

There Are Cats in this Book
Written and Illustrated by Viviane Schwarz
ISBN 978-1-4063-0094-9

Use the double page spread DEPICTING THE CATS UNDER THE BLANKET with multiple flaps.

Working in pairs, encourage children to explore the picture discussing their responses and working together to make meaning of what they see. Ask them to jot down words and phrases, which reflect their responses to looking.

The aims of this activity are:

- to increase the interaction with and enjoyment of picture books for children of all ages
- to develop children's confidence and vocabulary to respond to what they see – to observe and describe
- to encourage them to build on their previous experience, imagination and understanding to make sense of visual information – to interpret
- to consider a variety of graphic forms and their interaction with a text in order to convey layers of meaning – to appreciate
- to recognise different styles and techniques used and developed by a variety of illustrators – to analyse
- to begin to recognise and appreciate visual metaphor, irony, puns and jokes etc. – to participate

The following questions have been designed to help children to look more closely at the illustrative work of Viviane Schwarz, moving from the whole picture to the smallest part and to search for and use all available clues given by the artist to make meaning. Please select and adapt the questions to make them appropriate for your setting.

TELL ME ABOUT VIVIANE SCHWARZ'S ILLUSTRATION...

What colours have been used for the blanket?

What time of day does the blanket make you think of? Why?

What words would you use to describe how the cats might be feeling under this blanket?

What does the illustrator's choice of font and layout of the text tell you about the cats that are under the blanket-how many do you think there are?

What do you think you will see when you turn back the blanket?

Turn back the blanket. How would you describe the expressions on the cat's faces?

Look at the cat's eyes – how has the illustrator used their eye shapes to depict their sleepiness, surprise and pleasure?

The red cat has a speech bubble, how does this help you to understand the way s/he's thinking?

Can you make up a speech or thought bubble for the blue and yellow cats to show how you think they are feeling?

Who are the cats looking at?

How do you think s/he is feeling about you looking at them?

How has the illustrator involved you in this story?

As you lift each flap what more do the pictures reveal about the cat's characters-how would you describe them now?

What do their facial expressions, features and bodily gestures tell you about their personalities and character?

How would you describe this illustrative style?

What do you notice about the outlines and the application of colour on the characters and objects?

Why do you think Viviane Schwarz has chosen to use these colours for the cats?

What medium do you think has been used?

How do the speech bubbles help you to find out more about the cats personalities?

Who are the cats talking to?

There is no background or background colour on these pages. How has the illustrator used the blanket to help set the scene for you?

What further setting does the blanket help you to create in your mind's eye?

Where do you think this story is taking place?

Look at the right hand page of this double page spread (under all the flaps).

The red cat is pulling on a piece of wool. How has the illustrator created the tension on that thread? Look at the angle of the wool and the angle of the red cat's body. Look at its toes; it seems as if its claws are gripping into the floor.

What is the effect of that illustration on you as a reader? What does it make you want to do?

WRITE IT DOWN

Harvest children's responses and record their descriptions and comments on a flip chart/IAW. Are there any aspects of the picture that they find particularly interesting or puzzling? How do these pictures interact and work with the rest of the book?