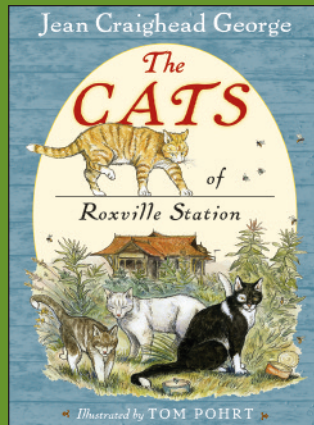


A thrilling new adventure from two-time Newbery Medalist Jean Craighead George



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By Jean Craighead George

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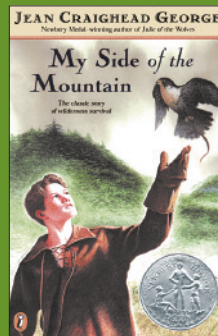
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My Side of the Mountain

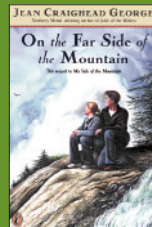
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In the 50 years since its publication and Newbery Honor win, Jean Craighead George's *My Side of the Mountain* has sold 8 million copies and has been translated into 12 languages. Jean grew up in a family of naturalists and spent much of her childhood outdoors. Her love of nature led her to write this detailed novel about one boy's exploration of the wilderness. Like so many of Jean's protagonists, Sam Gribble demonstrates independence, resourcefulness, and a curiosity about the natural world as he teaches himself to survive on *My Side of the Mountain*.

Revisit the other books in the My Side of the Mountain trilogy:



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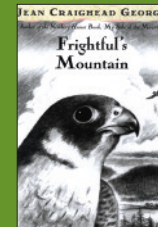
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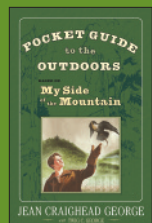
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In 2009, Jean will release a non-fiction companion, entitled *Pocket Guide to the Outdoors*. The book offers wildlife and plant identifications as well as tips on how to live off the land like Sam Gribble.



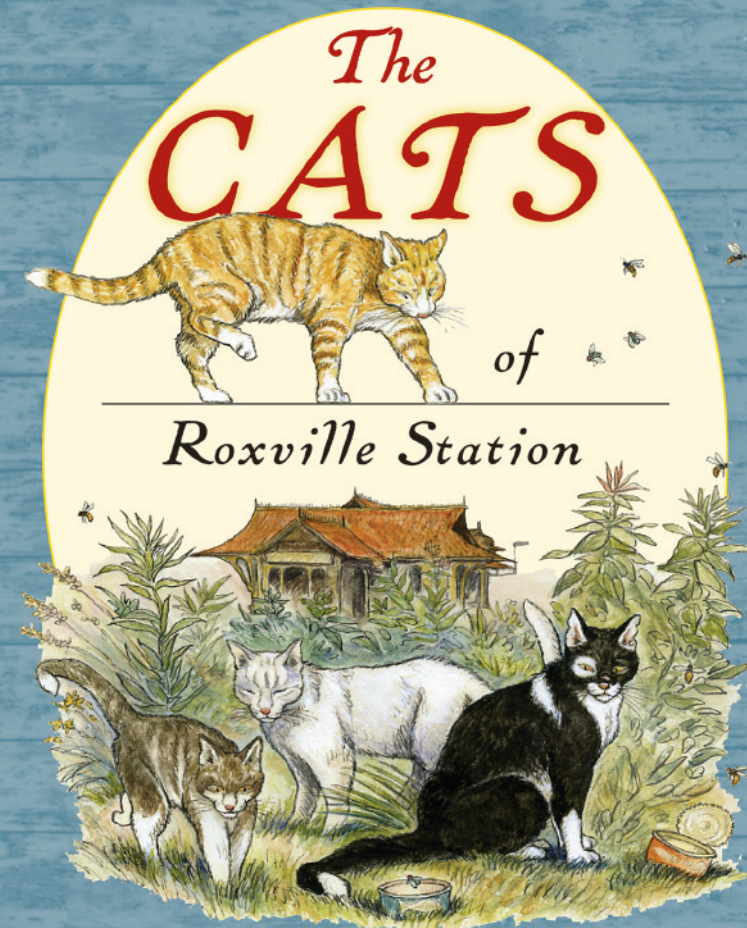
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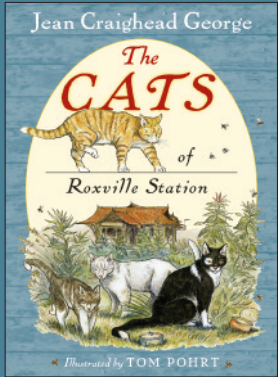
DISCUSSION GUIDE

