

The Cat in the Hat

by Dr. Seuss

LEARNING ABOUT Rhyming Words

*“I know it is wet
And the sun is not sunny.
But we can have
Lots of good fun that is funny!”
“I know some good games we could play,”
Said the cat.
“I know some new tricks,”
Said the Cat in the Hat.*

— From *The Cat in the Hat*, pages 7–8

Let this dapper cat give your class a lot of good fun that is funny with a word study game that sharpens reading skills from early prereaders to solid beginning readers.

While some students will identify rhyming words because they sound alike,

others will identify rhyming words because they look alike

as well. The impact of the rhyming word concept for the kindergarten set is the realization that being able to read one word like *cat* empowers them to read a whole list of other words like *hat*, *bat*, *sat*, *rat*, and *mat*—just by changing one letter. This change-a-letter rhyming word technique builds confidence and helps young readers tackle words in a playful way.



Our *Cat in the Hat* game

Rich Vocabulary

tame *adj.* easy to handle (not wild)

In the mini-lesson that follows, kindergartners learn a few alphabet tricks from *The Cat in the Hat*. To prepare for the lesson, fill a shoebox with magnetic letters from *A* to *Z*, copy the note below, and tape it to the lid.

*Please look in this box
From Thing One and Thing Two,
You'll find a fun game
Of learning-to-read clues.*

*Just twenty-six alphabet letters to learn,
All of the words in the world, any found in a book,
Are made with these twenty-six letters—
Just look!*

*Put these letters in order,
C with A-T makes CAT.
Replace C with H,
Now the CAT is a HAT.*

*I know it's a challenge,
but it can be funny,
And learning to read
Will make your days sunny.*

*I'm the Cat in the Hat,
And I'm here to say
Reading is fun!
Start learning today.*

After reading aloud this classic book to your students, display the shoebox and let the lesson begin. Here's a sample of how I get things rolling in my classroom.

- Mrs. L.:** I found this box sitting on my desk when I came to school today. (*I read aloud the note.*)
- Tara:** It's from the Cat in the Hat.
- Jordan:** How did he sneak into our classroom?
- Mrs. L.:** It's hard to say. What do you think is in the box?
- Jordan:** A game to teach us how to read.
- Mrs. L.:** What does the Cat in the Hat say the trick is to reading words?
- Amy:** Twenty-six letters. I know the letters.
- Kelly:** I think there are more than twenty-six letters.
- Wyatt:** Maybe we should count them.

Mrs. L.: Maybe there's something in the box to help us with that.

Amy: I'll check for you. Look, it's a bunch of letters.

Mrs. L.: Let's put the letters on the board. Gary, would you choose a letter from the bag, please?

Gary: It's a *J*.

Mrs. L.: Great! The sound for the letter *J* is . . .

Class: *J-J-J.*

Mrs. L.: Nice work. Lucy, please choose another letter.

Lucy: It's *B*.

Mrs. L.: The sound for the letter *B* is . . .

Class: *B-B-B. (We continue identifying the letters in the box and their sounds before placing them on the board in scrambled order.)*

Wyatt: The box is empty.

Kelly: Did we get them all? We should count them.

Mrs. L.: Good idea. *(The class counts 26 letters.)*

Mrs. L.: Let's put the letters in *ABC* order to make sure we didn't miss any. Say the alphabet slowly while I arrange the letters in order from *A* to *Z*. *(The class repeats the alphabet.)* Now let's count the letters again. *(The class counts 26 letters again.)* That means there are twenty-six letters in the whole alphabet. Words are made with letters. Let's try the Cat in the Hat's game. We'll spell a few words and see what happens. First, spell *cat*.

Kyle: I know how. *C-A-T* spells *cat*. *(Kyle spells the word with the magnetic letters.)*

Mrs. L.: Great! If we take away the *C*, what is left?

Class: *A-T.*

Mrs. L.: Right, *A-T* makes *AT*.

Tyler: That's a word.

Mrs. L.: You're right. Tell me how *at* might be used in a sentence.

Brian: I was at my Grandma's house.

Kevin: We are at school.

Mrs. L.: Nice work. Let's put the *H* with *AT*. Now we have . . .

