KING OF THE CATS
By Paul Galdone
Themes: Mystery/Halloween
Grade Level: K-2
Running Time: 5 minutes, iconographic

SUMMARY
KING OF THE CATS is the story of a gravedigger who returns home to his wife and cat with a story that is beyond belief. The gravedigger informs his wife that a group of cats was marching along and carrying a coffin toward him as he worked beside one of the graves. Finally, when the cats approached him, the message given to him by the leader of the cats was, “Tell Tom Tildrum that Tim Toldrum’s dead.” Well, this threw the gravedigger into a tizzy. How, he asked his wife, was he to tell this to Tom Tildrum when he didn’t even know who Tom Tildrum was!

At the very moment that the gravedigger says these words, his own black cat shrieked out, “What—old Tim dead! Then I, Tom Tildrum, am King of the Cats!” This provided the answer to the gravedigger’s question regarding who Tom Tildrum might be! This mysterious breath-holder ends with the cat rushing up the chimney, never to be seen again by the gravedigger and his wife.

OBJECTIVES
- Children will enjoy a suspense-filled mystery story.
- Children will learn about the way sounds and body language contribute to the eerie, suspenseful feeling of a mystery story.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES
Share the book, KING OF THE CATS, with children. Talk with children about scary stories they may have read, heard or seen.
Ask:
- What made the story scary?
- When did the story take place?
- How did you feel while you were listening to the story?
- How did you feel at the end of the story?
- What did the people in the story do or say that made you feel frightened?
- How did the people look when they said these things?

Provide a piece of black construction paper and white chalk for each child. Have children use the materials to create night scenes. Later, as children share their drawings, ask:
- How does it feel to be outdoors at night?
- What do you like most/least about it?

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES
Have children tell their own mystery stories into a tape recorder. Before beginning, review with children the elements of King of the Cats that contributed to making the story mysterious and exciting. When all the stories have been recorded, turn off the classroom light, pull the blinds and let children enjoy the suspenseful stories created by their own classmates!

Give children an opportunity to write or dictate their own follow-up story to KING OF THE CATS. Ask:
- Where do you think the gravedigger’s cat went when he discovered that he was now king of the cats?
- What kinds of things would he do as king of the cats?

Later, allow children to add drawings to their stories and display them on a classroom wall or bulletin board.

Talk with children about the ways the sounds and voices in the video contributed to its eerie effect. Encourage children to try to recall the sounds that made them sit up in their seats or feel a bit frightened as they watched. Then play a variety of recordings for children, some eerie, others light and happy. As children listen, encourage them to discuss how the music makes them feel.

Other videos about scary stories available from Weston Woods include:
- A Dark, Dark Tale by Ruth Brown
- Georgie by Robert Bright
- Teeny-Tiny and the Witch-Woman by Barbara Walker, ill. by Michael Foreman
- The Three Robbers by Tomi Ungerer
- The Trip by Ezra Jack Keats
- What’s Under My Bed? by James Stevenson
- Where The Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak

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The King of the Cats is the main antagonist of the 2007 direct-to-DVD film Tom and Jerry: A Nutcracker Tale. He is the tyrannical ruler of the cats, and the one who leads them in imprisoning the toys and taking over their kingdom and the winter wonderland. He fills the role of the Mouse King in the original ballet. He was voiced by Garry Chalk, who also played Doctor Robotnik in Sonic Underground. King of Cats is Catwoman's brother. He has romantic feelings towards her. A character who appeared in a golden age Batman story was later established as being an Earth 2 character in a Bronze age Superman story. The King of Cats sends flowers to Kyle, causing Batman to investigate her involvement. He soon becomes convinced that she is innocent, but asks her to aid in arresting the King of Cats. Selina, however, refuses after realizing that the King of Cats was her brother Karl. The King of Cats attempts to lure Selina out of her retirement and back into a life of crime. He is easily captured by Batman and Robin, but Selina pleads with Batman to let him go. When Batman refuses, she knocks him out and allows her brother to escape.