



imaginary theatre company

2011–2012 SEASON

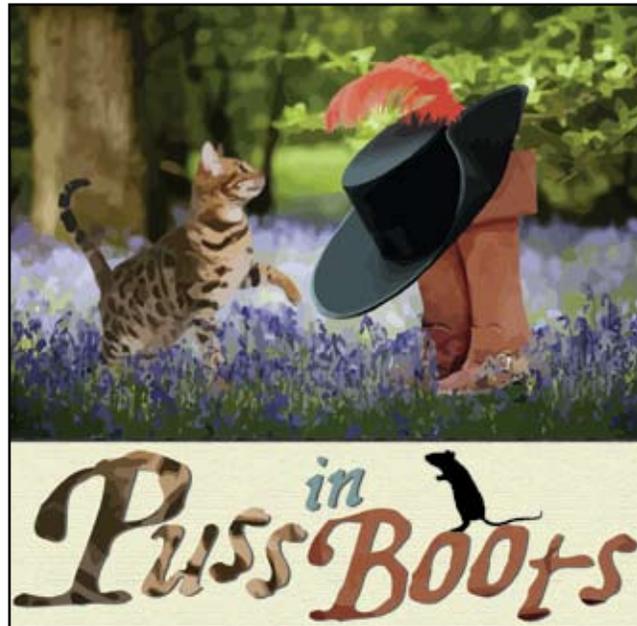
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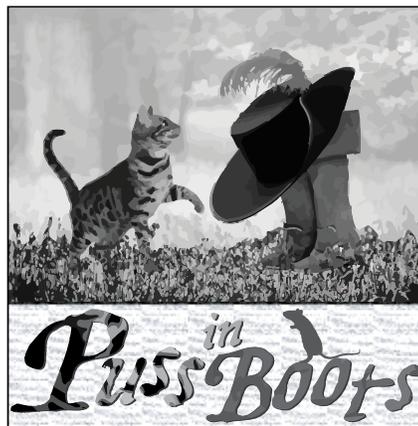
Book, Music and Lyrics by Brian Hohlfeld
Directed by Kat Singleton

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Imaginary theatre company



Book, Music and Lyrics by Brian Hohlfeld
Directed by Kat Singleton

Musical Director
Neal Richardson

Scenic Designer
Scott Loebel

Costume Designer
Susan Byrd

Stage Manager
Danny Maly

Director of Education
Marsha Coplon

The Company

Puss / **Lakeetha Blakeney**

King and others / **Alan Knoll**

John / **Jerome Lowe**

Princess and others / **Cara Myler**



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setting the scene



In true storybook style, the Miller has it all—a successful mill (which grinds wheat into flour), a son who's super smart and another son who is strong as an ox.

But no story is complete without a problem child (or two!), and the Miller has that as well—John, his singing, daydreaming son who doesn't do any work. On top of that, the Miller has a cat (Puss) who can't be bothered to catch mice. Meanwhile the work is piling up and mice are infesting the mill . . . what's a Miller to do?

Thanks to a cruel twist of fate (and a giant, mean Ogre), John and Puss are forced out of the mill and must face the cold, harsh world all on their own. Can these two get it together or are they hopelessly doomed?

who's who?



The **MILLER** is a strong, smart man who runs a successful mill with his three sons and a cat.

While his brothers are strong and smart, **JOHN** seems more interested in singing his catchy made-up songs and daydreaming about the princess . . . she is pretty dreamy, after all!

PUSS is a very gifted and clever cat, despite a curious lack of interest in mice.

The object of John's affection, the **PRINCESS** is beautiful, intelligent and quirky in all the right ways.

A kind, fair and honest man, the **KING** is like a ruler straight out of a fairytale.

Watch your feet! There just might be a **BARN MOUSE** or two roaming loose—apparently a certain cat hasn't been doing her job getting rid of them!

The **OGRE** is a big dumb meanie, quite literally! He's big, he's not very bright and he's really mean!



Once upon a time, there was a Miller who had three sons, a donkey and a cat. All three sons worked for him in his mill (so did the donkey and cat), where wheat was ground into flour.

Like any proud father, the Miller could go on and on about his sons—first the smart one, who counts the bushels and makes deliveries. Then there’s the strong one (strong as an ox, in fact) who drives the donkey and does the milling. These two boys are his pride and joy—good boys, just like him. And then there’s John, who doesn’t do a whole lot of work around the mill. Instead, he makes up songs that go “La la la la la la” and daydreams about marrying the Princess as she rides by in the royal carriage.

