

This cat must learn to fight

Varjak Paw

SF Said

Illustrated by
Dave McKean

'Stylish, original and inventive, *Varjak Paw* is
a modern children's classic' *Jacqueline Wilson*

WINNER OF THE SMARTIES PRIZE GOLD AWARD

SCHEME OF WORK

PERFECT FOR:

Students aged 8+; an action packed story full of adventure and self-discovery; atmospheric use of darkness and weather; wonderful writing opportunities; valuable discussions around self-belief and the power we have inside us; joining Varjak Paw on a multitude of missions – for a solution, for a place to belong and ultimately for self-acceptance.

KEY FOR CROSS-CURRICULAR OBJECTIVES:

English: Reading Comprehension;
Creative Writing; Writing to Explain

Design Technology & Art

PSHE & Citizenship

Science

Geography

Physical Education / Dance

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SUGGESTED OBJECTIVES	COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS	EXTRA ACTIVITIES
<p>Reading: Comprehension</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Read and understand words with –est endings - Ask questions to improve understanding of a text - Draw inferences such as inferring characters’ feelings and thoughts from their actions <p>Geography</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use geographical language to compare modern day ‘Mesopotamia’ with the UK <p>Creative Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use knowledge of text to write entry requirements into the family of Mesopotamian Blues - Produce thought bubble text to show what characters may be thinking at different times <p>Design Technology and Art</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work in the style of the illustrator, using straight lines to show emotion in characters’ faces 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Find the superlative adjectives on page 7. (Clue –est) 2. Why do you think the Elder Paw’s tales make Varjak feel restless? 3. Name at least two ways Varjak is different to his litter brothers (page 8). 4. ‘The tale was over...’ on page 9. Why have these exact words been chosen? 5. Which two verbs on page 12 tell us that Elder Paw relates to Varjak and he wants him to know this? 6. Look at page 18. Discuss the text, highlighting words and phrases showing Varjak as an outcast from the family. Why don’t they believe him about what he has seen? 7. What made the family trust the ‘Gentleman’ so quickly? What does this tell you about them? 8. Which of Elder Paws’ words near the bottom of page 35 do you think ‘thrilled’ Varjak the most? Why? What was his physical reaction to these words? 9. How many Skills are there in the Way of Jalal? How many are known? 10. ‘He was being torn apart by a thousand feelings.’ (page 43). Name seven different feelings Varjak could be experiencing. 	<p>Research Mesopotamia. Does it still exist? If so, in what form? Use maps and the Internet to find out about this area. Complete a comparison against the U.K. Use this vocabulary: country, border, continent, physical and human features, and climate.</p> <p>The rest of Varjak’s family are very clear about what makes a ‘proper Mesopotamian Blue’ (page 11). Write a list of entry requirements to be part of the family based on what they say.</p> <p>Look at the sketch of Father on page 23. It is mostly created with straight lines. Use this same technique to show cat faces with different expressions/feelings. Are some easier than others? Why?</p> <p>Create thought bubbles for the illustration on pages 24-25 (just before the Family Council meeting begins). Repeat this activity showing thought bubbles straight after the news from Elder Paw and then a third time showing their thoughts after the event between him and Father.</p>

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<p>Reading: Comprehension</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use dictionaries to check the meanings of words - Ask questions to improve understanding of a text - Draw inferences such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions - Retrieve information - Recognise personification - Justify thoughts by giving evidence <p>Design Technology and Art</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Draw contrasting settings based on knowledge from the book <p>Creative Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use figurative language to describe an object - Write a senses poem <p>Physical Education / Dance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create a series of cat-like movements to represent the Skills in the Way of Jalal 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'Beneath that giant sky, he was no one. He was nothing.' These are Varjak's thoughts at the top of the wall to the Outside (page 51). Re-write the sentence showing how Elder Paw would speak to him instead. 2. The author uses personification of the wind on pages 51-52 (and at later points). Find examples of this. 3. What is the 'something' shifting inside Varjak on page 57? Why did it happen then? 4. What are the first and second of the Seven Skills in the Way of Jalal? 5. Varjak seems excited to be able to do what he wants now he is Outside (page 63). Do you think he will be okay doing these simple everyday things? Give reasons for your answers. 6. Find an example of alliteration on page 66. 7. What time of year do you think it is? (Look on page 68 for a clue). 8. What is the 'claw of white light' mentioned on page 69? 9. Think of five words or phrases each to describe Holly and Tam. 10. What does the word 'breach' mean on page 75? 	<p>Draw the view Varjak would have from the top of the wall. Draw one that shows what is behind him (The Contessa's house) and one that shows what is in front of him (The Outside).</p> <p>On page 64, Varjak describes a 'monster' (car) he thinks could be a dog. Write a description of another object Varjak may not have seen before that might fit his understanding of what he's looking for. Use similes and personification. Possible ideas: bus, boat, plane.</p> <p><i>Slow-Time, Moving Circles, Shadow-Walking.</i> Create a series of movements to capture these actions. How will you make your movements cat-like?</p> <p>Write a two-versed senses poem. Your first verse should show what Varjak experiences with each of his senses in Mesopotamia. The second verse should show the contrast of The Outside.</p>

