

The Cat-Astrophe

It was a catastrophe. A cat-astrophe to be exact. The Witch Familiar Obedience Exam, known as the WFOE, was in fifteen minutes and Alice's cat was *not* cooperating. Alice thought an obedience exam was a silly idea anyway. Since when were witches' familiars obedient?

When Alice came to witch school, she learned that a familiar was a small household pet that bonded with a witch and helped her with magic. She also learned that they were usually cats, or maybe birds or toads, or sometimes mice. None of those pets were really great at being obedient. If they wanted obedient, they should have picked dogs.

So far Alice's cat had not done much except purr and cough up fur balls. She slept on Alice's pillow, so I guess you could say they were bonded, but she had never helped Alice with magic. Unfortunately Alice needed all the help she could get.

Alice had failed almost all of her tests since she arrived at witch school. She failed the potions test when the elixir she brewed to make her run faster made her feet stick to the floor instead. It must have been all the chewing gum she added. The only test she hadn't failed was the dormitory tidiness test. She made her bed as well as anyone else. The only problem was she didn't use magic to do it.

Now Alice was sure that she was on her way to failing the WFOE. “Sit!” she said half-heartedly to her cat. The cat purred. “Come!” she commanded. The cat coughed up a hairball. Alice sighed. It seemed hopeless. One more failure and they’d probably kick her out of school. She figured she deserved it. She was not cut out for magic.

Alice slumped against the wall. She might as well give up. Now there were only ten minutes left before the WFOE and she had no idea how to get her cat to be more obedient. She didn’t even know how to get her to stop coughing up hairballs. As she hung her head, her friend Marnie came out of the exam room.

“How was it?” Alice asked.

“So easy!” said Marnie said. “All you have to do is demonstrate one command. You can choose from sit, come, or stay. If your familiar does it, then you’ll pass. Easy breezy!” Marnie skipped off down the hall, waving her exam paper. Her bird flew behind her. Apparently it knew the come command really well.

Great, thought Alice. It sounded easy, but her cat wouldn’t sit. It wouldn’t come. Then Alice had an idea. Stay! That she could do. She had five minutes left to find some chewing gum. Easy breezy!



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NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. Which test did Alice pass?
 - a. WFOE
 - b. Dormitory Tidiness
 - c. Chewing Gum
 - d. Potions

2. Which animals are NOT usually familiars?
 - a. Dogs
 - b. Birds
 - c. Mice
 - d. Cats

3. How do you think Alice feels about the possibility of failing the WFOE?
 - a. Angry
 - b. Happy
 - c. Defeated
 - d. Stubborn

4. Why do you think Alice wants to find chewing gum at the end?
 - a. Because chewing it will make her less nervous
 - b. Because she wants to give it to Marnie to celebrate passing the test
 - c. Because she wants to make the potion to stick her cat's feet to the ground
 - d. Because she doesn't know what else to do

Instructions for teachers:

These questions can be used to assess understanding of the reading passage.

The item in bold is the correct answer for each question.

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