

*Teacher instructions: Read this passage aloud to your learner.*

### *THE KITTEN WHO LOST HERSELF*

"I think," said the Blind Horse, "that something is the matter with my ears." He and the Dappled Gray had been doing field-work all the morning, and were now eating a hearty dinner in their stalls. They were the only people on the first floor of the barn. Even the stray Doves who had wandered in the open door were out in the sunshine once more. Once in a while the whirr of wings told that some Swallow darted through the window into the loft above and flew to her nest under the roof. There was a deep and restful quiet in the sun-warmed air, and yet the Blind Horse had seemed to be listening to something which the other did not hear.

The Dappled Gray stopped eating at once. "Your ears?" said he. "What is wrong with them? I thought your hearing was very good."

"It always has been," was the answer, "and finer than ever since I lost my sight. You know it is always so with us blind people. We learn to hear better than we could before losing our sight. But ever since we came in from the field I have had a queer sound in my ears, and I think there is something the matter with them."

The Dappled Gray stopped eating and stood perfectly still to listen. He did not even switch his tail, although at that minute there were three Flies on his left side and one on his neck. He was trying as hard as he could to hear the queer sound also, for if he did, it would prove that the noise was real and that the Blind Horse's hearing was all right.

He could not hear a thing. "What is it like?" he asked.

"Like the loud purring of a Cat," was the answer, "but everybody knows that the Cat is not purring anywhere around here."

"She might be," said the Dappled Gray. "Where does the sound seem to be?"

"Above my head," said the Blind Horse; "and she certainly would not be purring up there at this time. She would either be sound asleep, or off hunting, or else out in the sunshine, where she loves to sit."

The Dappled Gray felt that this was so, and he could not say a word. He was very sorry for his friend. He thought how dreadful it would seem to be both blind and deaf, and he choked on the oats he was swallowing.

"Now don't worry," said the Blind Horse; "if I should be deaf, I could still feel the soft touch of the breeze on my skin, and could taste my good food, and rub noses with my friends. I wouldn't have spoken of it, only I hoped that you could hear the noise also, and then I would know that it was real." That was just like him. He was always patient and sweet-tempered. In all the years he had been blind, he had never once complained of it, and many times when the other Horses were about to say or do some ill-natured thing, they thought of him and stopped. They were ashamed to be impatient when they were so much better off than he.

The Horses kept on eating their oats and resting from their hard work. In the hay-loft above their heads, the Cat lay and purred and purred and purred, never dreaming that her doing so

# Listen.

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*Teacher instructions: Read this passage aloud to your learner.*

made trouble for her friends downstairs.

She had been hunting all the night before, creeping softly through the barn and hiding behind bags and boxes to watch for careless Mice and young Rats. They were night-runners as well as she, and many things happened in the barn and farmyard while the larger four-legged people were sound asleep and the fowls were dreaming with their heads tucked under their wings. Sometimes there were not so many Mice in the morning as there had been the evening before, and when this was so, the Cat would walk slowly through the barn and look for a comfortable resting-place. When she found it, she would turn around three times, as her great-great-great-great-great-great-grandmother used to do to trample a bed in the jungle, and then lie down for a long nap. She said she always slept better when her stomach was full, and that was the habit of all Cats.

Sometimes she hunted in the fields, and many a morning at sunrise the Cows had seen her walking toward the barn on the top of the fences. She did not like to wet her feet on the dewy grass when it could be helped; so, as soon as she was through hunting, she jumped on to the nearest fence and went home in that way.

Yes, last night she had been hunting, yet she was not thinking of it now. Neither was she asleep. A Rat gnawed at the boards near her, and she hardly turned her head. A Mouse ran across the floor in plain sight, and she watched him without moving. What did she care about them now? Her first Kittens lay on the hay beside her, and she would not leave them on this first day of their lives unless she really had to.

Of course she had seen little Kittens before—Kittens that belonged to other Cats—but she was certain that none of them had looked at all like her three charming babies. She could not decide which one of them was the most beautiful. She was a Tortoise-shell Cat herself, and her fur was spotted with white, black, and yellow. The babies had the same colors on their soft coats, but not in just the same way as hers.

At first she thought her largest daughter was the beauty of the family; she was such a clear yellow, with not a hair of any other color on her. "I always did like yellow Cats," said the young mother, "and they are said to be very strong."

Then she looked at her smaller daughter, who was white with tiny yellow and black spots on neck and head. "Such a clean-looking baby," she exclaimed, "and I am sure that when her eyes are open I shall find them blue like my own."

