**KING OF THE CATS**

By Paul Galdone  
Themes: Mystery/Halloween  
Grade Level: K-2  
Running Time: 5 minutes, iconographic

**SUMMARY**

*KING OF THE CATS* is the story of a gravedigger who returns home to his wife and cat with a story that is beyond belief. The gravedigger informs his wife that a group of cats was marching along and carrying a coffin toward him as he worked beside one of the graves. Finally, when the cats approached him, the message given to him by the leader of the cats was, “Tell Tom Tildrum that Tim Toldrum’s dead.” Well, this threw the gravedigger into a tizzy. How, he asked his wife, was he to tell this to Tom Tildrum when he didn’t even know who Tom Tildrum was!

At the very moment that the gravedigger says these words, his own black cat shrieked out, “What—old Tim dead! Then I, Tom Tildrum, am King of the Cats!” This provided the answer to the gravedigger’s question regarding who Tom Tildrum might be! This mysterious breath-holder ends with the cat rushing up the chimney, never to be seen again by the gravedigger and his wife.

**OBJECTIVES**

- Children will enjoy a suspense-filled mystery story.  
- Children will learn about the way sounds and body language contribute to the eerie, suspenseful feeling of a mystery story.  

**BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES**

- Share the book, *KING OF THE CATS*, with children. Talk with children about scary stories they may have heard, read or seen.  
- Ask:  
  - What made the story scary?  
  - When did the story take place?  
  - How did you feel while you were listening to the story?  
  - How did you feel at the end of the story?  
  - What did the people in the story do or say that made you feel frightened?  
  - How did the people look when they said these things?  
- Provide a piece of black construction paper and white chalk for each child. Have children use the materials to create night scenes. Later, as children share their drawings, ask:  
  - How does it feel to be outdoors at night?  
  - What do you like most/least about it?

**AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES**

- Have children tell their own mystery stories into a tape recorder. Before beginning, review with children the elements of King of the Cats that contributed to making the story mysterious and exciting. When all the stories have been recorded, turn off the classroom light, pull the blinds and let children enjoy the suspenseful stories created by their own classmates!  
- Give children an opportunity to write or dictate their own follow-up story to *KING OF THE CATS*. Ask:  
  - Where do you think the gravedigger’s cat went when he discovered that he was now king of the cats?  
  - What kinds of things would he do as king of the cats?  
- Later, allow children to add drawings to their stories and display them on a classroom wall or bulletin board. Talk with children about the ways the sounds and voices in the video contributed to its eerie effect. Encourage children to try to recall the sounds that made them sit up in their seats or feel a bit frightened as they watched. Then play a variety of recordings for children, some eerie, others light and happy. As children listen, encourage them to discuss how the music makes them feel.

Other videos about scary stories available from Weston Woods include:

- **A Dark, Dark Tale** by Ruth Brown  
- **Georgie** by Robert Bright  
- **Teeny-Tiny and the Witch-Woman** by Barbara Walker, ill. by Michael Foreman  
- **The Three Robbers** by Tomi Ungerer  
- **The Trip** by Ezra Jack Keats  
- **What’s Under My Bed?** by James Stevenson  
- **Where The Wild Things Are** by Maurice Sendak

**CALL 1-800-243-5020 TO ORDER THESE AND OTHER WESTON WOODS VIDEOS!**

This guide may be photocopied for free distribution without restriction.