



The Fire Cat

Esther Averill

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Pickles the fire cat to the rescue!

Pickles is a young cat with big paws who wishes to do big things with them! When he's adopted by the local firehouse, Pickles works hard to be a good fire cat. He learns to jump on a fire truck. He learns to help put out a fire, and he even helps out in a rescue.

Beginning readers will cheer as Pickles gets his wish and finds something big to do with his paws. With sweet illustrations from author-illustrator Esther Averill, this Level One I Can Read book is perfect for children learning to sound out words and sentences.

The Fire Cat Details

Date : Published September 7th 1983 by HarperCollins (first published 1960)

ISBN : 9780064440387

Author : Esther Averill

Format : Paperback 64 pages

Genre : Childrens, Picture Books

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From Reader Review The Fire Cat for online ebook

Abigail says

Pickles was well on his way to life as a feline delinquent. A cat with big paws and a longing to do big things, the boredom of his aimless, friendless existence as a street-cat had turned him into a bully. Luckily, his neighbor Mrs. Goodkind wasn't ready to give up on him. She understood that he wasn't a good cat OR a bad cat, but a good AND bad cat, and that what he needed was a sense of purpose. Then one fateful day, when Pickles found himself stuck in a tree, the local fire department appeared on the scene...

Esther Averill's The Fire Cat was one of my childhood favorites, and I must have read and re-read it a hundred times. Like all great children's books, it functions on more than one level. As a straight-forward narrative about a homeless cat who finds a home and family, it is an engaging and heart-warming story, with all the appeal of the classic "orphan" tale. As a teaching tool, Averill's simple story manages to offer a keenly observed social commentary, all without ever descending into any sort of didactic display. The young reader will absorb the idea that sometimes poor behavior (such as bullying) is the result of poor circumstances, rather than "simple" malice, and that there are more creative (and effective) solutions than condemnation.

I am always amazed at the great skill and discipline required to create a successful picture book or early reader. The truly great children's authors somehow manage to write stories that are emotionally involving and intellectually stimulating, all with a limited word choice that would stymie an author of adult fiction. Not a word is out of place in such books, whose simplicity can be deceptive...

Finally, as a side note, I have discovered that Esther Averill wrote an entire series of books about the neighborhood cats depicted in this title, none of which were known to me as a child. I can hardly wait to dive in!

August Maclauchlan says

My 4 year old loved this book. At the end of the book we looked at each other with tears in our eyes!:) awesome book!

Donna Crane says

Many level one readers are awkward for read-alouds but not The Fire Cat! With its engaging text superbly supported by simple but effective illustrations this title works for both early readers and younger children too. Why would a yellow and black spotted cat make trouble and chase other cats? Because he hasn't yet found his life's work! Pickles is a stray who needs to have his prodigious gifts channeled into meaningful activity. Mrs. Goodkind recognizes his potential and arranges for him to be adopted by the local firehouse. Next thing you know, Pickles is a model cat-citizen. Within a limited color palette and using expressionistic perspective, author and illustrator Esther Averill tells the story of a cat who is both bad and good and for whom readers can cheer as he takes charge of his destiny.

Meredith says

Is there a way to give a book more than 5 stars? Because I love this book more than 5 stars worth. I read it constantly as a child, and it's still fun today. Oh, Pickles. What a good cat you are!

Laura says

This book made me cry as I was reading it in the bookstore. Then I showed it to my therapist and it made him cry. (In all fairness, he's pretty easy. But still.) It's about a cat who turns his life around by doing good works. I'm serious. Listen, just read it, ok?

Kathryn says

I absolutely love this story! From the first few words--so simple, yet placed together in such a tender and descriptive way--I was a goner! Nevermind that the illustrations are also so simple, yet so full of character--I want to adopt our spunky spotted cat with the big paws and even bigger dreams. All the characters are great, Mrs. Goodkind and the firemen and The Chief. What a lovely story about the joys of finding one's purpose in the world--and how a lack of fulfillment can make one grumpy and unkind to others! It's no surprise this tale has been around since 1960. I can't say enough good things about it--so, especially if you are a cat-lover, read it!!! :-)

Hilary says

Whilst waiting for my daughter's ballet class to finish I found this 1960's copy in a charity shop for a £1, very happy moment. I sat in the car and read it from cover to cover and as soon as my daughter got into the car she did the same. Considering how ancient this book is the story is very sensitive and forward thinking. Pickles is a cat living rough, he is bored and has no purpose and chases small cats up trees. Mrs Goodkind can see that Pickles needs a home and a purpose in life. After a failed attempt at living with Mrs Goodkind and her timid kitties, Pickles finds his true vocation in life and earns the respect of those around him. The illustrations are absolutely lovely, not all slick and polished but have a really good feeling of the era and have spontaneity. Beautiful colour scheme of orange, yellow, pink, and olive green. Would highly recommend to those who love simple stories and vintage illustrations. We will be definitely looking out for the rest of the series.

