

muse®

Pets on the Mind

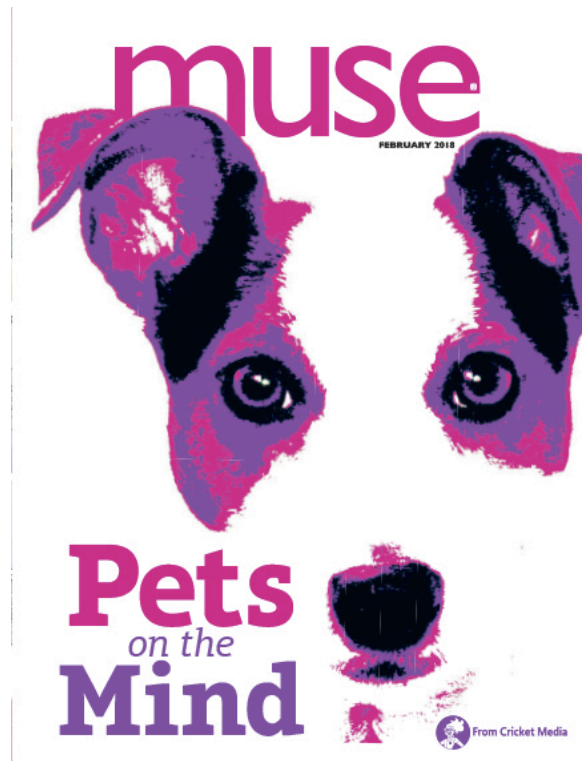
Scientists think pets may be more than just a furry face. Articles look at the evidence that shows the important psychological connections humans share with their four-legged friends.

CONVERSATION QUESTION

What psychological connections do humans share with pets?

TEACHING OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn how people's pet preferences are related to personality traits
- Students will learn how pets positively affect human wellbeing
- Students will learn the history of cat domestication
- Students will identify patterns
- Students will identify cause-and-effect relationships affecting human health
- Students will identify evidence that leads to explanations
- Students will write informative text
- Students will keep a journal to record changes in emotions related to time spent with pets
- Students will write a narrative story about having a cat in ancient times



In addition to supplemental materials focused on core STEM skills, this flexible teaching tool offers vocabulary-building activities, questions for discussion, and cross-curricular activities.

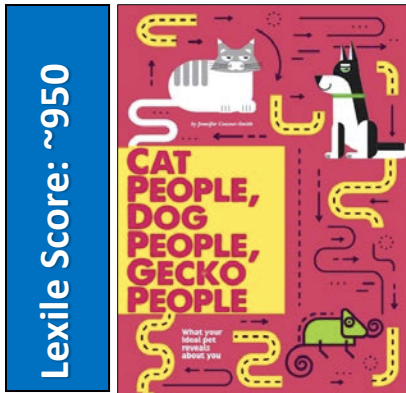
SELECTIONS

- **Cat People, Dog People, Gecko People**
Expository Nonfiction, ~950L
- **Animals on My Mind**
Expository Nonfiction, ~850L
- **How to Conquer the World (according to your cat)**
Expository Nonfiction, ~950L

Cat People, Dog People, Gecko People

pp. 10–14, Expository Nonfiction

This article describes a study that attempts to link personality types to pet preferences. Use this article to examine patterns.



RESOURCES

- Pet Profiles

OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn how people's pet preferences are related to personality traits
- Students will identify patterns
- Students will write informative text

KEY VOCABULARY

- **reputation** (p. 11) the common opinion that people have about someone or something
- **stereotype** (p. 11) an unfair belief that all people or things with a common characteristic are the same
- **solitary** (p. 11) done by a person who is alone
- **eccentric** (p. 12) strange or unusual

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: What psychological connections do humans share with pets?

Take a quick poll to see what pet preferences students have in your class. Ask students if they think their personality has something to do with the kind of pet they like.

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Have students locate the vocabulary words in context on pages 11 and 12. Ask students to discuss what the words mean with a partner and then look up the definitions to see if their ideas make sense.

READ & DISCUSS

Have students read the article and then lead a class discussion based on the following prompts.

- What kinds of stereotypes do people have about pet owners?
- How does the study provide evidence about the psychological connection humans have with pets?
- What patterns did the researchers notice?
- Why are their exceptions to this study's results?

CONCEPT/SKILL FOCUS: Identify Patterns

INSTRUCT: Explain that this article explores the truth behind stereotypes people have about pet preferences through a scientific study. Ask students to review the article to identify patterns the researchers found about the personalities of cat owners versus dog owners. Discuss their findings and ask students to share personal evidence in agreement or disagreement with these observations.

Point out the terms “more likely” and “tend to be” in the article, and ask students why the scientists are not using terms like “always” and “are.”

ASSESS: Take notes during the discussion to assess if students are able to identify and differentiate personality patterns associated with pet preferences as found in the study.

EXTEND

Language Arts Have students create several pet profile cards for a pretend pet-matching service. They can illustrate the profiles or use magazine photos. The pet cards should include the size, breed, and personality of the pet listed in the *Pet Profiles* graphic organizer. Mix up the profile cards and distribute them in small groups, where students will discuss the personality and pet traits to determine the best match for each student.

