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# KITTY is not a CAT



Teachers Resources

JESS BLACK

TEACHERS RESOURCES

# KITTY is not CAT

by Jess Black

## Teachers Resources by Robyn Sheahan-Bright

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# SERIES INTRODUCTION

‘Her name is KITTY – they read it on her collar. It seems all Kitty wants to be is a cat. But ... Kitty is not a cat!’

Kitty Is Not A Cat is a warmly funny junior-fiction series about Kitty, a little girl who believes she can be anything she dreams – even a cat.

‘In a rundown old mansion perched on a hill there lives a family of stray cats. These cats play music, love parties and live without a care in the world.’

But when Kitty arrives on the doorstep of this house full of music-mad felines, and thwarts their ‘No Humans’ policy by moving into their house, everything changes. In trying to be just like them, Kitty turns their lives upside down as they, in turn, attempt to teach her how to be human.

Based on a hugely popular Australian animated series made by BES Entertainment which first aired in April 2018, and which has been sold to 80 territories around the world, these books will further endear Kitty and her horde of feline housemates to their fans. This series is peopled by a cohort of kind-hearted but ill-informed feline characters. And when they make mistakes you can be assured that lots of fun will follow!

## SERIES THEMES & CURRICULUM TOPICS

Several themes relevant to curriculum topics (**Studies of Society and Environment, Science and English Language & Literacy**) might be identified in this series. Titles published to date, with relevant themes, are:

1. *LIGHTS OUT!* – FEAR OF THE DARK
2. *TEDDY’S BEAR* – LOVE & FRIENDSHIP
3. *HIRED HOUND* – RULES VERSUS FREEDOM OF SPEECH & ACTION
4. *BATH TIME* – HUMAN VERSUS ANIMAL CUSTOMS & BEHAVIOUR





## STUDIES OF SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT (SOSE)

These simple texts might be used to discuss emotional and social issues with relevance to children, for example:

### INDIVIDUALITY

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Kitty's determination to live as a cat is typical of children's fantasies about who and what they might be. Children enjoy role-playing or taking on different identities and wearing costumes (such as Superman, Batman or fairy costumes). Discuss with students who they would most like to be.

**ACTIVITY:** Read other books about children imagining themselves to be someone or something else. eg Kirsty Murray's *When Billy Was a Dog* Ill. by Karen Blair (Allen & Unwin, 2019); *Standing in for Lincoln Green* by David Mackintosh (HarperCollins, 2018); *Make It I'm the Mother* by Janet and Andrew McLean (Allen & Unwin, 2000); Jessica Love's *Julián is a Mermaid* (Candlewick Press, 2018).

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Have a dress up day and invite students to come as their favourite character or fantasy identity.

### VALUES AND MORALS

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Each of these four books conveys a number of lessons or morals. What did your students learn from reading each of them?

**DISCUSSION POINT:** When Butcher is outwitted by Kitty and the cats what moral is conveyed?

**DISCUSSION POINT:** In taking Kitty into their mansion, what values are the cats demonstrating, given they have a 'No Humans' policy?

[See other topics under **Key Curriculum Topic Sheets for Individual Titles** below.]

### SCIENCE

A range of simple science-related topics are also raised in this series, for example: **cats, hibernating bears, dogs and hygiene.**

[See **Key Curriculum Topic Sheets for Individual Titles** below.]



# KEY CURRICULUM TOPIC SHEET 1

## LIGHTS OUT!

### INTRODUCTION

The cats' scary-movie night is interrupted by Kitty shrieking 'Meow' upstairs! She fears the shadows on the wall, so the cats try to make her sleep. Cheeta brings a sheep to count; then they ask Last Chance to tell her one of his boring stories; then King Tubby consults his library for an answer; and when they discover that her night-light has gone missing, they make her a new one. Kitty hears her night-light's lullaby coming from King Tubby's room and discovers he took it – Tubby is also frightened of the dark!

### STUDIES OF SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT (SOSE)

#### FEAR OF THE DARK

*DISCUSSION POINT:* Kitty can't sleep and isn't sure why. Ask students if they have trouble sleeping and how they've resolved that problem.

*DISCUSSION POINT:* Is sleeping in a box a very good idea if you want to get a good night's sleep?

