

# A-Rhyme-A-Week: Classroom Instruction

## There Once Were Two Cats of Kilkenny

### Monday

1. Place 2 of the children's favorite rhymes on the chalkboard, and review them with the children. Tell them that we will be learning a new rhyme.
2. "There Once Were 2 Cats" seems to be a relatively recent addition to the Mother Goose compendium, appearing in volumes written in the 1900's. Still, it's a rhyme that appeals to children's sense of silliness and can be connected to the Cheshire cat who also does a disappearing act.
3. Introduce the "There Once Were 2 Cats" poster to the children. Begin as we usually do, having the children look first at the picture. Ask the children to tell you what they think is happening in this picture [the cats are circling each other]. Explain that this is what cats do when they are going to fight. Then have them look at the bottom. Explain that this is a cat's tail. We'll read this rhyme to find out what has happened to the rest of the cats. **Be sure to run your fingers under the words as you read them.**
4. Explain the rhyme to the children. Ask them if they think that cats could disappear while they are fighting. Then, chant "There Once Were 2 Cats" again, running your fingers under the words as you sing or chant. Work with the children to teach them the rhyme, encouraging them to join in. Keep in mind that this is rather a long rhyme; many children will not be able to commit this to memory quickly, but they will be able to join in.
5. This Monday, we are continuing our follow-up activity. At the end of this file, you will find word cards that feature the "it" rhyme -- *bit* and *fit*. Cut out the cards. First, show the children the word *bit*. Then, match the word card to the word in the nursery rhyme. Repeat this process with *fit*.
6. Next, hand one child the word card for *bit*. Then, cut the *b* off of *bit*; hand the *b* to one child and the *it* to another child. Repeat this process, cutting the *f* off of *fit*. You should now have four children standing. First, put the two who are holding the *it* pieces near each other, and ask the children if they notice anything special about these two cards. (They have the same letters). Explain that these letters make the *it* sound that we heard in our nursery rhyme. Then, have the child holding the "b" piece stand near one; read the word for the children. Repeat this with the "b". Discuss how, since the two "it" cards are the same, we can make the words by putting the "b" or the "b" in front of any of them. Then, collect the pieces from the children.
7. Finish your lesson by returning to "There Once Were 2 Cats". Distribute the hole-punched copies of the rhyming card for "There Once Were 2 Cats" to be placed in children's **My Very Own Nursery Rhyme Collection** folders at home.

## Tuesday

1. Begin by putting the "There Once Were 2 Cats" poster back on the blackboard, and chant the rhyme.
2. Remind the children that Tuesday is "acting" day. You will only need 2 children for each performance; each is one of the cats. Begin by explaining to the children that when actors fight in the movies, they never really touch each other. Have all children practice fighting and biting carefully. The performance begins with the two "cats" in the center of the playing area. They begin by circling each other, and then perform that actor-style fighting. Before the last line is chanted, both "cats" return to their places. When the last line is said, "There weren't any", all the children point to the center of the circle and then shrug their shoulders.
3. Because the rhyme is rather long, the chanting for "There Once Were 2 Cats" is best done as a group, until the last line is reached. Here, once the rhyme has been recited a few times, you can have individual children supply "There weren't any." As we have been doing, tape record the children's choral performances of the nursery rhyme for use in your classroom listening center. Be sure that you have a copy of the nursery rhyme to keep with the tape.
4. You might like to continue having children stand for each word of the rhyme. You can have each child stand, and if you run out of children, you can have the standing children sit (one at a time) as you all continue speaking a word at a time of the nursery rhyme. Remember that an activity like this helps children understand that words can be separated (segmented) from a stream of speech.
5. Special words in this week's chanting are *Kilkenny*, *excepting*, (these have 3 syllables) and *many*, *any*, *instead* - these have 2 syllables. Remember that you can demonstrate that although the word has 2 syllables (demonstrate with two claps) or 3 syllables (demonstrate with 3 claps), it is only one word.
6. Finish this lesson with your cloze activity. Use the following lines in particular:  
They fought and they fit  
And they scratched and they \_\_\_\_.

