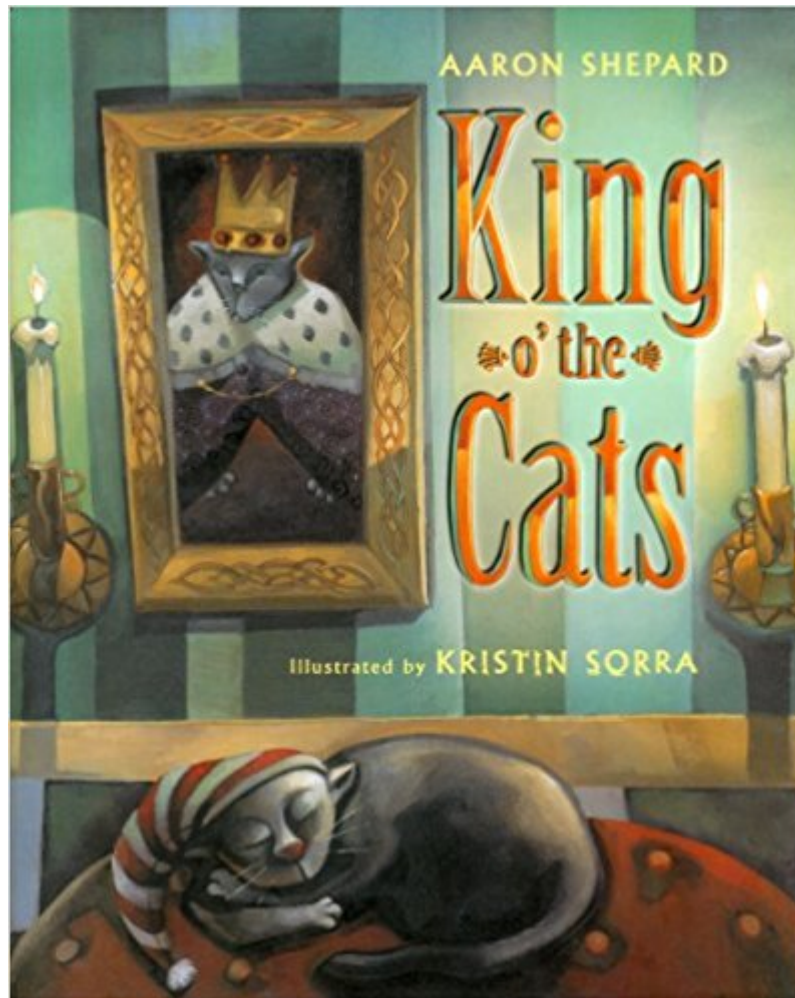




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# King O' The Cats



## Synopsis

Young Peter Black has a bad reputation in town for telling wild stories. Father Allen has given him work as a sexton, but this may be his very last chance at a job. So, what is Peter to do when he happens upon a cat coronation in the church in the dead of night? How can he convince Father Allen that this isn't just one more wild story? And why is Father Allen's cat staring at him like that? Explore the mystery in this much expanded and highly imaginative retelling of an old English favorite. Meow. . .

TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS -- A READER'S THEATER SCRIPT OF THIS BOOK IS AVAILABLE FREE ON AARON'S WEB SITE.

Aaron Shepard is the award-winning author of "The Baker's Dozen," "The Sea King's Daughter," "The Adventures of Mouse Deer," and many more children's books. His stories have appeared often in Cricket magazine, while his Web site is known internationally as a prime resource for folktales, storytelling, and reader's theater.

Kristin Sorra has illustrated picture books for numerous publishers. Her work has also appeared in comic books, magazines, stationery and paper products, off-Broadway shows, Web sites, and clothing hang tags.

August 2004 Junior Library Guild Selection  
2005 Kansas National Educational Association Reading Circle Catalog  
2006 Washington Children's Choice Picture Book Award Nominee

"A well-told, atmospherically illustrated replacement -- at last -- for the standard, but far-too-sketchy, Joseph Jacobs/Paul Galdone rendition." -- Kirkus Reviews, July 1, 2004

"Builds nicely and creates a fuller sense of the alternate life of the cats. . . . A seasoned storyteller, Shepard retains the basic scheme and a bit of wording from Jacobs, crafting a smooth narrative that will please listeners, storytellers, and readers." -- Margaret Bush, School Library Journal, Aug. 2004

"The story benefits from Shepard's firm grasp on the elements of good storytelling. . . . A fine choice for reading aloud." -- Carolyn Phelan, American Library Association Booklist, Oct. 1, 2004

"Kristin Sorra's vibrant drawings bring an old English folk story to life in Aaron Shepard's engaging King o' the Cats." -- Children's Bookwatch, Midwest Book Review, Jan 2005

One night Peter couldn't sleep. He tossed and he turned and at last got up to make himself some tea. But when he glanced out his window, he saw the windows of the church ablaze with light. "What in the world . . . ?" muttered Peter. "There shouldn't be anyone there, this time of night. And how'd they get in, anyway?" Peter pulled on a coat, crossed the yard, and quietly unlocked the back door. As he crept through the vestry, he heard a sound from the church. "Meow, meow . . . ." "Sounds like a cat," murmured Peter. "But I never knew a cat to light a candle." He peered around the curtain hung at the church entrance, and what he saw made him gasp. There was not one cat, but hundreds of cats, of every size and coloring. They filled the pews, and all of them sat upright just

like people.Â On the steps to the altar, a big black cat -- the biggest cat Peter had ever seen -- was kneeling with his head bowed. Standing above him with paws upraised was a black cat in bishop's robes, intoning, "Meow, meow . . . ."Â An altar kitten approached with a velvet pillow on which lay a small golden crown. The bishop lifted the crown and solemnly placed it on the kneeling cat's head.Â The church exploded with cries of "Meow, meow!" Peter didn't wait to see more. He raced through the vestry and back to his cottage, where he jumped into bed and stayed trembling under the covers till morning.Â