*DISCUSSION POINT:* King Tubby steals Kitty's night-light. Do you have a night-light? Does it help you overcome your night fears?

### SCIENCE

#### CATS

*DISCUSSION POINT:* In *Lights Out!* The Nazz reads on the movie case, 'Warning – can reduce lifespan by up to three cat lives.' (p 6) This refers to the fact that cats are said to have nine lives. Last Chance then decides not to watch, as he only has one of his lives left (pp 6–7); later King Tubby lists some skills cats are said to have (p 39). How much of what he says is true? Read about cats and the special senses they have.

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERACY

Study the writing style employed in this title, and examine the sub-topics under this **Series Topic** below: Narrative Person\* Word Play \* Literary Devices \* Structure\* Setting \* Characters\* Writing Tasks\* Series Writing\* Visual Literacy.

#### COMPREHENSION ACTIVITIES

**Q.** What movie were the cats watching?

**Answer:** *Purr-a-normal Activity*. (p 6)

**Q.** What kind of animal does Cheeta arrive with, the second time, in this novel?

**Answer:** A goat. (p 51)

**Q.** What sort of night-light do the cats create?

**Answer:** A disco light. (p 44)

# KEY CURRICULUM TOPIC SHEET 2

## TEDDY'S BEAR

### INTRODUCTION

The cats want to find a teddy bear for Kitty but have no idea what a teddy bear is. In a series of hilarious misunderstandings they endeavour to help but she ends up with a grizzly bear instead! They get on famously dancing together, except that grizzly bears can be dangerous. But just when the cats are beginning to worry about this, the bear does what bears do in winter – he hibernates – and all is well. Kitty is given a real teddy bear by Mr Clean, and she finally has a toy she can love.

### STUDIES OF SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT (SOSE)

#### LOVE & FRIENDSHIP

**DISCUSSION POINT:** 'That's the way, kid. Everyone has a different idea of what perfect means to them. What you choose to love is totally up to you.' (*Teddy's Bear*, p 57) What/who do your students love most?

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Can a toy become a friend?

### SCIENCE

#### HIBERNATING BEARS

**DISCUSSION POINT:** In *Teddy's Bear*, the huge grizzly bear is a little intimidating until he abruptly falls asleep. Research hibernation and what it does to an animal's body.

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERACY

Study the writing style employed in this title, and examine the sub-topics under this **Series Topic** below: Narrative Person\* Word Play \* Literary Devices \* Structure\* Setting \* Characters\* Writing Tasks\* Series Writing\* Visual Literacy.

#### COMPREHENSION ACTIVITIES

**Q.** What do Kitty and the grizzly bear have in common?

**Answer:** They both love dancing. (pp 22–3)

**Q.** What does Cheeta suggest they do to get rid of the grizzly bear?

**Answer:** 'We'll get another bear to help us get rid of this bear.' (p 42)

**Q.** The teddy bear is 'a threadbare creation thrown together from old patches and socks' (p 53). Why does Kitty love it so much?

**Answer:** 'It was soft and ever so cuddly – exactly what she had hoped for.' (p 54)





# KEY CURRICULUM TOPIC SHEET 3

## HIRED HOUND

### INTRODUCTION

The cats just love to make music but their neighbours aren't so keen on the noise they make together! So when Butcher the dog is hired to enforce a neighbourly silence, the cats are tricked into signing a contract which forbids them from playing. But there's a loophole, and when Butcher is outwitted, he moves on. And in a satisfying conclusion, Kitty very generously gives her dancing turtle to Stanley, the boy next door, who is pining for his pet dog, Butcher.

### STUDIES OF SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT (SOSE)

#### RULES VERSUS FREEDOM OF SPEECH & ACTION

**DISCUSSION POINT:** 'Freedom of speech is a cat's right' (p 40) Did Butcher really have the right to stop the cats enjoying making music in their own home? Should neighbours be able to enforce 'noise pollution' rules like the contract he tricks King Tubby into signing?

**DISCUSSION POINT:** What 'rules' should a neighbour be able to reasonably expect their neighbours to abide by?

### SCIENCE

#### DOGS

**DISCUSSION POINT:** In *Hired Hound*, Butcher's ability to hear sounds is mentioned several times. Do dogs have acute hearing?

