

Mirka Hokkanen 2023 Media Kit:

Kitty and Cat: Opposites Attract

Mirka is available for interviews and speaking engagements.

Bio:

Mirka Hokkanen is an author-illustrator who likes quirky animal characters and stories that make kids laugh. She began her career as a fine art printmaker before transitioning to book illustration. Mirka is the illustrator for *Four Otters Toboggan: An Animal Counting Book*, and the author-illustrator for the graphic novel series *Mossy and Tweed* (Holiday House), the picture book series *Kitty and Cat* (Candlewick), and the non-fiction picture book series *Little Seasons* (OddDot).

Mirka was born in Finland, but now has lived all around the world as a military spouse. She is currently living in South Korea, with her husband, three children and an assortment of pets. When not writing or illustrating books, she loves to be outdoors, sew, or paint and print in her studio. For more info, see MirkaH.com

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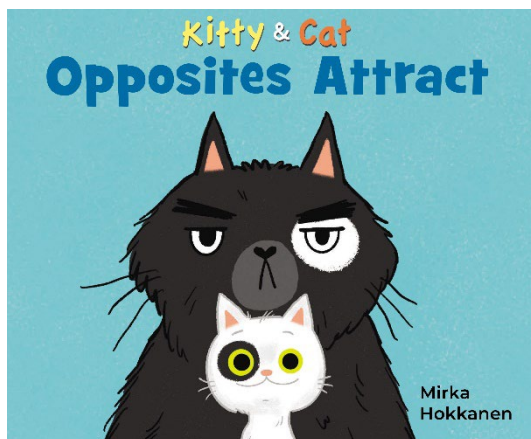
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Kitty and Cat: Opposites Attract



Publisher: Candlewick Press

Publishing Date: April 4, 2023

Price: \$18.99

ISBN: 1536223670

Length: 40 pages

Ages: 2-5 years

Book trailer: <https://youtu.be/VHxtFYsMjKU>

Themes: Opposites concept book, children's cat books, humor, acceptance, friendship

Meet Kitty! Kitty wants to play! Meet Cat. Cat just wants to nap. Bold, whimsical artwork and plenty of humor engage little ones in a sly and stylish introduction to opposites.

This deceptively simple concept book introduces readers to *grumpy, old, exhausted* Cat, who just wants to be left alone, and to *happy, new, energetic* Kitty, who longs to make friends. In a story told entirely through well-chosen pairs of opposites and drolly expressive artwork, author-illustrator Mirka Hokkanen manages to elevate the humble concept book into a true work of art—one that is bound to have readers *giggling* and *crying* for more!

Q&A

3-minute talk from author-illustrator Mirka Hokkanen, as she talks about the idea for Kitty and Cat; how the book evolved from idea, to sketches to final artwork. <https://youtu.be/IKi4-jqCe9k>

Where did the idea of kitty and cat combined with opposites come from?

The story of Kitty and Cat evolved from a silly-cat-antics idea to cat-antics-using-opposite-word-pairs to an opposite-word-pairs-friendship story. In the image you can see the scribbles I made in the middle of the night on a piece of paper, when the idea first struck me. The idea of the opposite word pairs and humorous cat antics came first, but I felt the story needed more structure and a stronger hook, so I decided to add the extra layer of the friendship story told only through the illustrations.

Can you talk a little bit about your creation process for this book? Where did you start with this one? Illustration or writing? How did it evolve all the way to this finished product?

I first thought up funny scenes and what the opposite word pairs for those scenes could be. So the book evolved and changed with the parameters of opposite words pairs that could come from visual setups. Once I started working with Kaylan and Lauren my editor and art director at Candlewick, we edited and moved scenes around a lot to create a better emotional story arc for the cats. Some scenes were left out, and new ones invented. At the end we probably spent the most time going back and forth and polishing illustrations and making sure that each illustration moved the story, and each composition, interaction and tilt of the head squeezed out the maximum emotion for that page.

Can you talk about the art style you chose for the story? Why did you use so much white space, instead of full color spreads?

I love Eric Hill's Spot books, not only because of the flaps, but because the illustrations are simple and easily readable for the youngest of readers. I see lots of books for young kids being produced where the illustrations are very busy and saturated, and they are hard for kids to (visually) decipher. My mission was to produce a book that had a classical feel, and staying power, like Eric Hill's books, but update it with humor and a modern twist.

