume and one the make-up for different characters. Your teacher may provide you with a basic outline of a face or body 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, as a class, what information and what design elements they contain. Then, design your own poster, paying particular attention to a strong graphic image that conveys a message about the content of your show.



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MULTI-DISCIPLINARY ACTIVITY

CREATING A PERFORMANCE PIECE

All subject areas can be combined to use the several different elements of **CATS** to create a piece of performance inspired by poetry. Your teacher may divide the project up into different sections, depending on how much time there is available and who you will perform the final piece for.

The first step is for the class to be assigned a poem. We suggest Preludes by TS Eliot for students in Year 7 to 9 or Cats by Phoebe Hesketh for Year 3 to 6. There are other suggestions in the Resources section.

SECTION ONE

Your teacher may use the ideas from the Pre-Show Multi-Disciplinary Activities or the English and Drama activities above to give a good understanding of the poem's content and meaning. Once the class is familiar with the poem, discuss how you wish to construct your performance. Spend time writing and using improvisation and dance or movement to develop character and a narrative. You will be put into a group to develop your ideas and regularly share and discuss your ideas to help your creativity and self-assessment.

SECTION TWO

Whilst you are developing the structure of your performance, your teacher may also wish to add some elements of design to give your performance a professional look. Your ideas from the activities above will help you develop designs for costume, make-up and sets. As a class, 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. As a class you may decide to give a small group of students the responsibility for developing the ideas and creating the actual costumes and sets.

SECTION THREE

When your class has 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 as a class the process of creating the performance and anything you feel you would change or develop.



RESOURCES AND CREDITS

RESOURCES

CATS RESOURCES

Highlights from **CATS** – CD – Really Useful Records

CATS (Original London Cast Recording /1981) available on streaming platforms andrew-lloyd-webber.lnk.to/Cats1981

CATS – video / DVD – Really Useful Films (Polygram Video)

CATS, *the Book of the Musical* – Harvest Books

TS Eliot's *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* – Faber & Faber

WEBSITES

catsthemusical.com.au

andrewlloydwebber.com

To find out more about TS Eliot, the poet behind *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, please visit [TSeliot.com](https://tseliot.com), where you can find out more about him, his life and his work.

If you would like to buy a copy of *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, you can purchase a copy from your favourite book retailer.

BOOKS

The Nation's Favourite Poems – BBC Books

(Includes TS Eliot's *Preludes* and *The Love Song of Alfred J Prufrock*)

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

CREDITS

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**.

The Culture Farm has made and adapted the materials for the Australian 2025 Tour.

PERFORM CATS WITH YOUR SCHOOL OR YOUTH GROUP!

CATS – Young Actors Edition is a one-hour adaption of Andrew Lloyd Webber's hit musical, specially tailored for young actors. The materials have been prepared to help your school or youth group mount the best possible production and to give your young cast and crew an exciting and rewarding experience.

The materials include: A Production Guide, Piano Vocal Score, Student Vocal Books, Vocal Tracks (for rehearsal), Accompaniment Tracks (for performance), show logo, choreography & staging videos.

CATS – Full Version – The full version of the show is also available to perform with a 10 or 16 piece orchestration.

Find out more about performing the show from ORiGiN Theatrical for performances in Australia & New Zealand: origintheatrical.com.au



2024-2025 International Tour Company. Photo by: Xiadong

CATS

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