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERACY

Study the writing style employed in this title, and examine the sub-topics under this **Series Topic** below: Narrative Person\* Word Play \* Literary Devices \* Structure\* Setting \* Characters\* Writing Tasks\* Series Writing\* Visual Literacy.

#### COMPREHENSION ACTIVITIES

**Q.** Who is Kitty dancing with when the story begins?

**Answer:** A turtle. (p 7)

**Q.** What instrument did Luna play?

**Answer:** A zither. (p 27)

**Q.** Why is Kitty a loophole in the contract?

**Answer:** "Zero noise is to be produced by the *cats*" (p 45)



# KEY CURRICULUM TOPIC SHEET 4

## BATH TIME

### INTRODUCTION

Kitty seems to have a cold, but when she coughs up a fur ball the cats decide that she needs to take a bath, as humans need to do that in order to keep clean, whereas cats wash themselves. Although cats really don't like water, they all troop into the bathroom, and have a hilarious time together. Kitty has her bath and feels much better, and even the cats agree that bathing can be a whole lot of fun!

### STUDIES OF SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT (SOSE)

#### HUMAN VERSUS ANIMAL CUSTOMS & BEHAVIOUR

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Humans tend to think that their behaviour is superior to or more sophisticated than animal behaviour. But here the cats are horrified by the notion of having a room where washing and toileting are done in the same space. Discuss how cats differ from humans (just as they differ in having such a particular way of washing themselves).

### SCIENCE

#### HYGIENE

**DISCUSSION POINT:** In *Bath Time*, the cats wonder if Kitty has caught a cold and then they discuss the importance of cleaning oneself, which is a very topical subject at present. How important is cleanliness?

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERACY

Study the writing style employed in this title, and examine the sub-topics under this **Series Topic** below: Narrative Person\* Word Play \* Literary Devices \* Structure\* Setting \* Characters\* Writing Tasks\* Series Writing\* Visual Literacy.

#### COMPREHENSION ACTIVITIES

**Q.** How would you describe Spook?

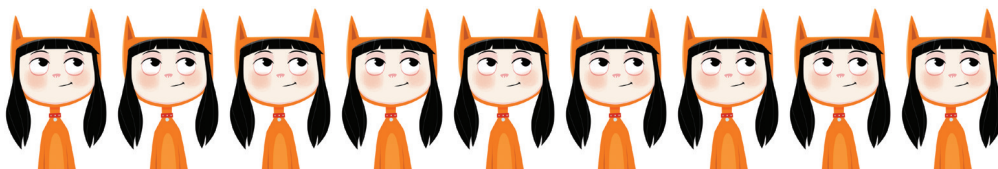
**Answer:** Nervous; "I have a bad feeling about this," said Spook, shaking at the thought of what lay behind [the door]." (p 29)

**Q.** What does Cheeta call dental floss?

**Answer:** String. (p 35)

**Q.** In the illustration, what is Mr Clean doing with the soap?

**Answer:** He is eating it as if it is a snack. (p 35)





# SERIES TOPIC - ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERACY

Study the writing style employed in this **series**, and examine the following sub-topics:

## NARRATIVE PERSON, PERSPECTIVE & TENSE

**ACTIVITY:** These books are written in third person so that no one person's (or cat's) view dominates the narrative despite Kitty being the eponymous 'heroine' of the series. Re-write one incident in first person to discover how differently it might have been told.

## WORD PLAY

**ACTIVITY:** The following are examples of word play in these texts. Invite students to locate other examples:

<i>Lights Out!</i>	'Purr-a-normal Activity,' (p 6).
<b>Metaphors</b>	'Kitty, this teddy is unbearable!' (p 36)
<b>Personification</b>	The title of this book is a play on words. What is the usual expression being referred to here? (Answer: Hired Hand.)
<b>Satire</b>	<p>'Isn't it obvious?' King Tubby was saying. 'The water comes out of this thingumajig, which is connected to this what's-it, and the what's-it is connected to this doodad. So, if my calculations are correct -'</p> <p>As he turned the tap there was a loud CREAK and THUD and WHOOSH! A powerful jet of freezing cold water shot out of the shower. It was so strong it knocked King Tubby off his feet and out of the bath. (pp 39-40)</p>

## LITERARY DEVICES

**ACTIVITY:** Find examples of the use of literary devices in this series of novels, using the table below to identify examples.

