



The Cats of Roxville Station

Jean Craighead George , Tom Pohrt (Illustrator)

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Rachet was thrown into a river to drown. But she claws up the riverbank and finds a home with the feral cats living by the Roxville train station. Amid foxes, raccoons, owls, and hostile humans, the cats fight for territory, hunt, and are hunted. Mike, a foster child, lives near the station. He spots Rachet and sets his heart on befriending her. But Mike must learn to 'speak' the language of cats to gain wily Rachet's trust. This gorgeous novel from two-time Newbery medalist Jean Craighead George offers insight into feline behavior as it explores the wonder of friendship and the natural world hiding among us.

The Cats of Roxville Station Details

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Author : Jean Craighead George , Tom Pohrt (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review The Cats of Roxville Station for online ebook

Claire says

Reviewing this feline piece of literature really calms me down after hearing the dog freak out downstairs for whatever reason. In fact, that was really all this children's book was - please join me for a peaceful frolic in the fields of Roxville Station. It is such a pleasant read.

Jean Craighead George (the author of *My Side of the Mountain* and also *Julie of the Wolves* as the back says) offers in the front a handy map so you can picture exactly where the action of this tale occurs, which is not unlike many other fantasy novels, but a perfect entryway into the fields of Roxville Station.

The SPCA and the Audubon Society are mentioned, which warms my heart for this book, as it is beginning to teach philanthropy to youth! (When I had a little, I have donated to both organizations within the past ten years - the SPCA is a dog/cat adoption agency, and the Audubon Society is The bird club I have had a catalog of North American birds from since I was maybe twelve, or maybe even ten.)

This book is well-informed about feline behaviour. It could possibly serve as a child's beginner guide to raising a family of kittens if (s)he had no access to the Internet; I am imagining like out on a farm.

The conflict between the boat lady Mrs. Dibber and the Audubon fellow Ron highlights an interesting monetary versus passion pursuit.

The reason I do not rate this higher is that Coal Tar's adventure begs belief towards the end. Otherwise, it would be a definite five star because I have become such a sucker for cats.

I am almost tempted to change my three-star rating to a two-star one because of the history behind the name of the barking dog in the last chapter, but I am staying firm at three because overall I liked this novel.

Emily Bailey says

I've read the *My Side of the Mountain* books by Jean Craighead George and was excited to see this was the next book to read for one of my book club meetings. I hadn't heard of *The Cats of Roxville Station* but it looked interesting.

The Cats of Roxville Station describes the way I think of cats and their habitats. I also learned some things, such as the sun spots and first homes - but why wouldn't those be true things? This book is very sweet but also sad. It's realistic and describes the way animals are treated in a way that made my heart ache for the cats and wish I could take them all; luckily this was just a story. I think this book is great for cat lovers and haters alike, as well as for the young and old. It's a very versatile book that's not too thick for those who turn away from long novels and is fun for those craving a quick read.

EllaB Red says

Super amazing and fun!! Loved it!

Barbara says

This is an interesting little book for anyone interested in the behavior of cats. Ratchet is a ferrel cat with a bad experience of humans. Ratchet must find her place in the hierarchy of cats living around the Roxville train station. Mike dearly loves animals and wants a pet of his own, but his foster mother hates animals and the answer to his question is always "no." Slowly, Mike is able to make friends with Ratchet as she slowly comes to trust her human.

Actually, I think ferrel cats are much more civilized than some supposedly domesticated, house broken humanoids. They have a hierarchy, and a system of rituals and postures for determining place, and they don't even always actually "fight" to move up in rank. They can choose to live with humans, or not. They are capable of taking care of themselves in the wild. I've read a couple of cat books recently. Did you know a cat might just leave it's home if conditions don't suit it? Then return when circumstances improve? Because they are not totally dependent on humans, they have a degree of autonomy that even dogs don't have. Sounds sensible to me.

Mz. Diana Gagliardi says

A sweet, quick book abt a cat who enters into a society of feral cats and the boy who wishes he could have her live with him. Going through the seasons, all the animals around the area go through their circles of life and how they all interact and intertwine.

Enjoy.

Richie Partington says

02 April 2009 THE CATS OF ROXVILLE STATION by Jean Craighead George and Tom Pohrt, ill.,
Dutton, May 2009, 192p., ISBN: 978-0-525-42140-5

"A lady in a fur coat threw a fighting, hissing cat off a bridge, got back into her car, and sped into the night.
"Rachet the cat splashed into the river.

"She felt the wetness, and hating it, reached out to claw this enemy. Her paw struck a stick, raked it for a better hold, and she was swimming.

"An eddy caught her, swirled her shoreward until she felt stones under her feet and ran out of the water. Shaking her paws, she four-footed it into a woods that edged the river. When she was out of sight of the bridge she stopped, shook herself, and frantically licked the water off her sodden tiger-striped fur. With her forepaw, she cleaned her ears of the river water, then her face and whiskers. The bruise on her ribs where the lady had kicked her yesterday had been soothed by the cold water and was no longer throbbing.