## Book Information

Age Range: 5 - 8 years

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## Customer Reviews

Grade 1-5â "Peter Black, who "loved to tell wild stories," replaces the unnamed sexton in this expanded spin on Joseph Jacobs's spooky tale. The young man works at the Church of St. Thomas the Believer, where he has several unnerving encounters with a group of cats. Each time, he relates the tales to Father Allen, who is reluctant to believe him. After Peter witnesses a feline funeral, the officiating cat instructs him, "Tell Tom Tildrumâ | that Tim Toldrum'sâ | dead." When Peter later recounts the events to Father Allen, the priest's pet jumps up upon hearing these words and declares, "Then I'm the King o' the Cats" and runs away. In addition to personalizing the characters, Shepard stretches the events to the standard folktale cycle of three evenings. Less dramatic than the original, this story still builds nicely and creates a fuller sense of the alternate life of the cats.

Sorra's single- and double-page oil scenes, dark in tone, have the look of some animated films, with square-faced, flat-figured humans and almost stern-looking cats. The somber, shadowy views befit the nighttime scenario. A seasoned storyteller, Shepard retains the basic scheme and a bit of wording from Jacobs, crafting a smooth narrative that will please listeners, storytellers, and readers. A prefatory note promises a reader's theater script and background information on the story at his very substantial Web site.â "Margaret Bush, Simmons College, Boston Copyright Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Gr. 1-3. When Father Allen hires Peter as the church sexton, he warns the lad that he must stop telling wild stories. But Peter finds it impossible not to tell Father Allen when he discovers hundreds of cats dressed and behaving like people: crowning their king, hunting with bows and arrows, and honoring their dead with a procession. The book's ending vindicates young Peter while making listeners smile. Based on a tale in Joseph Jacobs' More English Fairy Tales, the story benefits from Shepard's firm grasp on the elements of good storytelling. The artwork features warm, rich colors and unusual angles that give even the setting a sense of dynamic energy. The full- and double-page scenes in Sorra's stylized artwork are beautifully lit by sun, moon, and candles. With these large-scale, dramatic illustrations enriching an entertaining tale, this picture book is a fine choice for reading aloud. Carolyn Phelan Copyright Â© American Library Association. All rights reserved

It came damaged. Box was smashed and the binding cracked. Otherwise it was fine and an old favorite tale of mine.

I read "The King O' the Cats" to a group of children ranging in age from kindergarten through 5th grade. After hearing the story, all the children thought this was a good book to read to kids, but that it might be too scary for the younger ones. They all like cat stories and liked how the cats helped prove Peter's "stories" to be true. They thought it had to be something important to get the cats to talk to people, though. The illustrations lead to discussions on how the pictures were used to bring out the most important parts of the story, such as how the King of the cats stood out from the crowd as he was being crowned and thought it was interesting that the priest looked angry but spoke kindly to Peter. There was the one child who preferred books with non-talking cats, though.

Fantastic story. Great Halloween storytelling book.

Aunt Mary read \_King o' the Cats\_ to niece Robin, age 8, who really loves cats. She liked it all, especially the coronation scene. Robin is involved in Renaissance Faire activities and is attuned to the rituals of royalty. Aunt Mary liked the irony of Father Allen gaining a reputation for telling tall tales. Also, the illustrations were lovely, dark and appropriately spooky.

Our class really liked the book King O' the Cats. Kelly enjoyed the crowning of the cats, and all the cats going meow, meow. Mary enjoyed the details, which made her want to read more and more. Cheyenne liked how in the beginning Peter was making up stories, and at the end, the priest does the same things. Marissa feels that the book was "fantastic and funny." She especially liked when Tom jumped up and shouted "Then I'm the king o' the cats!" Diana enjoyed reading about Peter's shortcut. Shannon liked it when the cat hit his head! Alex B. liked the cats on the foxes chasing the dog. Brittany's favorite part was the cats in the church. Alex C. made a text-to-self connection, since he has cats, and he felt bad when his cat died. Daniel H. made a text-to-text connection-it reminded him of The Secret Shortcut. Destin also made a text-to-text connection, with The Boy Who Cried Wolf. (He also feels this book should get a medal!) Efren liked when the cats cried for the dead king cat. Morgan liked the whole book, but especially when the cats were speaking. Preston says, "I love your book, oh yes I do!" Ty liked when Tom went up the fireplace chimney, and he liked the title, too. Michelle wants Aaron Shepard to write a King O' the Cats part 2!

Kristin Sorra's vibrant drawings bring an old English folk story to life in Aaron Shepard's engaging King O The Cats. What kind of intelligence can cats have? Young Peter Black has noticed some strange things happening among the local cats lately; but nobody will believe his wild tale. His investigation of what is affecting all the cats in town reveals a changing world brought on by a single leader.

King o' the Cats ReviewWritten by Mrs.Jantzi's Challenge 5th graders We thought that the King o' the Cats would be a sure crowd pleaser. Our favorite part was when the cats hunted the Irish Setter. The characters are vividly hilarious. We liked the suspenseful parts.

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