Pet Profiles

Pet Photo
Name:
Kind of Pet:
Size:
Breed or Breeds:
Physical Description:
Personality Traits:

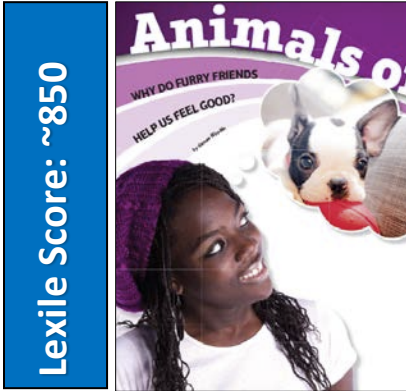
Pet Photo
Name:
Kind of Pet:
Size:
Breed or Breeds:
Physical Description:
Personality Traits:

Pet Photo
Name:
Kind of Pet:
Size:
Breed or Breeds:
Physical Description:
Personality Traits:

Animals on My Mind

pp. 16–18, Expository Nonfiction

Use this article that describes how pets trigger the release of emotion-altering hormones to teach cause and effect.



RESOURCES

- Cause and Effect

OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn how pets positively affect human wellbeing
- Students will identify cause-and-effect relationships affecting human health
- Students will keep a journal to record changes in emotions related to time spent with pets

KEY VOCABULARY

- **hormone (p. 17)** a natural substance that is produced in the body and influences the way the body grows or develops
- **adrenaline (p. 17)** a substance that is released in the body of a person who is feeling a strong emotion
- **oxytocin (p. 17)** a hormone responsible for human behaviors associated with relationships and bonding
- **cortisol (p. 18)** a hormone that regulates processes throughout the body, including metabolism and responses to stress

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: What psychological connections do humans share with pets?

Ask students if they have noticed any changes in how they feel when they play with their pets. Explain that this article examines research that provides evidence that pets actually affect human emotional and physical health.

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Display the vocabulary words and explain that these words appear in the article and are related to chemicals that the body produces. Divide students into groups of four, with each person assigned one vocabulary word. They will be responsible to explain the meaning of their word to the rest of the group. Point out the purple boxes in the article for information sources.

READ & DISCUSS

Have students read the article and then lead a class discussion based on the following prompts.

- Why did the authors choose to discuss hormones in this article?
- How does this information relate to new uses for pets?
- What other ways might pets help people feel better?

CONCEPT/SKILL FOCUS: Cause and Effect

INSTRUCT: Explain that the studies in this article help explain the psychological and medical benefits associated with pets. Have student partners look for cause/effect relationships discussed in the article. Have them record these on the *Cause and Effect* graphic organizer.

ASSESS: Review the graphic organizers to assess if students are able to identify and record the cause-and-effect relationships on the chart.

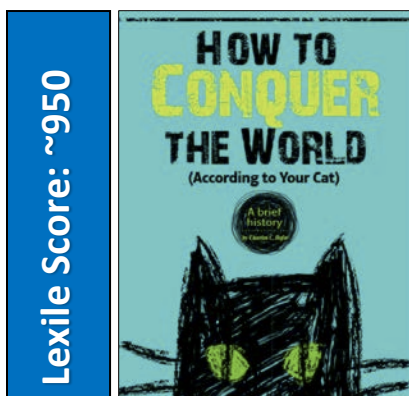
EXTEND

Language Arts Have students conduct their own mini research project by keeping a journal that describes how they feel before and after playing with a pet. For students who don't own a pet, have them spend time with a classroom pet or visit a pet store.

How to Conquer the World (according to your cat)

pp. 34–37, Expository Nonfiction

Evidence is presented about the history of cat domestication. Use this article as an example of how to support explanations with evidence.



RESOURCES

- Evidence and Explanation

OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn the history of cat domestication
- Students will identify evidence that leads to explanations
- Students will write a narrative story about domesticating a cat in ancient times

KEY VOCABULARY

- **domesticated** (p. 35) an animal that is tamed and kept as a pet or on a farm
- **mutualism** (p. 35) a relationship between two species of organisms in which both benefit

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: What psychological connections do humans share with pets?

Preview the photos and illustrations of the article and ask students what clues these might provide to shed light on when cats may have become domesticated.

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Share the vocabulary words and explain that both words have to do with human relationships with animals. Ask students to locate these words on page 35 and read the sentences aloud. Each sentence includes clues to support the meaning of the words in context.

READ & DISCUSS

Have students read the article and then lead a class discussion based on the following prompts.

- How did storing food impact the probable result of cat domestication?
- How does this show mutualism?
- Use the Meow-Line on pages 36–37 to see if dogs or cats were most likely domesticated first. Why do you think this is so?

CONCEPT/SKILL FOCUS: Constructing Explanations

INSTRUCT: Share how this article is a good example of collecting evidence from many different archeological sources (bones, art, remains) to help answer questions about earliest cat domestication. Have students point out examples of evidence in the article and record these on the *Evidence and Explanation* puzzle graphic organizer. Next, ask them to look for ways evidence is used to construct possible explanations.

ASSESS: Review students' work on the graphic organizer and during discussions to assess their ability to locate evidence and determine how it is used to construct explanations.

EXTEND

Language Arts Invite students to go back in time to ancient Cyprus and write a narrative story about domesticating the first wild cat.

Evidence and Explanation

Write evidence you find in the article that helps put together the pieces of the puzzle of when, where, how, and why cats were domesticated.