"When she was almost dry, she crept deeper into the night woods. Rachet, like all cats, found her way in the dark with the rods in her eyes, which could take in the faintest of light, even starlight, and make the night into day. Smelling dryness, she hurried to the fallen leaves under an oak tree and frantically rolled in them. Then, shivering with loneliness and fright, she meowed in her baby voice to bring her mother. There was no

answer. Her world had changed."

Did you know that there is meaning in the way a cat holds its tail? That cats can have altercations through which the social order is forever altered despite there not being any physical contact?

THE CATS OF ROXVILLE STATION is the story of Rachet the cat and of Mike, the foster child who longs for a cat his can call his own. As is Jean Craighead George's style, readers will come to know all sorts of true and weird stuff about the animal characters as they follow the action. In this case, we learn about Rachet and a half dozen other feral cats as well as the other animals living in this corner of a suburban neighborhood. There is Windy the barn owl, Ringx the raccoon, Cheeks the chipmunk, Fang the milk snake, Shifty the red fox, and Lysol the skunk. (No, the author does NOT give names to the neighborhood mice and rats. In this death-don't-have-no-mercy environment, that would be akin to naming the individual chips in a bag of Fritos. Nevertheless, we do learn gnarly details about the ability of mice to reproduce on a scale that necessitates the use of exponents and/or calculators.)

"Rachet rubbed her own personal scent on the buckets and boxes to make her smell-trail through the junk. To a cat the smell-trail was as bright as neon lights are to people."

For that matter, death hasn't offered Mike much mercy, either. His mother died when he was three; his father died when he was eight; and after a group home experience and a failed foster situation, he came to live in a big, old house with Mr. and Mrs. Dibber. The kindly husband shared boating and baseball with Mike, but then he died, too. Now Mike is alone with the hard-hearted widow and she has no use for cats and little praise for Mike.

But like Sam Gribble from George's MY SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN, and Miyax from JULIE OF THE WOLVES, Mike is an observant and resourceful adolescent -- a survivor -- who is determined to find a way through the difficult hand he has been dealt. His patience and determination is the perfect match for a cat who has only known cruelty by the hands of humans.

I have not paid a lot of attention to the feral cats who have come and gone from my farm over the years. In recent months there has been a black cat that I have observed periodically: Sometimes I look out the upstairs window and see it wandering up or down the long driveway. Sometimes I go out to the barn at night to check on the goats, and glimpse it bolting out of the hay room when I enter. I am happy to share the farm with cats in the same way that -- I learned from this book -- the Egyptians welcomed and began domesticating these curious creatures four thousand years ago.

The past couple of days, when I see that black cat outside, I find myself taking a second look and watching more thoughtfully. Thanks to Jean Craighead George, I have a newfound respect for cats -- the kind of respect that comes from really knowing about something.

Richie Partington, MLIS

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Wayne Walker says

Mike is a thirteen-year-old orphan boy who lives with his foster mother, Mrs. Dibber, in an old, run-down Victorian mansion known by local kids as “the haunted house” at Roxville Station. Ratchet is a young house cat thrown off the bridge into the Olga River at Roxville Station by a woman in a fur coat and must now become a feral cat. There are other feral cats in the community, such as Volton the tomcat, Queenella, Ice Bucket, Flea Market, sisters Tatters and Tachometer, and Elizabeth, being fed by “the Bent Lady” who lives in a nearby apartment building, along with other wild creatures in the vicinity, like Shifty and Shafty the foxes, Ringx the raccoon, Fang the milk snake, Windy the owl, Lysol the skunk, and others with all of whom Ratchet must compete to live.

Mike desperately wants to tame and keep Ratchet, but Mrs. Dibber has said no animals in the house. So he wonders if he can make her an outside pet. However, he must first learn to speak the language of cats to gain the trust of Ratchet, who has been abused by humans. Will he succeed? And will Ratchet survive? Author Jean Craighead George writes that her motivation for the book was twofold. First, her daughter’s cat Trinket carried her kittens down the staircase one day and placed them on the rug before the George family to present them as a lioness presents her cubs to the social pride. Secondly, George had the opportunity to observe the behavior of a group of feral cats around the railroad station at North White Plains, NY, where she had twenty minutes to wait while transferring to an express train for New York City. The story offers insight into feline behavior while exploring the wonder of friendship and the natural world hiding all around us.

As one who has had cats in my home almost my entire life, I can say that *The Cats of Roxville Station* captures feline behavior perfectly. There are a few common euphemisms (gee, drat, gosh, and darn), and Mike does some “creative storytelling” which comes very close to lying. Global warming and evolution are hinted at, although the reference to evolution is a good example of “microevolution” as opposed to “macroevolution.” Some people, especially sensitive children, may not like the sadness, such as when three blind and helpless kittens are fumigated and thrown in a dumpster and then a little while later their mother eats a piece of poisoned meat and dies. However, George is a realist who presents what actually happens in life, and these kinds of situations do occur. Yet, the scenes are depicted sensitively without being either maudlin or harsh. With all kinds of odd but true facts about the animals, including the amazing details of how the cats interact with each other and with humans, this book is quite fascinating.