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<p>Reading: Comprehension</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss words and phrases that capture interest and imagination - Draw inferences such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions - Retrieve information - Explore themes - Identify how authorial choices contribute to meaning <p>PSHE and Citizenship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss the impact of bullying - Learn how resources can be allocated and how these choices affect individuals, communities and the sustainability of the environment <p>Writing to Explain/Science</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explain how sounds are made and how they travel <p>Creative Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use figurative language and a range of punctuation to describe a London setting 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discuss the illustrations of the cars on pages 92–93. 2. Varjak thinks he has failed (page 96). He says he is 'an insect'. What is the significance of this choice of words? 3. Find a beautiful phrase on page 98 that confirms Varjak can no longer see the sky. 4. A great deal of this book is set at nighttime. Why do you think this is? What impact does it have on the descriptions? 5. In his darkest moments, Varjak meets Jalal in his dreams. What does the author use the dreams to do? 6. Why is 'spiky' a great description for Holly? What two things about her can it describe? 7. Look at the paragraph that starts, 'We are the noblest of cats' (page 131). What does it mean to be noble? Why is this an important point in this book? 8. On page 132, Varjak's collar is bitten off him and then falls through some bars of a metal grille. Read this description and discuss the imagery used. What could it represent? 9. What are the third and fourth of the Seven Skills in the Way of Jalal? 10. 'He didn't feel alone any more' (page 141). If you had to describe what Varjak <u>did</u> feel at this point, rather than what he <u>didn't</u> feel, how would you describe it? 	<p>Julius always made Varjak question his authenticity as a Mesopotamian Blue. He called him names and always made him doubt himself. Discuss Varjak's thoughts about himself on page 96. What long term impact has Julius' bullying had on Varjak?</p> <p>Sounds are used in descriptions to help create an atmosphere. On page 107, Varjak, 'probed the air currents that carried the sound...'. Research how sounds are made and how they travel. Present your findings using examples from the book.</p> <p>'You take enough, and no more. That is the way the world is made.' Jalal tells Varjak this on page 110. Apply this thinking on a global scale considering humans use of resources. Is this how the world operates? Should it, or could it be?</p> <p>On page 134, a well-known London location is described. Where is it? Pick another London location and write a setting description in the same style. Use a semi-colon in your description.</p>

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<p>Reading: Comprehension</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Draw inferences such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions - Use dictionaries to check the meanings of words - Retrieve information - Discuss words and phrases that capture interest and imagination <p>PSHE and Citizenship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understand the characteristics and stages of healthy friendships <p>Creative Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write an alternative passage of action, focusing on use of powerful verbs <p>Design Technology and Art</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create an inspirational poster 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'You could be important. I could make you important.' Razor says this to Holly on page 150. What do you think he means by 'important'? Is this something everybody considers desirable? 2. Why was Holly so cross on page 156? 3. How would you describe how Varjak is feeling on page 158? Have you ever felt like this? 4. What does the absence of an invisible barrier between Varjak and Holly mean about their relationship? (page 159) 5. What is the main difference between the illustrations from Varjak's dreams and those in the real world? What is the impact of this? 6. Find the simile on page 164 to describe the moon. Why was this description used? 7. Based on what you know, come up with a list of five words to describe Sally Bones' character without describing her appearance. 8. How would you describe Varjak's actions on page 168-169? What do they tell you about how he feels towards Holly? 9. What does the word 'contempt' mean on page 174? Use it in a sentence of your own. 10. What are the fifth and sixth of the Seven Skills in the Way of Jalal? 	<p>The theme of 'Friendship' runs through the book, particularly between Varjak and Holly. Consider the stages of a friendship. What happens at the beginning? How does a friendship change over time? What are the essential ingredients of a healthy friendship?</p> <p>When the dog turns up in the alley way, Sally Bones' gang scarper, much to her annoyance. Write an alternative passage if the gang had stayed and fought. Focus on your use of powerful verbs.</p> <p>Jalal is full of words of wisdom. One example of this is at the top of page 179. 'Believe something is impossible and you will surely fail. But believe in yourself and you can do anything.' Create a motivational/inspiring poster using these words of wisdom, or come up with your own, inspired by Jalal's advice.</p>