<b>Alliteration</b>	eg 'He twisted. He twirled.' ( <i>Teddy's Bear</i> p 23) 'The bear growled.... The bear grimaced.' ( <i>Teddy's Bear</i> p 17)
<b>Simile</b>	
<b>Metaphor</b>	
<b>Other</b>	

Hyphenated words can be used as adjectives to dramatic effect:

<i>Lights Out!</i>	'spine-tingling, hair-raising (p 4 ) nail-biting (p 18)
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**ACTIVITY:** Invite students to come up with their own inventively hyphenated adjectives like these.

**ACTIVITY:** Humour is often forged on misunderstandings or lack of knowledge. Examples of that include:

<i>Lights Out!</i>	'Kitty had a nice, normal, comfortable bed, but she insisted on sleeping in a cardboard box. She felt it was more catlike.' (p 11)
<i>Teddy's Bear</i>	King Tubby wants to give Kitty a teddy bear to play with, in the cooler months ahead, but they don't really know what a teddy bear is!

Identify other examples of humour in these texts. Add quotes to the following table:

<b>Alliteration</b>	
<b>Simile</b>	
<b>Metaphor</b>	
<b>Other</b>	

## STRUCTURE

The structure of the four stories can be analysed in terms of five key narrative features used to engage the reader's attention and to shape a work. The five parts are; exposition; rising action; climax; falling action; catastrophe, denouement, resolution, or revelation. In short, a story consists of establishing a situation, conveying a problem, complications, confronting the problem, and arriving at a resolution. Suspense is necessary to keep the reader interested.

**ACTIVITY:** Examine any of the four titles and how they follow this five-part structure.

**ACTIVITY:** Compare these structural devices to the story Last Chance begins telling in *Lights Out!* (p 29) What is wrong with the story he is telling, and how it is structured? Why does it put everyone to sleep?

## SETTING

**ACTIVITY:** The cats live in a 'rundown old mansion'. Describe the mansion. Draw the mansion. Describe the sounds you might hear in the mansion, for example, music is one of the sounds mentioned a lot in these texts.

## CHARACTERS

<i>Lights Out!</i>	Kitty, The Nazz, Last Chance, King Tubby, Cheeta.
<i>Teddy's Bear</i>	Kitty, The Nazz, Last Chance, King Tubby, Cheeta, Petal, Mr Clean, Timmy Tom and a grizzly bear.
<i>Hired Hound</i>	Kitty, The Nazz, Last Chance, King Tubby, Cheeta, Petal, Mr Clean, Timmy Tom, Spook, Thorn, Luna, Butcher and Stanley.
<i>Bath Time</i>	Kitty, The Nazz, Last Chance, King Tubby, Cheeta, Petal, Mr Clean, Timmy Tom, Spook and Thorn.

**ACTIVITY:** Draw up a character chart for one or more of these characters and find one key quote which gives a clear picture of the nature of that/those characters. Then write a brief character study of the person/cat using the quote to illustrate the points made in your summary.



## WRITING TASKS

**ACTIVITY:** *Lists of things* can be a good way to start a writing exercise. Make a list of all the musical instruments mentioned in the series. Then create a 'noise-making' poem which begins:

The zither ...

The tambourine ...

The drum ...

The keyboard ...

**ACTIVITY:** Write a *diary entry* by King Tubby written in his self-important voice.

**ACTIVITY:** Write a *limerick* based on the series. A limerick is a funny 5-line poetic form with an AABBA rhyme scheme. [See **Bibliography**.]

**ACTIVITY:** In *Teddy's Bear* (pp 20–21) Kitty and the grizzly bear have a series of misadventures which are told using the *cumulative tale structure* of a repeated series of incidents leading to an unexpected result. Invite students to imagine another series of things which they might have tried together and which go slightly (or terribly!) wrong.

## SERIES WRITING

**ACTIVITY:** Watch an episode of the *animated series* and then ask students to review the episode and compare it to the books.