Why can’t John be more like his brothers?

As if the Miller didn’t have enough to deal with, lately the mill is being overrun with barn mice because Puss (the Miller’s clever cat) just doesn’t have a taste for rodents. Since when does a cat not chase mice?

One day, the Miller goes to run an errand (visit the Ogre’s castle to collect payment for some flour), but doesn’t return alive. Apparently, the Ogre didn’t feel like paying for his flour, so instead he turned into a lion and ate the Miller. The Miller leaves his mill to his two more capable sons, so all that’s left for John is Puss, an empty sack and a dirty old pair of boots.

Though they’re down, they’re not entirely out—Puss puts on the pair of boots and begins to hatch a royal plan. The clever cat visits the King, posing as a servant of the

made-up Marquis of Haoofa (bless you!). Puss quickly sets to winning the King over with feline charms and a little gourmet cooking. John hides in the wings and spies the beautiful Princess (who also happens to make up her own songs that go “La la la la la”)—she’s even more perfect up close!

After visiting with the King several times, Puss invites the royal family over to the castle of the Marquis. This will give John a chance to be closer to the Princess than ever before—she’ll be right across from him at the dinner table! But wait—where are they going to get a Marquis? And where are they going to get a castle?!

This is the finale of Puss’ plan—John will play the part of the Marquis while the Ogre will provide the castle (though both will need a little convincing). Puss shows John that he’s gifted and clever, giving him the confidence to be the Marquis. She puts John, the King and Princess in the carriage to the Ogre’s castle while she rides ahead.

Puss confronts the Ogre, who isn’t exactly willing to give up the keys to his castle. Puss tricks him, however, into turning into a mouse. As the royal carriage rides in, Puss bites the bullet and eats the mouse. Ogre problem solved!

Meanwhile, John has been using his newfound confidence to woo the Princess. When they get back to the castle, they find the final piece of Puss’ plan—a gift for the Princess from John. It’s a ring, with which John boldly proposes to the Princess. She accepts, and they all live happily ever after!

Please feel free to adapt these materials to suit your classroom needs and reproduce them for future use.

The activities in this guide address the following Missouri Show Me Standards and Illinois Learning Standards.

MO: CA1, 3, 4, 5; FA2, 3, 5; SC3

IL: 1, 2, 3, 5, 12, 25, 27

words to the wise



Party favor: a gift, usually small and inexpensive, given to guests at a party

Vittles: food

Crème brûlée: a dessert of custard topped with caramelized sugar

Ferocious: savagely fierce, cruel or violent

Errand: a short journey undertaken in order to deliver or collect something

Loathsome: causing hatred or disgust; repulsive

Saddled: burdened with an oppressive responsibility or task

Sentimental: excessively prone to feelings of tenderness, sadness or nostalgia

Camembert: a kind of rich, soft, creamy cheese with a whitish rind, originally made near Camembert in Normandy

Feline: relating to cats or other members of the cat family

Marquis: a nobleman ranking above a Count and below a Duke

Carcass: the dead body of an animal

Salivating: displaying great interest or desire at the sight or prospect of something; drooling

Wiles: devious or cunning strategies employed in manipulating or persuading someone to do what one wants

Trifling: unimportant or trivial

Emissary: a person sent on a special mission, usually as a diplomatic representative

Bouillabaisse: a rich, spicy stew or soup made with various kinds of fish, originally from Provence

Fondue: a dish in which small pieces of food are dipped into a hot sauce or a hot cooking medium such as oil or broth

Who Said It? Answer Key (p. 11)

1. The Miller
2. Puss
3. John
4. Princess
5. The Ogre

The Real Puss in Boots ...

A Fairy Tale Beginning

Did you know?

