

The Cats of Tanglewood Forest by Charles De Lint & illustrated by Charles Vess

COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS—SIXTH GRADE FOCUS

Every book can meet most if not all Common Core State Standards. However, we have found that some books address certain standards with particular strength. These activities seek to make the connections between a given text and the Common Core College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards—leaning on this text’s literary strengths. Teachers can find specific ELA standards for their grade within each Anchor Standard at corestandards.org.

RL.5.2 and RL.5.5

Lillian, the main character of *The Cats of Tanglewood Forest*, encounters several unique characters on her quest to bring her aunt back to life. Provide students with a story map where they can keep track of the elements of the story: characters, setting, major events, and theme. After reading the story, have students use their story maps to write a summary of the book. The summary should include characters, settings, important events, the theme, and author’s style.

RL.5.4

The author uses rich vocabulary throughout the story. Students should keep track of new words on sticky notes or in notebooks. Ask students to try to define the new words based on the context clues in the text then use print or online dictionaries to check the meanings. After determining the definitions, students will share the words they collected in small groups or keep track on a word wall in the classroom.

Examples of vocabulary words:

uninhabitable (p.1)

trivial (p.63)

premonition (p.129)

cantankerous (p.139)

haphazard (p.159)

whimsical (p.166)

voracious (p.174)

skulking (p.192)

wily (p.232)

discordant (p.235)

RL.5.2

This reading standard asks students to identify the theme of a story and how characters “respond to challenges” in the story. Lillian faces many challenges and obstacles throughout her journey. On page 153, Lillian reflects on her situation: “...her life wasn’t a fairy tale. It was a sad mess and there wasn’t anything magical about it.” Do you agree with Lillian’s thoughts about her life? Why or why not?

On page 170, Lillian tells Mother Maman (the bear woman), “But being from someplace else doesn’t mean you’re bad.” Identify other passages or quotes from the story that illustrate the story’s theme. What are ways that Lillian responds to challenges and difficult situations?

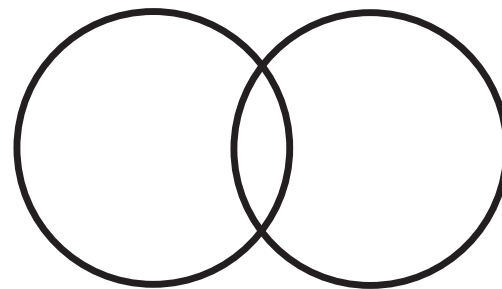


RL.5.3

Literature standard 5.3 asks students to compare and contrast characters, settings or events in the story. Have students compare and contrast Old Mother Possum and the Apple Tree Man using specific details and examples from the text. Be sure to have students describe how the characters interact with Lillian.

Old Mother Possum

Apple Tree Man



RL.5.9

In this reading standard, readers are asked to compare and contrast stories from the same genre. *The Cats of Tanglewood Forest* incorporates elements of fairy tales, fables, and Native American folktales. Read several fables such as “The Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing,” “The Lion and the Mouse,” and “The Dancing Monkeys.” Students should determine the lessons or morals from the fables. This can be done through small group discussions. How do the morals compare with the lessons in *The Cats of Tanglewood Forest*?

Compare and contrast a fairy tale with *The Cats of Tanglewood Forest*. The teacher may read aloud the fairy tale to the class or ask students to independently read fairy tales of their choice. Create concept maps to illustrate the similarities and differences between the fairy tale and *The Cats of Tanglewood Forest*.

Possible fairy tales: *The Nightingale*, *Snow White*, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *The Tinderbox*, and *The Goose Girl*

RL.5.7

The book includes many beautiful watercolor illustrations by Charles Vess. Ask students to explain how the illustrations “contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of the text.” Do the illustrations fit the genre and the plot? Why or why not? How do the illustrations in the book help readers better understand the story and characters?

W.5.3

This writing standard focuses on writing narratives based on “real or imagined experiences.” Have students create a new character for the story and write a scene that includes a description of the new character. How would the new character interact with Lillian?

RF.5.4.

Passages to read aloud for fluency practice

P. 8–10	Practice using phrasing to read smoothly and fluently.
P. 70–73	Focus on reading the dialogue with expression.
P. 145–149	Practice reading fluently and with expression. Pay attention to words that should be emphasized and focus on phrasing.
P. 232–235	Read fluently with expression and “self-correct word recognition” while reading.