**ACTIVITY:** Write a *story synopsis* for another adventure in this series and give your story summary a two-word title like the ones for the first four titles.

[See also **Worksheets B. and C.** for further writing activities.]

## VISUAL LITERACY

**ACTIVITY:** Draw some of the cats in this series – each is distinctive in appearance and the clothes they wear add to their character. Create a 'gallery' of your drawings to share with your classmates.

**ACTIVITY:** What other famous cats have appeared in picture books or junior novels? For example, watch this video of 'Leigh Hobbs Drawing Old Tom' *ABC Education* 25 February 2016. <https://education.abc.net.au/home#!/media/2248669/drawing-old-tom-with-leigh-hobbs>

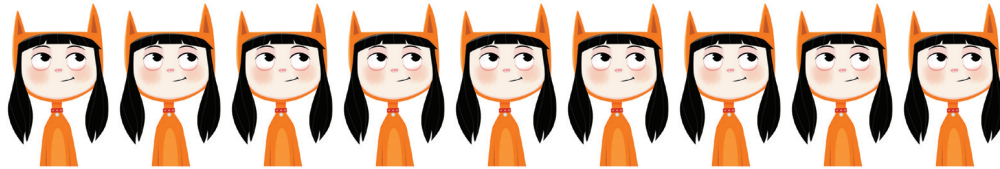
**ACTIVITY:** Other things students might draw are: the sheep in *Light's Out!* or the grizzly bear in *Teddy's Bear*, or Butcher the dog in *Hired Hound*, or the bathroom in *Bath Time*.

**ACTIVITY:** Examine the images in each book and discuss which artistic techniques have been employed, for example, in *Light's Out!*, **silhouettes** are used (pp 14–5, pp 22–25 and pp 46–49).

**ACTIVITY:** Create a comic interpretation of an incident in the series. [See **Worksheet D.**] [See **Bibliography.**]

**ACTIVITY:** Design a new cover for one of the books in the series.

**ACTIVITY:** Create a book trailer for this series. [See **Bibliography.**]



## FURTHER ACTIVITIES

**1. Compare this series to other series featuring distinctive characters like Kitty.** [See **Bibliography.**]

**2. Design a poster to advertise this series.**

**3. Listen to the theme song of the animated series.** 'Kitty Is Not a Cat theme song' *YouTube* November 14, 2018 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MOVdTETqM5U>> Then write words for your own original song about Kitty.

**4. Create a diorama of the mansion,** in which the cats live with Kitty **using cardboard boxes and patterned paper.** Create simple cut out cardboard figures of the cats and furniture to place inside the mansion.

**5. Create a 'Kitty is Not a Cat' Mobile.** [See **Worksheet A.**]

**6. Create a cat mask** using a paper plate, craft paper (for ears, and nose), pipecleaners (for whiskers) and texta pens to draw the mouth and eyes. Use hat elastic to attach the mask to your head.

**7. Create a display of books about cats** in your classroom.

**8. Create some Kitty bookmarks.** [See **Worksheet E.**]

**9. Make cat themed food** to eat at the party below.

**8. Have a *Kitty is Not a Cat* party** – invite all the students to dress as characters from the series. Make sure all the food is 'cat themed' and the room is decorated accordingly.



# CONCLUSION

Follow Kitty and her feline friends as they embark on a series of madcap adventures. Even if she's not actually a cat, Kitty is purr...fectly happy to join her friends in their thoroughly catlike adventures.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Jess Black** is the author of over thirty books for children. She has written the *Mr Walker* series, *Keeper of the Crystal* series, *Little Paws* series and is the co-author of the highly successful *The Kaboom Kid*, *The Bindi Wildlife Adventures* series and the *RSPCA Animal Tales* series.

*The Tales of Mr Walker* was longlisted for the ABIA Awards and the INDIE Awards for 2019 and is a CBCA Notable book for 2019.

*The Keeper of the Crystals* series, *Animal Tales*, *Little Paws* and *Mr Walker* books are on the NSW Premier's Reading Challenge booklist for 2019 for year 3-4.