There are other authors who are very famous for their fairy-tale stories:

Hans Christian Andersen

- *The Emperor's New Clothes*
- *The Snow Queen*
- *The Little Mermaid*
- *The Ugly Duckling*

The Brothers Grimm

- *Beauty and the Beast*
- *The Elves and the Shoemaker*
- *Hansel and Gretel*
- *The Frog-Prince*
- *Rapunzel*
- *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*
- *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*

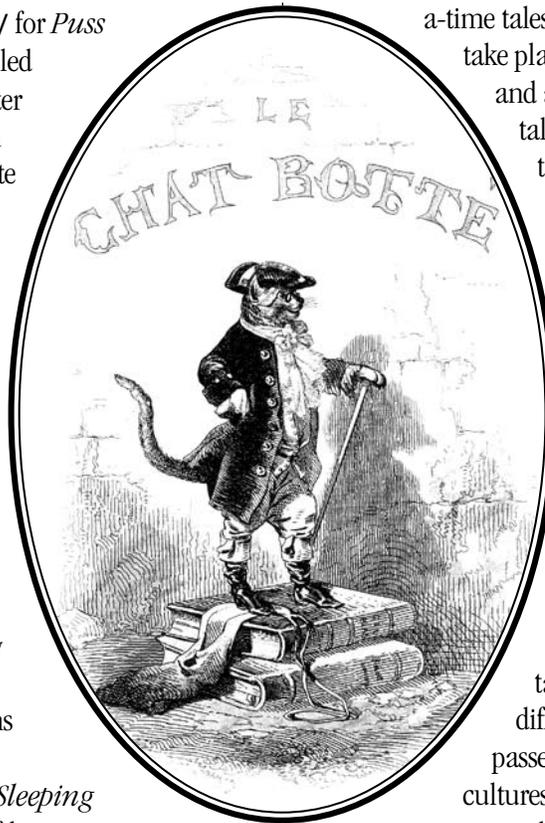
What others do you know?

The original story for *Puss in Boots* was actually called *Le Maître Chat*, or Master Cat. It's actually a French fairy tale written in the late 17th century by Charles Perrault, published in 1697.

That makes the *Puss in Boots* that you know and love an adaptation, or a version of Perrault's tale adjusted for the theatre. But don't worry, it's quite common for classic stories to be adapted. In fact, this story is so popular that it has shown up in various forms over the years, from Tchaikovsky's ballet *The Sleeping Beauty* to Walt Disney's film adaptation in 1922 to this year's new movie based on Shrek's buddy. Can you think of any modern-day characters that might be like Puss?

Adaptation isn't something that's new to today's storytelling, however. Even Perrault himself was adapting preexisting folk tales when he wrote his stories. *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Sleeping Beauty* and *Cinderella* are just a few examples of the classics that Perrault borrowed from folk tale sources as he created a new literary genre—the fairy tale.

As you probably already know, fairy tales are short stories that include mystical characters like goblins, elves, trolls or gnomes (though ironically, not often actual fairies!), and usually include some sort of magic or enchantment. These stories also include beast fables, or stories in which animals can talk and take on other human qualities. More often than not, there's a happy ending to these once-upon-



a-time tales, which always seem to take place in a land far, far away and a time long, long ago. Fairy tales have a legendary feel to them and though they're often far-fetched, they're usually told as though they might be true.

Charles Perrault may have been the first person to actually record fairy tales in literary form, but they have existed for thousands of years in oral form (more on this later) with our favorite tales having roots in several different oral story traditions passed down in European cultures. While tales like *Puss in*

Boots are decidedly of the European tradition, other cultures have contributed to the genre, from ancient Egypt (*The Tale of Two Brothers*) to modern day China (where various fairy tales are told in Taoist philosophy).

Great stories demand to be told, and that's exactly how fairy tales survived before they were written down. For these stories, having an oral tradition simply means that they were originally transmitted orally from one generation to another, or told instead of read as they weren't written down. Fairy tales survived this way because of their dramatic and fantastic nature, allowing the storyteller to easily remember and actually act out favorite moments from a story through specific character voices and actions. Have you ever told a story like this?

Fairy tales almost always seem to have a moral, and though our clever feline practices some trickery and deceit to succeed, the original

Le Maistre Chat was indeed written as a lesson to young people on devotion to one's master and a guide for civilized conduct. The story stresses the importance of industry and the ability to thrive under any circumstance, both of which are valuable qualities.

All of this leaves the burning question—where does Mother Goose fit into fairy tale history? Wasn't she the one who came up with the stories originally? Who is this mystical, fairy tale-like woman?

By most accounts, Mother Goose was probably never actually a real person, though like the stories she tells, her character is probably a creation inspired by an actual individual, an actual tale or some combination of both. Early mentions of her name appear in print as far back as the 1620s in France, and some historians suspect she is based on legends of the wife of King Robert II. These legends depict her as an animated and engaging storyteller who spun incredible tales for children.

