

THE CAT WHO WENT TO HEAVEN

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READING RIGHT

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SYNOPSIS

A poor Japanese artist's new cat, named *Good Fortune*, seems to be bringing the artist good luck. He is commissioned to paint a scroll of the death of Buddha, and spends many days preparing and painting.

Good Fortune looks on as the painting unfolds, and seems to become sadder as each new creature is added. The artist finally decides to paint a cat in the picture even though he knows he may lose his commission, since cats were forbidden to enter paradise. His love for the animal that had been a friend to him is more important than the money. In the end, *Good Fortune* still brings him good luck when a miracle occurs which causes the priests to change their minds and accept the painting with the cat in it.

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Lesson 1

Sections 1-2

1. Where is the setting of the story?
 - A. China
 - B. Japan
 - C. Hong Kong

2. What does the artist think makes the cat lucky?

3. Who is Buddha?
 - A. A holy man of India
 - B. The head of the temple
 - C. An old statue

4. What does "dexterity" mean?
("Good Fortune... began to wash herself with the greatest thoroughness and dexterity.")

5. Circle the event, which happened first.

The artist sells his last vase
The priest hires the artist

6. Why would creating a painting for the temple be so important to the artist?

7. Why does the artist think the cat might have had something to do with his good luck?

8. Do you think that the priests will like the painting and the artist will become famous? Explain your answer.

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Lesson 2

Section 3

1. Compare the poem *The Second Song of the Housekeeper* to *The Third Song of the Housekeeper*. What is different about their rhyming patterns?
2. What did the artist do first before he began his painting?
 - A. Went out to buy art supplies
 - B. Ate a large meal
 - C. Spent three days trying to understand Buddha
3. How long did the artist sleep after he was done thinking about the Buddha?
4. What does "renunciation" mean?
(*"Today he reflected upon the renunciation of Siddhartha."*)
5. What three characteristics does the artist say the painting of Buddha must have?

6. If you were a famous artist what would you do before you started a painting of someone?

7. What does the artist mean when he says, "...the cat has the doors of Paradise closed in her face?"

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Lesson 3

Section 4

1. Why did the artist draw the snail first?
 - A. He wanted to start with one of the easier animals first.
 - B. Snails are very important in Japanese tradition.
 - C. The snail was the first creature to sacrifice himself for Buddha.

2. What does the artist do each time he finishes painting an animal?

3. On what type of surface or material is the artist painting?
 - A. Canvas
 - B. Silk
 - C. Wall

4. What does "contemplation" mean?
("She found her master lost in contemplation...")

5. Put the following animals in the correct order that the artist painted them.

_____Elephant
_____Snail
_____Horse

6. Do you think the cat, *Good Fortune*, will be good or bad luck to the artist? Explain your answer.

7. If you could be any animal, what would you be? Explain your answer.

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Lesson 4

Section 5-6

1. The author says, "Suddenly he heard the hiss of an arrow...". For which physical sense is that written?
 - A. Hearing
 - B. Seeing
 - C. Tasting

2. What colors do the Japanese wear for mourning (to show sadness)?
 - A. Blue
 - B. White
 - C. Black

3. Does the housekeeper think the cat could be related to goblins?

4. Put the following in the correct order.

_____ The dog saved his owner
_____ The artist has tea with a neighbor
_____ The deer is drawn
_____ The artist drawing the swan

5. What does "fortitude" mean?
("Let us meet this with fortitude and let a lot be drawn.")

6. What is the story of the water buffalo supposed to teach us?
 - A. Betting is a good way to make a fortune
 - B. You can get more from kindness than meanness
 - C. There are a few rare animals that can talk

7. The cat admired and liked the first drawings; how does she feel about the paintings done in this section?

6. Why do you think the artist painted a cat in the picture even though he knew it would be considered wrong?

7. Tell which of the characters, person or animal, you are most like. Explain your answer.

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Answer Key

Lesson 1

1. B
2. The cat is considered lucky due to the fact that it is a three-colored cat.
3. A
4. Dexterity means ease and skill in using the hands and other parts of the body.
5. The artist selling his last vase should be circled.
6. By making a painting for the temple the artist would become better known and respected. What the priests liked became fashionable for the townspeople; therefore if the priests liked his paintings, the townspeople would also start to buy his paintings.
7. The artist thinks the cat might have had something to do with his good luck because the cat often seemed to be praying to Buddha.
8. Answers will vary.

*The word apparition, which means ghost or phantom, is found frequently in this story and should be discussed.

Lesson 2

1. The first poem rhymes the last word of every other line and the second poem rhymes the first two lines, then the next two and so on through the poem.
2. C

3. The artist slept for twenty-four hours.
4. Renunciation means to give up something.
5. The three characteristics the artist wants to paint are:
 - A. The look of one gently brought up and unquestioningly obeyed
 - B. The look of one who has sacrificed himself greatly'
 - C. The look of one who has found peace and given it to others
6. Answers will vary.
7. The author meant that the cat couldn't go to heaven.

Lesson 3

1. C
2. Each time the artist finishes a section of the painting he stops to think about what he will paint next.
3. B
4. Contemplation means looking at or thinking about something long and seriously.
5. The correct order is: 2,1,3.
6. Answers will vary.
7. Answers will vary.

Lesson 4

1. A
2. B

3. The housekeeper does not believe the cat could be related to goblins. See "The Fifth Song of the Housekeeper" page 38.
4. The correct order is: 1,3,4,2.
5. Fortitude means courage or firmness in meeting pain, danger, or trouble.
6. B
7. In this section of the book the cat has become dissatisfied with the artist's work and seems to be sad.

Lesson 5

1. A
2. When Good Fortune saw the cat in the painting she "fell dead too happy to live another minute".
3. During the night, the cat that was by the animals in the painting disappeared and was found being blessed by Buddha.
4. Consorts means to keep with someone or something.
5. A
6. Answers may vary but the artist realized what a good friend the cat had been to him and he wanted to do something for the cat.
7. Answers will vary.