Jess has written two picture books. *Moon Dance* is a celebration of our native flora and fauna. *The Bold Australian Girl* is a story about an Aboriginal mother and daughter. Mum tells her every night that she can be anything she wants, especially *Bold!*

Jess has worked as a writer and director in children's theatre, a writer and editor in children's television; a book seller and a book buyer.

Jess has two new series coming out this year!

One is a horse series with Scholastic called *Pepper Creek Ponies*. The first book of the series is coming out in July, 2020 and is aimed at readers aged 7+ It's based on her own childhood riding and owning horses in Brisbane.

The second series is an adaptation of the TV show *Kitty is not a Cat*. It's heavily illustrated and aimed at readers aged 6+. First book comes out in August 2020.





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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE NOTES

**Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright** operates *justified text* writing and publishing consultancy services, and is widely published on children's literature, publishing history and Australian fiction. Her publications include *Paper Empires: A History of the Book in Australia 1946–2005* (co-edited with Craig Munro) (UQP, 2006). In 2011 she was recipient of the CBCA (Qld) Dame Annabelle Rankin Award, in 2012, of the CBCA Nan Chauncy Award for Outstanding Services to Children's Literature, and in 2014, the QWC's Johnno Award.





# SERIES WORKSHEETS

## WORKSHEET A. CREATE A 'KITTY IS NOT A CAT' MOBILE

Draw portraits of your favourite characters from the series. Colour them in, glue them to chart paper before cutting them out and attaching them to a metal clothes hanger by fishing line to create a mobile.

## WORKSHEET B. UNSCRAMBLE BOOK TITLES WITH KITTY

Unscramble the well-known book titles featuring cat characters below. (They are all listed in the **Bibliography**, and the authors are also listed as a clue.) Students might then draw their own images of some of them.

1. TLOMOD (2 words) by Leigh Hobbs
2. TSIPUBOSNO (3 words) by Charles Perrault
3. HCTANTITEHEHTA (5 words) by Dr Seuss
4. DHICLYMATXKSIEBSEOTENO (7 words) by Eve Sutton and Lynley Dodd
5. TSLNMISFOCLIOA (3 words) by Wanda Gág
6. CTFHETATA (3 words) by Jack Kent
7. KLSMIYNALNKI (2 words) by Lynley Dodd
8. TCAWL PYOHEATNDHSTEUS (5 words) by Edward Lear
9. TBACMTBTAY (2 words) by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler
10. GEMTHFRTEGELUFO (4 words) by Judith Kerr



**Answers:** 1. Old Tom 2. Puss in Boots 3. The Cat in the Hat 4. Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes 5. Millions of Cats 6. The Fat Cat 7. Slinky Malinki 8. The Owl and the Pussycat 9. Tabby McTat 10. Meg the Forgetful Cat

## WORKSHEET C. QUIZ WITH KITTY

1. What problem does Kitty have in *Light's Out*?
2. In *Light's Out!* what solution does Cheeta offer her to deal with her problem?
3. In *Teddy's Bear*, when the bears are asked to find a teddy bear for Kitty, what does Petal offer her?
4. Who finally gives Kitty an actual teddy bear in *Teddy's Bear*?
5. In *Hired Hound*, what is the name of the hired hound?
6. At the end of *Hired Hound* what does Kitty give away and to whom?
7. In *Bath Time* why do the cats decide Kitty needs a human bath?
8. In *Bath Time* why don't the cats like bathrooms?
9. Where does Kitty sleep?
10. What policy did the cats have before Kitty moved in with them?