Less credible, though perhaps more fun to believe, Boston legends speak of a real-life American Mrs. Goose who lived in Boston around the time Perrault was working on his stories. Mrs. Goose (wife of Isaac Goose) was

famous for singing songs and telling stories to her grandchildren—songs and stories that were later gathered and printed by her grandson.

Perrault was the first to actually publish a collection of stories with the Mother Goose name (called *Tales of Mother Goose*), giving an official voice to the legendary character. From the beginning of her literary tradition, she has been represented as a warm and caring country woman with a stockpile of entertaining stories for adults and children alike.

But Perrault hasn't been the sole voice behind Mother Goose, as over the years a number of other authors have written on her behalf. Most notably, John Newbery compiled a collection of English nursery rhymes under Mother Goose's name (*Mother Goose's Melody*), which gave her a whole new area of focus—children's poetry.

Today, you can find fairy tales (and the influence of fairy tales) just about everywhere. From daycare to Hollywood, fairy tales continue to entertain fans of all ages. Can you think of any recent, popular adaptations of fairy tales (or characters in fairy tales) that might be your favorites?

Did you know?

Over the years, Mother Goose stories have included lots of titles you might know:

- *Cinderella*
- *Sleeping Beauty*
- *Puss in Boots*
- *Little Red Riding Hood*
- *Jack and Jill*
- *Little Bo Peep*
- *The Pied Piper*
- *Miss Muffet*
- *Tweedle-Dee and Tweedle-Dum*

And many more!



The Very Gifted and Clever Cat

Did you know?

By some counts there are hundreds of different breeds of cats. How many can you name?

- Abyssinian
- Australian Mist
- Bengal
- Burmese
- Calico
- Himalayan
- Ichabod
- Maine Coon
- Maltese
- Pixie Bob
- Persian
- Siamese
- Sphynx

Plus many, many more!

In the play, Puss is certainly an extraordinary cat that can talk, cook and even scheme to save the day. But what's the story on real-life cats?

Cats (both domesticated and wild) fall into the scientific family Felidae, and are referred to by scientists as felids. Felids are pure carnivores, which means you won't find them eating a lot of fruits, veggies or other plants. They prefer rodents, birds and other small animals that they can hunt. Big cats (the tiger, lion, jaguar and leopard) are known to hunt much larger prey like wildebeest, impalas, zebras and buffalo, just to name a few favorites!

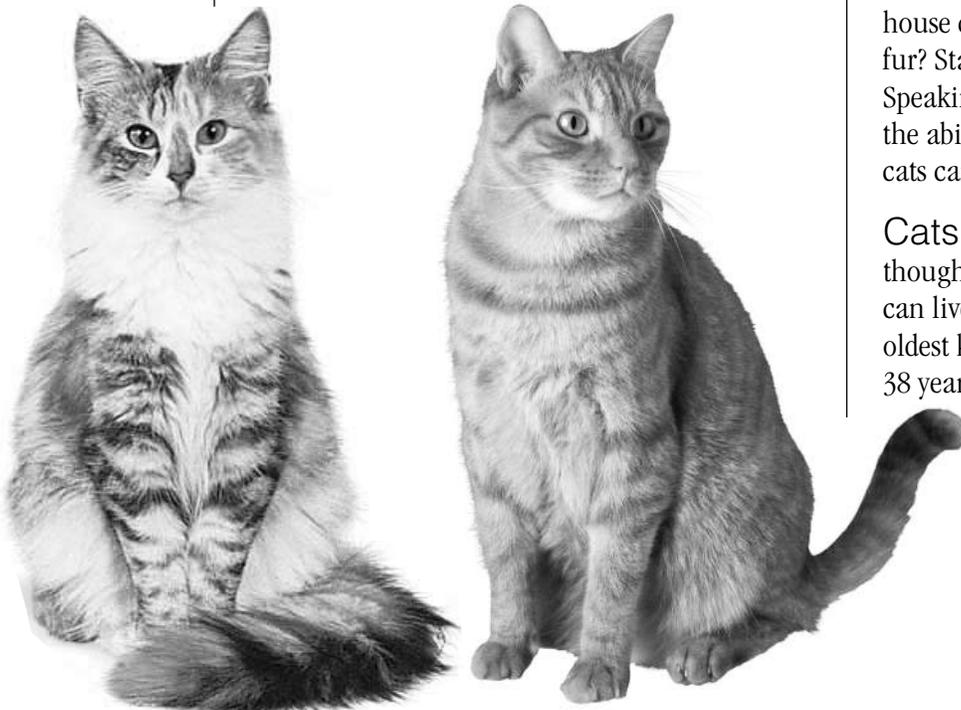
Cats can be active around the clock, but they can also as easily sleep the day away. In fact, the term "cat nap" comes from the felid's ability to fall asleep almost any time, anywhere or any place, combined with the cat's ability to stay asleep (cats can sleep as much as 20 hours in a single day!). Most species are at least partially nocturnal (active at night), with wild species like lions most active after dusk.