Class: *HAT.*

Mrs. L.: Right! Let's try this with other letters. Go to the beginning of the alphabet and put the *B* with *AT*.

Lauren: That would be *B-AT*. *Bat!*

Mrs. L.: Right! So far you've read the words *cat*, *hat*, and *bat*. I'll put the letter *B* here with the *C* and the *H* since they all make real words with *AT*. Let's try another letter. *D* is next. *D* with *AT* makes . . .

Marc: *DAT*. I never heard of that.

Kevin: You just said it! I never heard of *DAT*.

Mrs. L.: Actually, *that* is spelled *T-H-A-T*. How do you like that?

Marc: Not *D-A-T*?

Mrs. L.: Words are funny. There are so many of them, and many sound very similar. Reading lots of books and listening to lots of stories is the best way I know to

- become familiar with lots of different words. Since *D-A-T* is not a word, I'll put the *D* back in the alphabet line. Let's try another letter with *AT*.
- Leah:** *E* would make *E-AT*.
- Mrs. L.:** If *E-A-T* were part of the sound-alike word family of *AT* it would be *E-AT*, and that is not a word. But *E-A-T* actually is a word. You use this word every time you eat.
- Class:** *EAT!*
- Joni:** Is that how you spell *eat*?
- Mrs. L.:** Yes. We'll put the letter *E* off to the side since it's a special letter with *AT*. Time to put the next letter with *AT*.
- Tara:** That's *F* for *F-AT*.
- Tyler:** I see a fat cat in a hat.
- Mrs. L.:** Wow! You sure used a lot of *AT* words in that sentence. We'll put *F* with *C*, *H*, and *B*. What's next?
- Paul:** *J-AT*.
- Mrs. L.:** Sometimes *G* makes the *J-J-J* sound. But other times *G* has a hard *G-G-G* sound like in *goat*.
- Rebecca:** *J-AT* and *G-AT* aren't really words.
- Mrs. L.:** Then we should put *G* with the *D* to show the letters that don't make words found in books. We already know *H-A-T* makes a word. *I* is a vowel. Vowels make two different sounds—long and short. *I-A-T* would either make the word *I-AT* (*with a long i sound*), or *I-AT* (*with a short i sound*).
- Kyle:** That doesn't make sense. *J* is next.
- Lucy:** We tried that already when we did *G*. Put *J* with the not-found-in-book letters.
- Wyatt:** *K* makes *K-AT*!
- Lauren:** No, *C-A-T* makes *cat*.
- Mrs. L.:** Since *K* and *C* both make the "cuh" sound, *K* with *AT* would be sound-spelling for *cat*. When you see *cat* in a book, it's spelled *C-A-T*. Let's make some more *A-T* words. (*We continue for the rest of the alphabet.*)

ON ANOTHER DAY

After school that day, I chart the *a-t* lists shown on the next page by writing the beginning letter in red and *-at* in black. The next day, the children and I read our lists of words, which is hung in a prominent place in our classroom. I challenge them to be on the lookout for other *-at* words in books they read independently or hear during read-aloud. We begin another list titled "More *-at* Words from Books." Words with blends such as *chat*, *brat*, *drat*, *scat*, and *flat* top this list.

Real <i>-at</i> words book-spelled	<i>-at</i> words not found in books	Non-rhyming <i>-at</i> words
at pat	dat qat	eat
bat rat	gat uat	oat
cat sat	iat wat	
fat tat	jat xat	
hat vat	kat yat	
mat	lat zat	

With the magnetic letters and the note from the Cat in the Hat back in the shoebox and the *a-t* charts hung nearby, a word study center has been created. Students construct and read the *-at* words independently using our lists as a reference. After everyone has had a chance to practice reading the *-at* words at the center, copy the words onto index cards for students to practice reading in isolation.

As individual students are able to read the words on the cards (with assistance), they receive a badge that reads: I Can Read *AT* Words All By Myself! This badge is worn proudly by students who are happy to proclaim their new reading knowledge.

MORE FUN WITH THE BOOK

Have students design a hat for the Cat in the Hat. Set up an art center where they can glue red stripes onto a large white hat outline. To complete the hat, ask students to add a few *AT* family words to the hat using self-stick foam alphabet letters.



Cat in the Hat badge