Do you have any future plans to do more like this? Can we expect a book series?

Yes! I originally wrote Kitty and Cat into a series of four concept books and so far we have made two. *Kitty and Cat: Bent Out of Shape* comes out fall 2024. If the books do well, I have hopes that we'd get to continue the series. I have ideas for holiday and themed books as well. I've fallen in love with my characters and have so much fun illustrating them!

Why do you write for children?

As a visual person I never grew out of picture books. I'm happy to have kids to share them with now, but the books I buy for them are bought just as much for me. Having children also changed picture books for me. Instead of a very personal experience of how much I liked reading one, it became a bonding and sharing activity. We've created so many precious memories around reading and books, and I want to share and create those moments for others. I hope that parents who read my books will be able to have the same kinds of experiences with their kids that I've had with mine; lots of laughs, cuddles, being curious about our world, using your imagination, and learning new things.

Reviews

Hokkanen tells a simple, satisfying story while including examples of opposites in a natural-sounding way. . . Color is used sparingly in some scenes and fully in others but always effectively. An amusing, enjoyable picture book for reading aloud.

—Booklist

The concise text, made up entirely of opposite words, is effective, while the digitally created illustrations of the protagonists will make cat lovers smile; together, text and art convey a simple story of the developing relationship between the new fur-siblings. . . endearing.

—Kirkus Reviews

Full review <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/mirka-hokkanen/kitty-and-cat/>

Digitally rendered feline figures pounce and play across ample white space, interacting with cat toys, yarn balls, and a goldfish bowl in various splashes of color, creating a lively, feline-forward concept lesson.

-Publishers Weekly

Full review <https://www.publishersweekly.com/9781536223675>

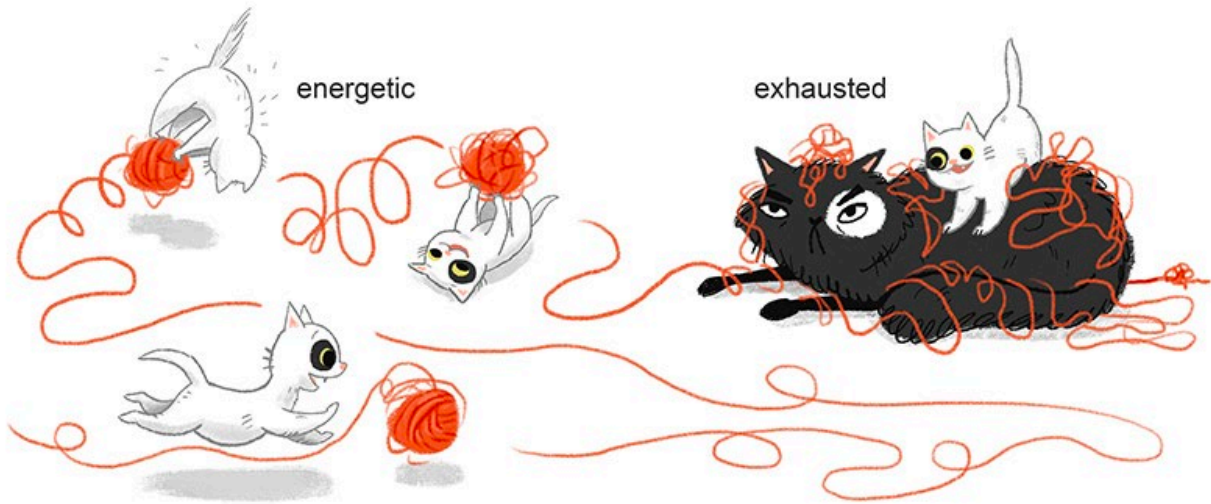
Sample Illustrations:



big



little



energetic

exhausted



up

down

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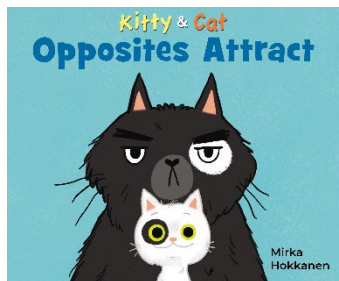
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