## Wednesday

1. Begin by putting the "There Once Were 2 Cats" poster on the blackboard, then run your fingers under the words as you chant the rhyme. Repeat the cloze activity from Tuesday, having children fill in the missing words.
2. Remind the children that **bit** and **fit** rhyme, and that we are going to learn some other words that rhyme. Introduce these pictures from the picture card set: **bit**, **fit**, **flit**, **hit**, **knit**, **mitt**, **sit**, **skit**, and **split**. (There are other pictures you may include as well.) Be sure to explain to the children what the word and picture mean. Some words, such as *flit* may be new for the children. As usual, take the time to talk about the pictures, relating them to what your children have seen and know. Always remember, **if there is a picture that you feel is unsuitable for your particular classroom**, you can eliminate this picture from the set.
3. Many of these words can be pantomimed or acted out. For instance, you can ask the children to "flit" around the room or to try to do a "split".
4. Remind children we have been sorting by rhyming sounds. This week, we'll be contrasting **it** with **ide**. Use the following pictures: **bit**, **hit**, **knit**, **sit**, and **ride**, **bride**, **glide**, **guide**. Call the children's attention to the words "bit" in the nursery rhyme poster. Then, tape the picture for **bit** at the top of one column and the picture for **ride** at the top of the other. Place all other pictures in the chalk tray, saying each one's name.
5. Remind the children that when words end the same we say that they **rhyme**.
6. Call children one at a time to take a picture and decide if it ends the **same** as **bit** or **ride**. Keep in mind that some children are still working to hear and understand "rhyming" and "same-ness". If a child is hesitant, go ahead and support him or her with the task.
7. Finish today's lesson by chanting "There Once Were 2 Cats". You may choose to chant it as the "standing up" version we used yesterday, with the children in a circle, standing one at a time for each word of the rhyme.

## Thursday

1. Select 5 or 6 of the downloadable riddle cards that you think are best suited for your students.
2. Begin by putting the "There Once Were 2 Cats" poster back on the blackboard. Ask children to chant the rhyme, allowing 2 or 3 at a time to chant or sing the rhyme for the class.
3. Set the pictures from the picture card set on the chalk tray. Tell the children that today we will be guessing the answers to some riddles. The answer to the riddle will be one of the pictures we looked at yesterday.
4. Put the riddle cards on the board one at a time. Read the riddle, then help your students decide which picture best answers the riddle. Tape the picture at the bottom of the riddle card. You read the riddle, letting the children fill in the missing word, completing the rhyme by saying the name of the picture.
5. Finish the lesson with the cloze activity you did on Tuesday, having the children supply the missing word at the end of each line of the rhyme.

## Friday

1. Remind the children of the various activities you've done this week, and tell them that this is **Children's Choice** day. Display 3 different rhyme posters -- **There Once Were 2 Cats**, **If Wishes Were Horses**, and **An Apple Pie**. We are continuing with the *individual* or *small group* performance option on **Children's Choice** day, when children who are ready to recite a rhyme alone or with a friend can add their name(s) to the Choice list. Because being able to recite the rhymes will ultimately help children with their understandings of "text", we hope that, by the end of the year, all children will be able to successfully recite four to five of the rhymes we are learning. There will also be children who can chant many more than five rhymes! Continue encouraging those children who have never volunteered to consider reciting with someone who has volunteered several times. Let the children decide which rhymes they would like to act out, to chant, to sort pictures for, or to do the riddle rhymes for.
2. Record the children's choices on the board using the written list as the order to follow. Then complete the activities. Crossing them out as you complete them will give children a chance to think of how we use print to remind us of things.
3. We are continuing to sing the alphabet song every Friday. Place your alphabet card (see *Dr. Seuss's ABC* in the **A-Book-A-Week** section) on the board, encouraging children to point to the letters as they sing the alphabet song.
4. Finish by chanting "There Once Were 2 Cats" All children may pretend to be either of the fighting cats. Again remind them of the safety that actors practice.
5. Remind children to look at their **My Very Own Nursery Rhyme Collections** with their families over the weekend.

fit  
bit