

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.

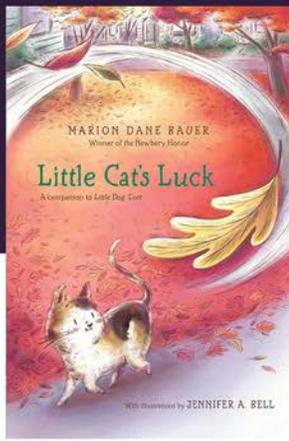
3.RL.1 – Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of the text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

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)

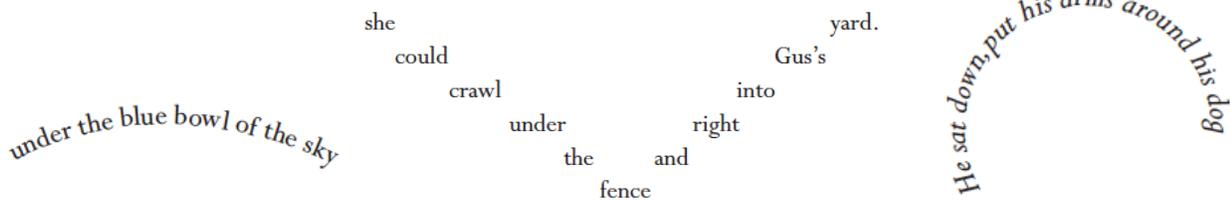
1. How would you describe Patches? Which of her traits reminded you of most cats? Which traits made her different from most cats?
2. *“Some dogs are not meant for inside.”* (p. 27) Do you agree with this line from the book? Why or why not?
3. How would the story have been different for Patches if Gus 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

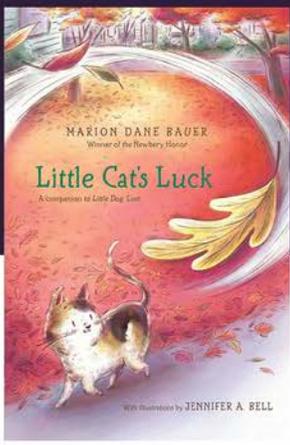
Plummet  
 Bounce  
 Dive  
 Swoop  
 Plunge  
 Sink  
 Droop  
 Wilt  
 Drip  
 Melt

#### 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.)

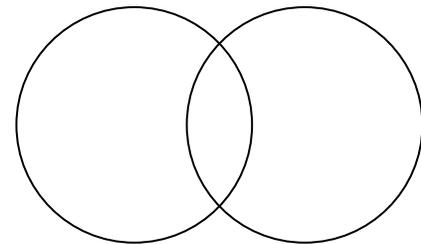
Use the online, interactive Venn diagram tool <http://bit.ly/1JWNn3e> to describe and analyze *Little Cat's Luck*. Consider using the following Venn diagram options:

#### 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



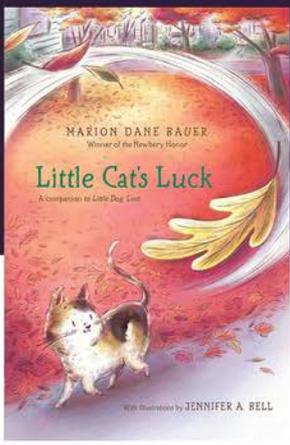
Next, read *Little Dog Lost*, also by Marion Dane Bauer. "Wholly satisfying ... a perfect selection for pet lovers new to chapter books and anyone who just enjoys a cheerful dog story." *-Kirkus Reviews*, starred review. Then consider how these two stories in verse are similar and different!

#### 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:**

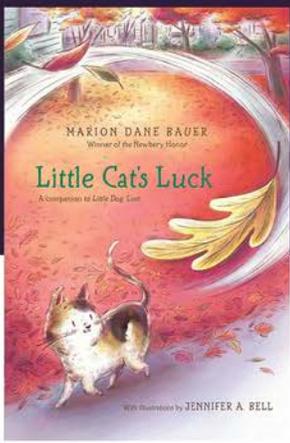
"Please!" the voice said. "Can someone come?" Gus rather liked that word ... please. He couldn't remember when anyone had ever said "Please!" to him. They said, "NO!" They said, "SIT!" And "STAY" Even "SHUT UP!" But never "Please!"

**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?

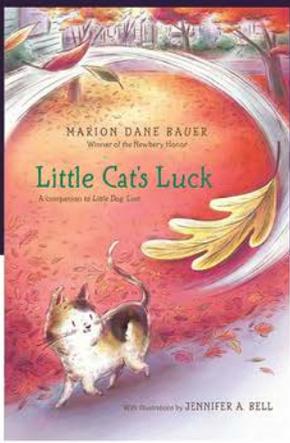
Write a descriptive paragraph, including lots of details about your special place.

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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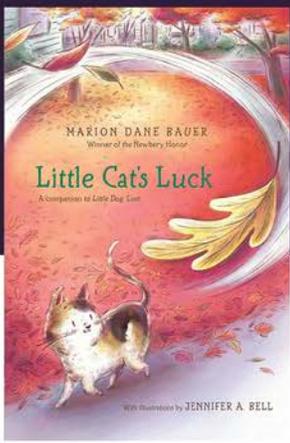
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### Life Lessons from Little Cat's Luck

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