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<p>Reading: Comprehension</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Draw inferences such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions - Use a thesaurus to select synonyms - Make comparisons within a book - Discuss words and phrases that capture interest and imagination <p>Creative Writing/ PSHE and Citizenship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write a character description based on knowledge from the book - Think about about stereotypes and making assumptions <p>PSHE and Citizenship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understand the value of laughter - Understand the importance of our own mental health and things we can do to help it <p>Creative Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write one of Varjak's adventures from the book, focusing on being selective and impactful with language choices 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why did Varjak feel a connection with Cludge? What did he recognise in him? 2. 'Something in Varjak soared at that moment.' (page 187). What is that 'something'? 3. As the trio approach the house on the hill, another storm approaches. Why does the author choose for this to happen at this moment? 4. Find a word on page 201 that means the same as 'skinny'. Think of three more synonyms that would be suitable to use in this sentence. 5. What is the significance of the 'empty armchair' on page 203? 6. Varjak made an error in judgement earlier in the book when he was fighting Razor. He makes a similar mistake on page 204 when fighting his brother, Julius. What mistake did he make? 7. What did Holly discover upstairs? (page 208) 8. How would you describe Father's and Aunt Juni's behaviour when they are talking about the 'common cats' on page 210? 9. List at least three reasons Varjak should follow Holly and at least three reasons he should stay with his family. Use pages 211-215 to help you. 10. Discuss the change to the usual description of Jasmine's voice at the end of page 215. 	<p>What does the character of Cludge tell us about our assumptions? Draw an outline of Cludge. Write about his appearance, movement and vocalisations on the outside. On the inside, write the unseen things we find out about him, including his feelings.</p> <p>Recall a time when you were laughing or giggling uncontrollably like Holly, Cludge and then Varjak on page 186-187. How does it feel when you can feel the laughter coming? How does it feel in the middle of the laughter? What does it feel like afterwards?</p> <p>'The world Outside had left its mark on him.' (page 199). This sentence references the scars Varjak's Mother notices on his face. Are all scars from people's experiences on the outside of their body? Discuss the impact events can have on our mental health. Come up with some ideas of how to nurture our mental health.</p> <p>At the beginning of Chapter 29 on page 200, Varjak is telling his family the tales of his adventures. Select your favourite event from the book since Varjak has been Outside. Write how Varjak would recount it to his family. Can you do this using only two hundred and fifty words?</p>

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<p>Reading: Comprehension</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Retrieve information - Draw inferences such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions - Discuss words and phrases that capture interest and imagination - Explore themes <p>PSHE and Citizenship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss social and topical issues - Appreciate the range of identities in the UK <p>Design Technology and Art/ Writing to Explain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create an action plan, including a diagram - Explain the steps of the plan, benefits and potential pitfalls <p>Creative Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue the story focusing on use of light/dark and the weather to demonstrate atmosphere and mood 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the seventh of the Seven Skills in the Way of Jalal? 2. Why did Jalal's words on page 218 seem to, 'reach right into his (Varjak's) heart?' 3. On page 221 there is a revelation about the colour of Varjak's eyes. How do you think Julius, Elder Paw and Varjak himself would feel about this? 4. The weather is used again on page 222 to help us understand how Varjak is feeling. Find the example. 5. Why wasn't Varjak annoyed or disappointed with his family when they wouldn't help him on page 224? 6. What discovery did Holly make on page 240 that saved Varjak's life? 7. How can something be a strength and a weakness? (page 242) Can you think of any other examples where this is the case, from the book or your own knowledge? 8. Find the word used to describe Holly's voice on page 244. Why was this word chosen? Find three synonyms you think would be suitable replacements. 9. Which three words on page 252 give Varjak some hope his family may join him Outside in the future? 10. Eyes are a very important part of this story, right up to the last sentence. Think about how they are used and what their descriptions help to convey. Find some examples, from throughout the book, for at least three different characters. <i>(This question could be extended to a full task.)</i> 	<p>'You see, who you are and where you come from count for nothing with me. The only thing that counts is what you do.' Use Jalal's words on page 218 to have a discussion around the topic of refugees and belonging. How can people demonstrate the sentiment of Jalal's words with actions?</p> <p>When Varjak released the cats from the cage and they all ran out, he said things weren't 'going according to plan' (page 236). What could Varjak have done differently? Write a different plan, including a diagram, to prevent the cats from dispersing erratically. What are the benefits of your new plan? What are the potential pitfalls of your plan?</p> <p>It seems Varjak, Holly, Tam and Cludge are the joint leaders of a new style of gang. They leave the House on the Hill at sunrise. Write the next part of this story, up until the moon is visible in the sky. Use light/dark and the weather to demonstrate the atmosphere and mood.</p>