

writer and teacher
Marion Dane Bauer

Teaching Guide: *Little Cat's Luck*

Anchor Standard 1

RL.1 Key Ideas and Details—Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

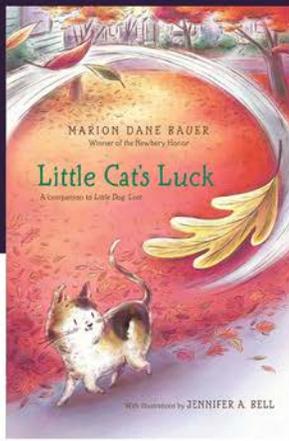
3.RL.1—Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of the text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

4.RL.1—Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

5.RL.1—Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

Tackling Tough Questions (discussion guide)

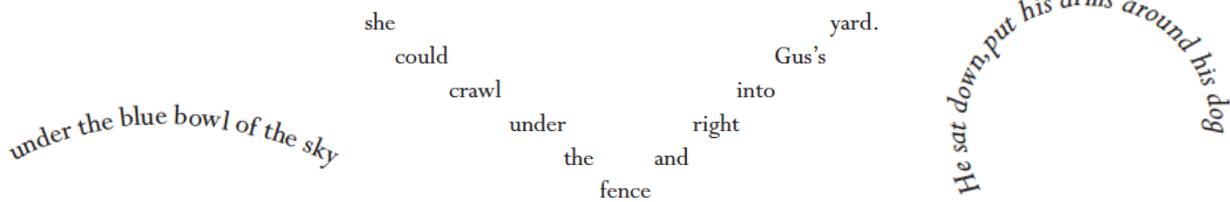
1. How would you describe Patches? Which of her traits reminded you of most cats? Which traits made her different from most cats?
2. *"Some dogs are not meant for inside."* (p. 27) Do you agree with this line from the book? Why or why not?
3. How would the story have been different for Patches if Gus had been an inside dog?
4. *"Who ever heard of the meanest dog in town apologizing?"* (p. 31) Gus thought he might have made a mistake by calling Patches "ugly" but he didn't say anything out loud. Why is he so worried about protecting his "fierce reputation"?
5. Give some of the reasons **why** Gus became the "*meanest dog in town*"?
6. How did Gus feel when Patches asked him to name the first baby kitten? (p. 100)
7. Why did Patches like the smell or "*fragrance*" of Gus? (p. 80)
8. *"Humans have a way of complicating happy endings, especially those of the animal kind."* (p. 200) What did the author mean by this?
9. *"She saw no meanness there, as everyone in town said. It wasn't even selfishness."* (p. 196) What did Patches see in Gus at the end of the story? How did Patches help change Gus?
10. What did the humans learn about their pets in this story?



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Very Visual Verbs (a spin on concrete poetry)

Little Cat's Luck includes writing that is very visual with lines of text that are shaped to show the meaning of the words or sentences:



Think about the words in the lists below and give “concrete” writing a try!

The book trailer for *Little Cat's Luck* shows how text animation can be used to illustrate movement and emotions in text. <http://bit.ly/1HIVi2L>

For more information and tips about concrete poetry, check out <http://bit.ly/1nEUwuo>

Movement down

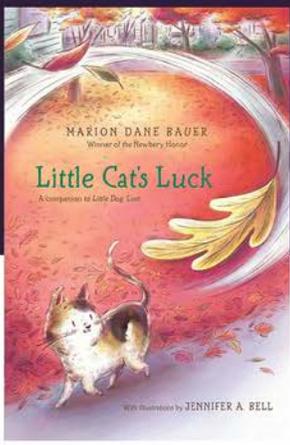
Plummet
 Bounce
 Dive
 Swoop
 Plunge
 Sink
 Droop
 Wilt
 Drip
 Melt

Movement up or over

Jump
 Rise
 Grow
 Blossom
 Spring
 Heap
 Float
 Glide
 Sail
 Across

Movement around

Spin
 Hook
 Twist
 Arch
 Bend
 Curl
 Swerve
 Surrounded
 Encircling
 Scattered



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Anchor Standard 3

RL.3 Key Ideas and Details Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

3.RL.3—Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

4.RL.3—Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g. a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

5.RL.3—Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or drama, drawing on specific details in a text (e.g., how characters interact.)

What's Luck Got to Do With It? (Create a Venn diagram.)

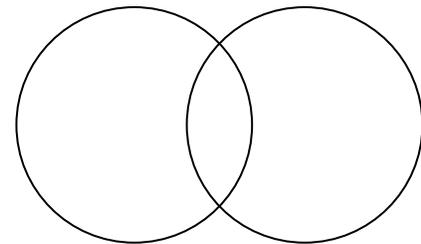
Use the online, interactive Venn diagram tool <http://bit.ly/1JWNn3e> to describe and analyze *Little Cat's Luck*. Consider using the following Venn diagram options:

Circle #1

Patches
Patches' Humans (owners)
Patches
Gus
Gus at beginning of story

Circle #2

Gus
Gus' Humans (owners)
Real Cat
Real Bully
Gus at end of story



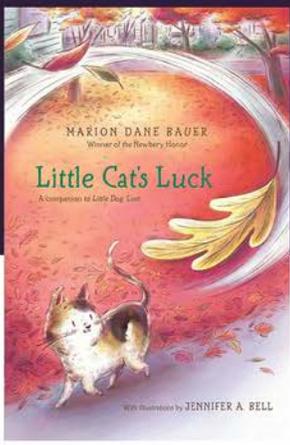
Next, read *Little Dog Lost*, also by Marion Dane Bauer. "Wholly satisfying ... a perfect selection for pet lovers new to chapter books and anyone who just enjoys a cheerful dog story." —*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review. Then consider how these two stories in verse are similar and different!