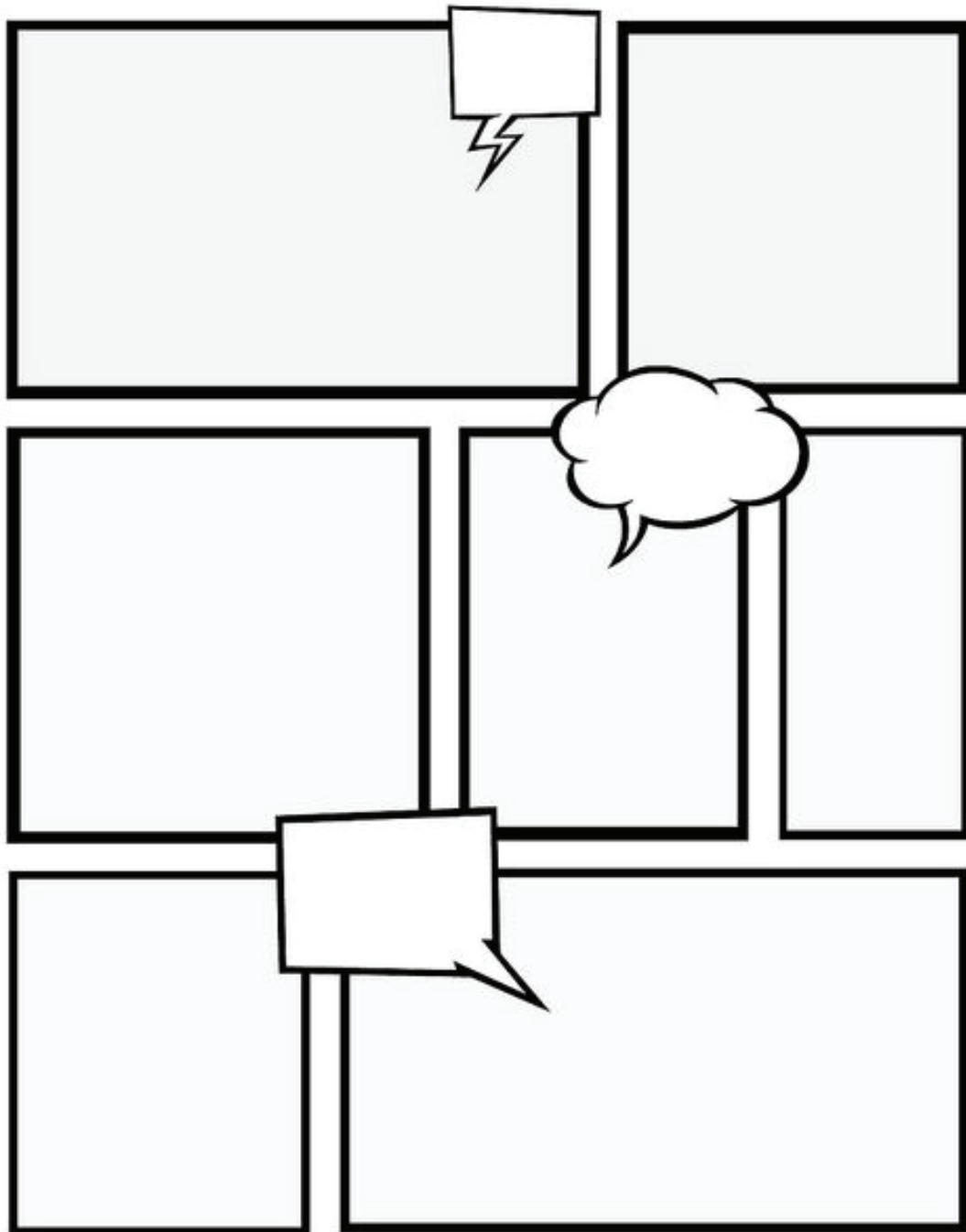


**Answers:** 1. She can't sleep. 2. A sheep (for counting sheep). 3. A packet of teddy-shaped biscuits. 4. Mr Clean. 5. Butcher. 6. A turtle which she gives to Stanley, the neighbours' son. 7. Her cough results in Kitty coughing up 3 fur balls, so they realise that she hasn't learned to wash herself properly. 8. Because cats don't like water. 9. In a cardboard box. 10. NO HUMANS policy.



## WORKSHEET D. CREATE A KITTY COMIC

Create a comic interpretation of one of the scenes in this series of books. Use the layout below as the storyboard for your comic. Enlarge on a photocopier to give you more space.



Comic Book Template viewed at: <http://www.pinterest.com/pin/365706432212821426/>

## WORKSHEET E. CREATE KITTY BOOKMARKS

The six images below are 8 x 5cm. Cut out as rectangles, and glue each of them to the top of a strip of contrasting coloured chart paper which is 16cm x 5cm. Below Kitty's face you can then decorate the rest of the bookmark in any way you wish to.