Judy says

True, the storyline is fiction, but it is packed full of info about cats, and the facts are presented engagingly. This could be a turn-off if someone is expecting a typical, young-reader, plot-driven story, but it will appeal to kids of all ages who love nature, even if they aren't wild about cats.

I am not a cat person, but I picked this up because I admire the author. References to plants, birds, mammals, and the workings of an ecosystem are woven neatly into the story.

The 'weightiest' science fact is on page 4:

Ratchet, like all cats, found her way in the dark with the rods in her eyes, which could take in the faintest of light, even starlight, and make the night into day.

At this point, I paused, wondering what mental image kids would use to make sense of 'rods in the eyes.'

Here's a more typical statement that also addresses cats' vision:

Cats see no color, just shades of gray, but the grays are colorful to them.

The illustrations add to the story, partly because they never cross from realism to cutesy.

There's a lot to like in this story. I believe it is one of JCG's last books -- she died in 2012.

I changed my rating from 4 to 5 stars. The more I thought about the skill it takes to write text that is engaging yet is not a thriller and educates while it entertains, the more I appreciated the story.

Debra says

Reviewed 1/22/10, read the book last summer (2009).

The cover makes it appear that the story will be a sort of romantic one about cats living in a train station. However, there is nothing romantic about living life as a feral cat.

As a cat person, I enjoyed the story but some children may be upset by the number of cats and kittens who die in this book. On the other hand, I think that is the author's point: to show that cats in the wild live a treacherous life and may not survive. It is also a good teachable moment for parents to discuss with their kids why it is important to take their pet to the veterinarian for spaying or neutering.

What I found unrealistic about the book was the portrayal of the boy as 14. Maybe 50 years ago a 14 year old would act like the kid in the book. Not so much today.

The best part about the book was the descriptions of how the cats interacted. I read it last summer and still remember some of the characters and their antics!

Destinee Sutton says

Here are my thoughts on this book:

1. It's a love story between a boy and a cat. And I mean like boy-meets-cat, boy-wants-cat, boy-gets-cat, boy-loses-cat, boy-gets-cat-back.
2. Most of it reads like the narration of a wildlife documentary. We learn all about the habits of cats, mice, owls, raccoons, deer, etc.
3. The cat illustrations aren't exactly bad, but they're not cute.
4. I enjoyed reading it, even though it felt overtly educational and the boy said ridiculous things no teenage boy I've met would ever say like, "Drat!" and "That cry was the male cat caterwauling for his female."
5. There was something so old-fashioned about this book (see the boy's quotes above), even though there

were allusions to global warming and electric rail. Certainly some people will say this is boring and/or cheesy.

6. I would recommend this to young nature/cat lovers, but the reading level is fairly sophisticated for such an innocent cat book, so it's a tough call age-wise.

Jessica Ann says

An interesting view from cats' perspective and many other animals--maybe too many animals. Some parts were a little choppy and I had a hard time understanding the point of the book (and the point of some of the characters) until towards the end, it started picking up and captured my attention. The very ending, though, was a slight letdown after all of the buildup. Overall, easy, short read with some nice perspectives and descriptions if you're into cats.

Bibliomama says

A lot of feral cat behavior in only a scrap of a story. But I did enjoy the different feline personalities.

Krista the Krazy Kataloguer says

I absolutely LOVED this book! Jean Craighead George turns her observations of the natural world to cats in this story about a group of feral cats trying to survive in the suburbs. The story centers around Rachet, an orange tabby, and Mike, a foster child living in a nearby home, who wants a cat but whose foster mom won't let him have one. The story describes in fascinating detail how not only cats, but other suburban animals, such as raccoons, skunks, owls, deer, foxes, and birds, survive the seasons and man-made changes in the environment. As the story progresses, Mike and Rachet slowly form a relationship, but will Rachet ever become the pet Mike wants? Read and find out. Read and learn facts you never knew about cat behavior. Outstanding story, possibly my favorite of all of her books. Highly recommended!!

karen says

this book is the anomaly for my class in that it is going to be far easier to write about academically than here, where i can be (i hope) more entertaining. its an odd little book. on the surface, its just a story about cats. and then when you start reading it, you learn pretty quickly that its not a story at all. its more like a cat behavior book cloaked in something that passes for fiction. almost. i dont know to whom this is targeted. kids dont really want to read about what the position a cats ears are in means... do they? (i know very little about what kids like)they want a story, right? with adventures and cat interior monologues and maybe a cat-language or something. thats what i thought i was getting. anthropomorphize, please.

Kate says

Rachet is an abused cat that now has to make her way in the wild. She finds herself with a group of feral cats that live near a train station. A boy named Mike wants Rachet for his own, but his foster mother won't allow cats. As time goes by, Rachet makes her way up the cat hierarchy, avoids predators, seeks food and shelter, and has a litter of kittens.

I'm not a big fan of cats, but it was interesting to read about cat behaviors and why they do the things they do. Other animal behaviors were described as well. While some of the animals did die during the story, this was not one of those tearjerker animal stories - it was more meant to be realistic. Overall there was a happy ending.