Becky says

I enjoyed revisiting The Fire Cat by Esther Averill. I read this one many times as a child. But I had no idea it was part of a larger series of books, the Cat Club series by Esther Averill. The Fire Cat does not star Jenny Linsky. It stars Pickles. Pickles has been a delightful character in almost all of the other books in the series. He is probably one of Jenny's best best friends. In the Fire Cat, readers learn more about Pickles. Was he always a fire cat? Of course not! There was a time he was a hopeless cat that was a little bit bad and a little

bit good. One of the firemen takes an interest in him and takes him to the fire station. He is hoping that the chief will allow Pickles to stay. Pickles most definitely wants to stay. He wants to prove himself worthy, so he decides to learn by example. He learns to slide down the pole, for example, he learns how to work a hose. The fire chief is definitely charmed, I imagine cat-loving readers are just as charmed. I certainly was! The Fire Cat is a feel-good read. Readers see Pickles transform from a slightly-naughty homeless cat to a brave and dutiful fire cat. He learns responsibility and compassion. Overall, it's just a good story.

Adrienne says

PICKLES, THE FIRE CAT

A Review

This book was originally published in 1960, so comparing its illustrations and other details to modern books seems a bit unfair. The illustrations are not great, but the book is still around in libraries and schools and has been re-published several times. In short, even though it looks a little dated, the story still stands.

Generally speaking, I dislike books with anthropomorphism, but in this case, I think the author uses the technique without "cutesiness" or gross exaggeration. Moreover, since cats can sometimes seem so human-like to children (and adults), I think the reader can connect to Pickles and the lessons that Pickles learns in a way that would not be possible were the technique not used.

Overall, I enjoyed this little book and think it makes a wonderful addition to family story times. (Although, as it is 60+ pages long, it might not work as well in other contexts and/or with very young / picture-book readers.)

Kaethe says

It's got a spotted cat instead of a dalmatian for the fire department mascot. And the cat wears a fire hat. It's brilliant. Go and read all the Esther Averill forthwith.

Susan Morris says

I have to give this 5 stars, because I have never forgotten this book from my childhood. When someone said the title, I said "Pickles!" - who finds his home at the fire station - remembered his name from 40 years ago. (Library)

Kristine Hansen says

We'll call this book comfort food, along with every other book by Esther Averill, shall we? As I am curled up in bed with a cold, it makes sense to look for things that make me feel good, at least in the emotional

sense, since I can't stop my nose from running (oh but I wish I could!)

Pickles is a cat who is neither good nor bad, but a bit of each. I first meet him, back when I first learned how to read somewhere about the age of three or four. I loved this book and I'm surprised I didn't wear out my copy completely. First of all, there's enough words here to be a real story, with three actual honest to goodness chapters. That alone makes this book awesome. Then put in a cat who is trying really hard to be good, the thrills and chills of fires and rescues, and a lot of really great people who love Pickles (and cameos from all the cats in the Cat Club), and you've got a winner.

I will likely read this book another hundred times yet in my lifetime, and I will likely love it over and over again. What's cool is seeing that my children love this book too. And just that easily Pickles has become a classic, as well he deserves.

Rebecca McNutt says

This was one of my favourite books when I was a kid. With its vibrant illustrations, originality and heroic feline main character, it's a book that all ages can enjoy and it's become a classic since the early 1960's, being published all the way through the 2000's in different languages and formats.

Jamie Winslow says

The Fire Cat is a story about a cat named Pickles that lived in a barrel in a large yard next to a big house. In the house lived a lady named Mrs. Goodkind who had several cats of her own. Pickles was a cat with big paws who wanted to do big things but the only thing he knew how to do was chase other cats that came into his yard. Mrs. Goodkind told Pickles that he should not chase those cats and that he needed a good home and she brought him into her home. Although it was nice Pickles wanted to be free outside. One day he chases a cat up the tree in the yard and it started to rain. The other cat eventually climbed down but Pickles was afraid to come down. Mrs. Goodkind called the fire station to come and retrieve Pickles. The fireman that helped get Pickles out of the tree took him back to the firestation to see if the Cheif would let him live there with them so he could do big things. Mrs. Goodkind called the Cheif and said the Pickles would be a good fire cat. Pickles began learning how to be a fire cat and soon the Cheif gave Pickles his very own fire hat. He was officially part of the fire crew. Pickles big job was to help a cat who got stuck in the same tree as him. He helped the cat down and was a big success as a fire cat.

Sharn Dhah says

A touching story with a great message for kids to learn early on, Pickles is a cat who begins the story homeless and a bully to other cats. After being taken in and cared for by Mrs. Goodkind, Pickles tries to behave, but soon reverts to his old ways. Mrs. Goodkind, ever forgiving and supportive, tells Pickles that he is not good and not bad, but a mixture of both (like everyone in the world). Pickles is very aware of his behavior, and strives to become something greater than himself. When he is accepted into the firehouse, he pushes himself to learn all he can, persevering even when things are difficult. He also learns to be kind to other cats. He reflects on his past behavior, regretful that he was ever so cruel. This story shows that it's possible to change if you're determined, and no one should be written off because they are "bad." Also

humorous at times, without being overly moralistic.
