

Three Samurai Cats

A Story From Japan
Retold by Eric A. Kimmel

illustrated by Mordecai Gerstein

Summary

Oh no! A bothersome rat has taken over the castle of canine daimyo, a powerful lord. Who does he call? The samurai cats! But all samurai cats deal with pesky invaders differently, as you soon shall see!

Ideas for Classroom Use

Discussion Questions

Encourage the children to find examples from the story to document their answers.

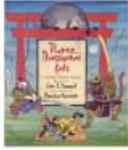
- > *What is a samurai? If you don't know the answer, where could you find out?*
- > *How do you think the daimyo expected the champion samurai cats to solve his rat problem?*
- > *Describe the techniques the first two samurai cats used in trying to oust the villainous rat.*
- > *What strategies did the rat use to outsmart the first samurai cats?*
- > *How did the daimyo react to meeting Neko Roshi, the "greatest living master of the martial arts?" Was he what the daimyo expected?*
- > *How did the daimyo continue to react to Neko Roshi as weeks passed and the rat became even bolder with his actions in the castle?*
- > *Describe the strategies Neko Roshi used to finally outsmart the rat.*
- > *How do you think the rat took over the castle in the first place?*

Responding to the Text

Problem Solving

Many class rooms and schools already have a practise of helping children solve problems when they arise. This is a great time to review your own school's or classroom's practices. What are they? How do your children solve their problems without violence?

Encourage children to make a list and work together to create posters about how to solve the problems that arise during day-to-day classroom life. They might use the cats, dogs and rats from **Three Samurai Cats** as inspiration for their posters.



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Practice Meditation

Neko Roshi was practising a form of Zen meditation in **Three Samurai Cats**. Encourage children to try simple listening and meditation exercises to assist them in focusing. It's powerful to provide an opportunity for children to actually be as still and quiet as they can be, to focus and listen to their breathing, to take even 5 minutes to relax. They (and you) will be amazed at their ability to concentrate and focus immediately after experiencing this kind of relaxation and stillness. Children's creative abilities are also immediately enhanced. For more information, you might consult the many books available on meditation for children.

Art

Design Your Own Samurai Cat

Using the book as your guide and Mordecai Gerstein's glorious illustrations, design your own outfit for a samurai cat. Mr. Gerstein used bright, bold colors for his cats and their wear. Use bold, colored pencils or paint to help your samurai cats come alive!

Cooking

Make Sticky Rice Balls

Find a recipe for simple sticky rice balls (there are many on the internet) or buy bags of sticky rice from the store. Prepare and give each child a small bowl of rice. Encourage him/her to create several small sticky balls with the rice. Enjoy, if you wish, with many dipping sauces that are available. Can children imagine a greedy, out-of-control rat grabbing all of the rice balls from everyone in the classroom and creating a giant one, only to be outdone by it?