

19th Century literary non-fiction

Source B

This 1893 article originally appeared in *The Lady* magazine, a weekly women's magazine mainly read by higher class women. This article discusses the look and behaviour of domesticated cats, with the author particularly impressed by her/his own cats.

Cats

Never have cats held so important a position in the animal world as they do at the present time. In days gone by pussy's chief value consisted in her capabilities as a mouser, and so long as she accomplished her work satisfactorily that was all that was required of her.

Nobody troubled as to the shortness of her face, the size of her ears, or the length of her tail.

5 Everyone was perfectly satisfied with her sober grey coat and four white feet. Her green eyes, too, we all took quite as a matter of course. But now a very different state of affairs exists. In many instances her propensity for mousing only composes one of her numberless characteristics, if, indeed, the most aristocratic specimens deign to catch a mouse at all.

10 The markings which are now produced in our cats are certainly wonderful. We have striped tabbies and spotted tabbies, the stripes and spots so clearly and regularly defined in the best cats that it seems difficult to believe that it is all Nature. The colours, too, are most beautiful – the rich orange, delicate chinchilla, dusky-looking smoke, vivid red, and last, but not least, blue – blue, or what the uninitiated would undoubtedly cover term slate, being one of the most fashionable shades among the pussies of the present day.

15 Cats can be trained to almost anything, if taught when they are young. We have a number of Persians, which sit with equanimity* upon the top of our birdcages watching the canaries hopping merrily about from perch to perch, making no attempt to touch them, nor ever dreaming of inserting a velvet paw through the narrow wires, to the discomfiture of the fluttering inmates. They are left alone with the birds by the hour together, yet an overturned
20 cage or a slaughtered canary is an unheard-of catastrophe in our household. Chickens, too, our cats fully realise are forbidden to figure in their *menu*. They ramble about at their own sweet will among numberless broods of the tiniest bantam* chicks, yet one of the latter is never missing! and they quite seem to recognise the fact that a plump little mouse, or an unwary blue-bottle caught buzzing upon the window-pane, is their only legitimate prey.

25 Sometimes we hear of cats creating terrible havoc in the poultry-yard, killing chickens by the dozen, and making life a perfect martyrdom to the distracted mothers. The best way to cure pussy of this fatal habit is to take the dead chicken from her, pepper it well, and then fasten it round the delinquent's neck. Place her in a room, and leave her thus for an hour or two, to
30 ruminate over her wrong-doings. It is ten to one if poor puss will ever err* again. Once released from this somewhat severe, if necessary, punishment, she will make off, with tears in her eyes (whether from emotion or the pepper it is impossible to say), and for the future she will avoid the poultry department with strange persistency, and regard with distrust the fluffy little denizens* of the chicken coops.

Glossary

- * equanimity – calmness and composure, even in spite of difficult circumstances
- * bantam – naturally smaller than the standard-size of fowl
- * err – to make a mistake or an error
- * denizens – inhabitant or resident of a particular place

Sample Paper 2 Section A Question 3:

03 You now need to refer only to **Source B** from **lines 9 to 20**.

How does the writer use language to describe cats?

[12 marks]

This article is from the *Flintshire Observer Mining Journal and General Advertiser for the Counties of Flint and Denbigh* (2nd February 1893) where it was reprinted from *The Lady*. The full text can be found online at <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3751519/3751521/20/cats>. I have added paragraphs for ease of reading.

This resource was found by using the free [Welsh Newspapers Online](#) website created and maintained by Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru – The National Library of Wales.

This resource is brought to you by Dr Catherine Charlwood, a former teacher, lifelong scholar and co-host of [LitSciPod: The Literature and Science Podcast](#). If you have questions, she can be contacted at catherine.charlwood@cantab.net.