Whether it's a lion or a house cat, every felid has specially honed senses for the hunt. Their large eyes are six times more sensitive to light than human beings', allowing them to easily see in the dark. Large ears tune cats into high-frequency sounds, helping them to locate unseen prey. A keen sense of smell and highly sensitive whiskers allow felids to literally taste the air or detect the slightest movement in the air around them. Perhaps the coolest sense cats possess is a strong sense of balance—they always seem to land on their feet no matter how bad the fall!

With some exceptions, wild and domesticated felids are typically solitary (that is, they live by themselves), though domesticated cats tend to be relatively more sociable (and species like lions live in prides, or groups of lions). Most wild cats live in forested terrain, though they can be found almost anywhere from deserts to mountainous regions.

Most felids can vocalize and make sounds like meowing (meowing), hissing, growling and snarling, and all rely heavily on body language to communicate with others. For example, have you ever seen a house cat with an arched back and puffed out fur? Stay away! That's one angry cat! Speaking of angry cats—big cats also have the ability to roar, a sound that domesticated cats can't quite muster.

Cats can live between 10 to 14 years, though many house cats (and even wild cats) can live in captivity beyond 20 years. The oldest known cat on record, Creme Puff, was 38 years old when she died in 2005.



Who Said It?

Did you pay close attention to the play? Surely you can tell who said each quotation below—just match the correct choice below the correct quote!

1. “That’s my eldest son—the smart one, counting up the bushels. He’s a good boy. Just like me. And there’s my second son, the strong one, driving the donkey. He’s as strong as an ox. Just like me.”

A. Ogre B. Puss C. John D. The Miller

2. “Any old cat can do that. I am a very gifted and clever cat. If I just lie here and act like a piece of cheese ... the mice will come to me.”

A. Puss B. John C. The Miller D. The King

3. “She’s so beautiful. If only I could meet her. If only I could talk to her, and be her friend ... That’s it! The Princess. That’s what I want in the world, Puss.”

A. The Princess B. The King C. John D. The Miller

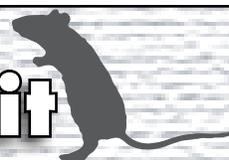
4. “Having a whole country—that sort of thing doesn’t matter to me at all. I much prefer to stay in my room. That’s my favorite place. I like to be alone there and write in my diary and make up songs”

A. The King B. The Princess C. The Miller D. The Ogre

5. “You no scared of me? They no stories. They true. Me prove it to you. Me turn into something big ... and eat you up.”

A. The King B. The Princess C. The Ogre D. John

read more about it



Grimm, Jacob and Grimm, Wilhelm.
***Grimm’s Fairy Stories.* CreateSpace,**
2011. Where did the fairy tale go after Perrault? Check out Grimm’s collection of stories to see!

Perrault, Charles and Clarke, Harry.
The Fairy Tales of Charles Perrault.
Nabu Press, 2010. Read all of the classics as they were originally written! Note that this book contains a historically accurate translation, that is, some of the language will be slightly different than what we use today. For example, the word “enchant” is spelled “inchant” in the book.

<http://www.surlalunefairytales.com/authors/perrault.html>

Can’t wait for the book to arrive from Amazon? Look no further than SurLaLune Fairy Tales! This site includes full texts of *Puss in Boots*, *Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty in the Wood*.

Shelley Duvall’s Faerie Tale Theatre.
KOCH Vision, 2008, DVD. Check out this complete set of 26 classic tales brought to life by the likes of Billy Crystal, Matthew Broderick, Susan Sarandon, Mick Jagger, Robin Williams and more!

Costume Creations

Costume designers get to decide what the actors will look like in the play. Here is our Costume Designer's ideas for Puss and her master, John. Finish the costumes with colors you think they should wear.



Designs by
Costume Designer
Susan Byrd