Circle #1

Patches
Patches' Town
Patches' problems
Patches' Human

Circle #2

Buddy
Buddy's Town
Buddy's problems
Buddy's Human



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**A Matter of Manners (the significance of the word "please" in the story)
 (Social Emotional Behavior)**

Think about how the word "please" affected the characters in *Little Cat's Luck*.

Complete the chart showing details about each incident.

Page	Character who is saying "Please"	Character being spoken to	Result of "please" being said
54			
58			
88			
130			
195			

On page 54:

"Please!" whispered the mouseling.

On page 58:

"Please!" said Patches, remembering how she seemed to have no choice but to do what the mouseling asked when he'd said, "Please."

On page 88:

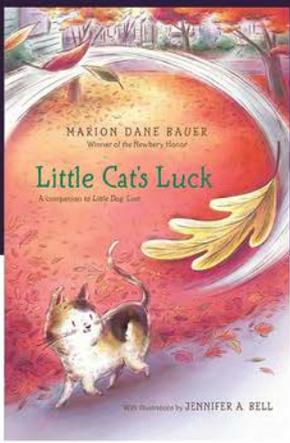
"Please!" the voice said. "Can someone come?" Gus rather liked that word ... please. He couldn't remember when anyone had ever said "Please!" to him. They said, "NO!" They said, "SIT!" And "STAY" Even "SHUT UP!" But never "Please!"

On page 130:

"It's all right, Mama. If you only say 'please,' this cat won't eat you." His mother wasn't so sure about the power of please, even though she had faithfully taught her children to say it.

On page 195:

"Please," he said, very politely. "Don't eat me!"



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There's No Place Like Home ... or Is There? (descriptive writing activity)

"The problem with searching for a special place without knowing where such a place might be – or even what it might look like should you find it – is that the search can take a great deal of time."

Imagine you were searching for your special place. Visualize using your five senses.

- ▶ What would it look like?
- ▶ What would it smell like?
- ▶ What would it feel like?
- ▶ Where would it be?
- ▶ How would you know it is your special place?

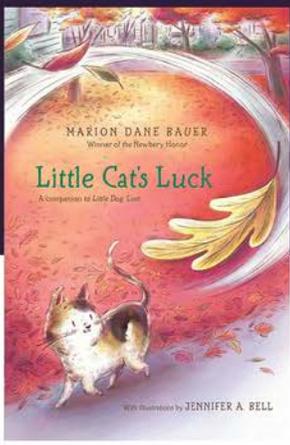
Write a descriptive paragraph, including lots of details about your special place.

Teacher tips for effective instruction on descriptive writing can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1nJVB41>

You might also consider using these books: for older writers, *What's Your Story? A Young Person's Guide to Writing Fiction* by Marion Dane Bauer; for younger writers, *You Can Write a Story!* by Lisa Bullard.



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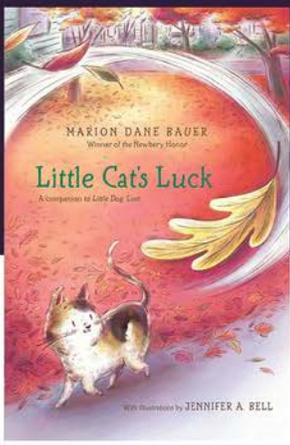
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Life Lessons from Little Cat's Luck

Do you agree or disagree with these statements? Share your thinking.

Quote from <i>Little Cat's Luck</i>	Agree or Disagree?	Reasons why you feel as you do...
<i>"Cats, as you may have noticed, are not much inclined to take responsibility for their own mistakes." (p. 52)</i>		
<i>"How much gentler our world could be if we only knew how to listen to one another." (p. 191-192)</i>		
<i>"You see, the main ingredient for happiness – for dogs as well as for us humans – is having someone to love." (p. 116)</i>		
<i>"But while being a mother can make a creature fierce, it can also make her wise." (p. 159)</i>		

Now that the story is over, look back and list all of the times that Patches was lucky and all the times she had a good attitude. Did the story turn out the way it did because of luck or attitude?



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Vocabulary

Chapters 1–5

calico
chipped
slathered
chirred
pounce
haunches
prowl
scatter
endeavor
obedient
gulping
careening
blaring

Chapters 6-10

invading
flabbergasted
glimpse
quavered
captive
mere
inclined
specialties
nibbles
solemn

Chapters 11-15

gulp
obstacle
encountered
confine
emerged
fragrance
contented
clenching
lumbered
thrust
minuscule
murmured

Chapters 16-24

commotion
faithful
lingering
startled
sampling
herds
reuniting
proposed
pelted
recall
stoop
released
wailed
drifted
enormous

Chapters 25-32

slash
retracted
banished
fond
narrowed
ignored
courageous
wept
lack
ceased
shattered
uneasy
accustomed
soothing
hostage
mesh
locate