Just at this moment, the warm, dark little bunch of fur between her forepaws moved, and she looked lovingly down upon him, her only son. "He is certainly a very remarkable one," she said. "I never before saw such a fine mixture of yellow and black, first a hair of one and then a hair of the other, so that, unless one is very close to him it looks like a rich brown. And then his feet!" She gave him a loving little poke with one forefoot and turned him onto his back. This made him wave his tiny paws in the air. The thick cushions of skin on each were as black as

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black could be, and that is very uncommon. They are usually pink, like those of his sisters.

The little fellow lay there, wriggling very feebly, until his mother gave him another poke that turned him over. Then he stretched and crawled toward her, reaching his head first one way and then another. He was so weak that he could not raise his body from the hay, but dragged it along by taking short and uncertain steps with his four shaking legs. It was only a short time since he found that he had legs, and he hadn't any idea how to use them. He just moved whichever one seemed most in his way.

He didn't know where he was going, or what he was going for, but his little stomach was empty and he was cold. Something, he didn't know what, made him drag himself toward the big, warm creature near by. When his black nose touched the fur of her body, he stopped pushing ahead and began to feel from side to side. He did not know now for what he was feeling, yet when he found something his tiny mouth closed around it and a stream of sweet warm milk began to flow down his throat and into his empty stomach. He did not know that it was milk. He did not know anything except that it was good, and then he fell asleep. His sisters did in the same way, and soon the happy mother could look down and see her three babies in a row beside her, all sound asleep. Their pointed little tails lay straight out behind them, and their soft ears were bent forward close to their heads.

"I wonder," said she, "if I was ever as small as they are, and if my mother loved me as I love them." She stretched out one of her forepaws and looked at it. It was so much larger, so very much larger, than the paws of the Kittens. Such a soft and dainty paw as it was, and so perfectly clean. She stretched it even more, and saw five long, curved, sharp claws slide out of their sheaths or cases. She quickly slid them back into their sheaths, for fear that in some way they might happen to touch and hurt her babies.

A Swallow flew down from his nest and passed over her head, then out of the open window. "Kittens!" said he. "Kittens!" He flew over the fields and saw two Horses standing by the fence while the farmer was oiling his machine. "We have new neighbors in the barn," said he, "and the Cat is purring louder than ever."

"Who are the neighbors?" asked the Dappled Gray.

"Kittens!" sang the Swallow. "Oh, tittle-ittle-ittle-ee."

The Blind Horse drew a long breath. "Then I did hear her purr," said he; "I am so glad." He never made a fuss about his troubles, for he was brave and unselfish, yet the Dappled Gray knew without being told how much lighter his heart was since he heard that the Cat had really been purring above his head.

The days passed by, and the Kittens grew finely. They got their eyes open, first in narrow cracks, and then wider and wider, until they were round and staring. The White Kitten had blue ones, the others brown. In the daytime, they had long, narrow black spots in the middle of their eyes, and as the bright light faded, these black spots spread out sideways until they were



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quite round. When it was very dark, these spots glowed like great Fireflies in the night. Then the Mice, who often scampered through the loft when the Cat was away, would see three pairs of eyes glowing in the hay, and they would squeak to each other: "See! The Kittens are watching us."

And the Kittens, who were not yet old enough to go hunting, and who were afraid of everything that stirred, would crowd up against each other, arch their little backs, raise their pointed tails, stand their fur on end, and say, "Pst! Ha-a-ah!"

Sometimes they did this when there was not a person in sight and what frightened them was nothing but a wisp of hay, blown down by the wind. Afterward, when anything moved, they sprang at it, held it down with their sharp little claws, and chewed on it with their pointed white teeth. When they were tired of this game, they played hide-and-seek, and when they were tired of that they chased their tails. It was so nice always to have playthings with them. Sometimes, too, they chased each other's tails, and caught them and bit them hard, until the Kitten who owned the tail cried, "Mieow!" and tumbled the biter over.

They were allowed to play all through the loft except over the mangers. Their mother was afraid that if they went there they would fall through the holes which had been left in the floor. During the winter, the farmer used to throw hay down through these to the hungry Horses. When the Cat saw her children going toward these places, she called them back and scolded them. Sometimes she struck them lightly on the ears with her forepaw. "I don't like to," said she, "but they must learn to keep away. It is not safe for them to go there."

One morning when she was away, they were playing hide-and-seek, and the White Kitten was hunting for a good hiding-place. "I'll hide near one of these holes," she said, "and they won't dare come there to look. Then, after they have hunted a long, long time, I'll get another place and let them find me." She did hide there, and after a long, long time, when her brother and sister were in the farther end of the loft, she tried to run over to another dark corner. Instead of that, the hay began to slip and slide under her and she went down, down, down, through a long dark box, and hit with a hard thud at the bottom.

She was so scared that she couldn't have told how many toes she had on her forefeet. Of course, she had five on each, like all Kittens, and four on each hind-foot, but if anybody had asked her then, she would have been quite likely to say "three."