Jean Craighead George



✧ Illustrated by TOM POHRT ✧

ABOUT THE BOOK



Playing, fighting, napping, yowling; cats are curious creatures. They have their own language, full of ear twitches and tail swishes. They have keen senses and are able to pinpoint the location of food or foe. Domesticated for centuries, they have come to rely on human companions for food and shelter.

This gorgeous novel from naturalist and prolific author Jean Craighead George offers insight into feline behavior as it explores the wonder of friendship between species. Detailed and informative in the telling, *The Cats of Roxville Station* encourages readers to think more critically about humanity's effect on the natural world.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



JEAN CRAIGHEAD GEORGE has written more than one hundred books for children, including the Newbery Award-winning *Julie of the Wolves* and the Newbery Honor novel *My Side of the Mountain*. She lives in Chappaqua, New York.

Visit her at www.jeancraigheadgeorge.com

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR



TOM POHRT is the renowned illustrator of several bestselling children's books. He lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

A NOTE FROM JEAN CRAIGHEAD GEORGE

"The independence of feral cats has always intrigued me. How could they live on their own? There was a group of such cats living around the station where I switched trains to New York. The wait for my train was made exciting by the cats and a lady who came to feed them; not that they needed it. Because of her, however, I was able to observe these remarkable animals. I know how important observation is, in both writing and science. My observations formed the basis of a book I was to write about the cats many years later."

DISCUSSION POINTS & ACTIVITIES

- Name the cats that live at Roxville Station. Compare and contrast their personalities. Where do each of the cats live at the end of the book? How have their lives changed?
- Discuss the ranking system between the cats. What does it mean to be in the top position? How does Rachet change her rank?
- Discuss the phrase "cats walk alone." What does this mean? Support your response by finding examples in the novel.
- How do cats communicate with each other? How do they communicate with humans? Does Rachet use a different language to talk to Mike than she does with the other cats?
- Try to communicate with a friend or classmate without using words. Does your body language (movements, gestures, posture) seem like something that an animal would use?
- By reading *The Cats of Roxville Station*, we learn that birds mark their territory by singing to each other, instead of fighting. How do other animals mark their territory? How do humans?
- Discuss the mysterious bond that author Jean Craighead George says exists between cats and humans. What signs do you see of this bond between the characters in the novel? How does living in the wild make this bond difficult for Rachet and the other cats of Roxville Station?
- Why do you think the Bent Lady responds to the building of the new station by saying, "How can they take my cats away from me?" Do the cats of Roxville belong to anyone?

- How do humans interact with cats in this story? Why is Rachet wary of people?
- Cats first entered humans' homes and lives in ancient Egypt, where they caught rats and mice in granaries. Can you name other domesticated animals and how they have helped us throughout history? Use the library and the internet for help.
- When a bad snowstorm hits Roxville, all the cats take shelter in Mrs. Dibber's basement. Why can't the cats weather the storm like the wild animals? What other dangers do the cats face, as former pets?
- The wild animals have names like Shifty the fox, Cheeks the chipmunk, and Fang the Snake. The cats have human or technological names like Elizabeth, Ice Box, and Tachometer. Why do you think Jean Craighead George chose those names for the cats? Are the cats' names related to their abandonment?
- What does Mike mean when he says, "That beautiful, green-eyed cat and me. We're survivors."? Are there any similarities between Rachet and Mike?
- How does Mrs. Dibber change by the end of the novel? What do you think makes her change?
- Jean Craighead George is a renowned naturalist. What have you learned about nature from reading this book?
- After reading *The Cats of Roxville Station*, create a nature journal. Use a section to record your observations of pets and wild animals. What animals are commonly found near your home and school? What do they look, sound, smell, or move like? Include some blank pages where you can draw the animals you see, like Tom Pohrt draws the cats of Roxville Station.



Illustrations © Tom Pohrt