

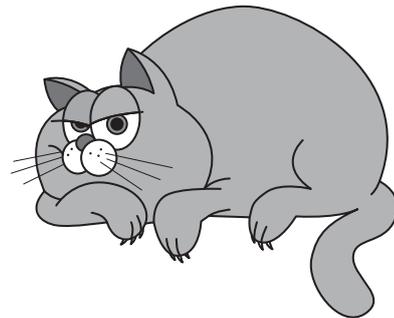
 This text is from *The First Macmillan Nursery Collection: Cinderella and other stories* and is retold by Mary Hoffman.

## Belling the Cat

'Belling the Cat' is a fable, a short story with a moral or lesson to be learned. This fable is thought to have been written by Aesop, a slave who lived in Ancient Greece.

There was once a colony of mice living in an old house. Their lives were sweet and easy, with plenty to eat. But there was one cloud in their sky: the cat.

He was a huge fat ginger tom, but still very quick on his feet, and he liked nothing better than hunting mice. Almost every day, the mice lost one of their number to the swift paws and sharp teeth of the ginger cat.



The mice called a council to see what they could do. There was a lot of squeaking and muttering, but one mouse came up with an idea.

"If we were to get a bell and tie it round the cat's neck," he said, "we would always be able to hear when he was approaching. Then we could escape his clutches."

All the mice agreed that this was a really excellent idea. Indeed, they went so far as to get a bell and a ribbon. Now, all they needed was someone to volunteer for the job of tying it round the neck of old Ginger.

But, funnily enough, not one mouse came forward, not even the one who had suggested the bell. And to this day, for all I know, the big ginger cat is still catching mice, even though they know how to stop him, for want of a mouse brave enough to put the bell round his neck.

And it's no good our feeling superior to the timid mice, for how often do we humans also know the right thing to do, but don't do it because we are afraid? There is often not much to choose between us and those mice.

Name:	Class:	Date:
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# Belling the Cat

1 In what way were the lives of the mice *sweet and easy*? Give **one** way.

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	2b
1 mark	

2 *But there was one cloud in their sky...*

What does this mean? Tick **one**.

They didn't like it when it rained.

They only had one real problem.

They didn't understand each other.

They couldn't find a volunteer.

	2a
1 mark	

3 Look at the paragraph beginning: *He was a huge fat ginger tom...*

**Find** and **copy a phrase** that means the same as 'one of the mice got caught'.

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	2b
1 mark	

4 At the council, *one mouse came up with an idea*.

What was this idea and how would it help the mice? Explain your answer as fully as you can, using the text to help you.

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	2b
2 marks	

	/ 5
Total for this page	

5 *But, funnily enough, not one mouse came forward...*

What does the phrase *funnily enough* show about the writer? Tick **one**.

- The writer doesn't know why no mouse came forward.
- The writer knows how the mice could stop the cat.
- The writer thinks the mouse's idea is quite entertaining.
- The writer is not surprised that no mouse came forward.

2g  
1 mark

6 *And to this day, for all I know, the big ginger cat is still catching mice...*

Why is this still happening, even though the mice know how to stop the cat?

\_\_\_\_\_

2d  
1 mark

7 *And it's no good our feeling superior to the timid mice...*

Use the text to explain **in your own words** what the writer means here.

\_\_\_\_\_

2g  
1 mark

8 **Draw lines** to **match** each word with its meaning in the story. One has been done for you.

Word	Meaning in story
fable	nervous and frightened
council	offer to do something
swift	a short story with a moral
timid	quick
volunteer	a meeting

2a  
1 mark

9 The story 'Belling the Cat' is a fable with a lesson to be learned. Which of the following 'lessons' would best fit the story? Tick **one**.

- It is often better to work together.
- It is no good being afraid of anything.
- It is not always easy to do the right thing.
- It is hard to come up with good ideas.

2c  
1 mark

/ 10  
Total for this test