She was sore, too, and when she felt a warm breath on her and opened her eyes, she saw that some great creature had thrust his nose through a hole in the side of the dark box. "It must be a Horse," she thought, "and my mother says that they are kind to Cats. I think I'd better tell him who I am. I don't want him to take me for a Pig, because he may not like Pigs." You see, she forgot that Horses had been living in the great world and could tell to what family a person belonged the very first time they saw him. The only people she had ever seen were Swallows and Mice.



*Teacher instructions: Read this passage aloud to your learner.*

"If—if you please, sir," she said, "I am the White Kitten, and I just tumbled down from the hay-loft, but I didn't mean to."

"I am the Blind Horse," answered a strong and gentle voice outside, "and I hope you are not hurt."

"Not very much," answered the Kitten. "I just feel achey in my back and scared all over."

"Come out into the manger, White Kitten," said the Blind Horse, "and perhaps you won't be so scared. I won't touch you, although I should like to. You know I am blind, and so, unless I can touch people I don't know how they look."

The White Kitten crawled out and saw him, and then she wasn't afraid at all. She was so sorry for him that she couldn't be afraid. She remembered the time before her eyes opened when she had to feel for everything she wanted. It was not so hard then, because she did not know anything different, but now she could not bear to think of not being able to see all that was around her. "If you will put your nose down in the other end of the manger," she said, "I will rub up against it, and you will know more how I look."

The Blind Horse did this, and who can tell how happy it made him when her warm and furry back rubbed up against his nose? "Thank you," he whinnied; "you are very good."

"Would you know I was a Kitten if I hadn't told you?" she said.

"Indeed I would," he answered.

"And you wouldn't have thought me a Pig?" she asked.

"Never!" said he; "I wouldn't even have believed you if you had told me that you were one."

The Blind Horse and the White Kitten became firm friends, and when she tried to wash off the dirt that got into her fur she sat in the very middle of the manger and told him all about it.

"My mother always has washed me," she said, "but my tongue is getting big enough to wash with now. It is getting rougher, too, and that is a good thing. My mother says that the reason why all the prickles on Cats' tongues point backward is because then we can lick all the meat off from bones with them. I'm 'most old enough to eat meat now. I can't wash the top of my head though. You have to wet your paw and scrub it with that. Can you wash the top of your head?"

Then the Blind Horse told her how the men kept him clean; and while he was telling this the Cat came into his stall, crying and looking for her child.

"Oh, mother," cried the White Kitten, "I tumbled down, but I didn't mean to, and I'm sorry I didn't mind you, and the Blind Horse can't wash the top of his head, and he knew that I wasn't a Pig."

The Cat was so glad to find the White Kitten that she didn't scold at all, but jumped into the manger and washed her clean, and then caught the loose skin of the Kitten's neck between her teeth and carried her through the stalls, across the barn-floor, and up the stairs to their home. That made the Kitten much ashamed, for she thought that she was old enough to go alone.

# Listen.

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*Teacher instructions: Read this passage aloud to your learner.*

For two whole days after this the White Kitten was so lame from her fall that she could only lie still on the hay, and she could see that her mother did not treat her as before. "I won't ever go near those places again," she said. "I never will."

"You promised me before that you would stay away," said her mother, "and you broke your promise." She did not punish the White Kitten, but she felt very sad and she could not help showing it. There was a dreadful ache in her child's little Kitten-heart that was a great deal worse than the lameness in her back or in her neck or in her legs.

At last there came a day when the whole family walked downstairs, and the Cat showed her three children to the farmyard people and spoke a few words about each. "The yellow Kitten, my big daughter," said she, "promises to be the best hunter: she is a wonderful jumper, and her claws are already nearly as long as mine. My son, the brown one, has a remarkable voice. And this White Kitten, my little daughter, is the most obedient of all. She has never disobeyed me since the day she fell into the manger, and I can trust her perfectly."

Then the White Kitten knew that she was quite forgiven, and she was the happiest person on the farm.

– Clara Dillingham Pierson

# Discuss.



## Lesson 105



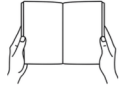
*Teacher instructions: Discuss the illustration and the passage with your learner.*



*What do you see in the illustration?*

*What do you remember from the story you just listened to? Tell me the story using your own words.*

*Read.*



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*Read this silently and then out loud.*

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*Write.*



Lesson 105



*Copy the passage.*

“Would you know I was a Kitten if I hadn’t told you?” she said.

“Indeed I would,” he answered.

Handwriting practice lines consisting of solid top and bottom lines with a dashed midline.

Write.



Lesson 105

end



Use the illustration as inspiration to write a sentence.



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