

THIS STORY IS NOT ABOUT A KITTEN



Randall de Sève
and
Carson Ellis

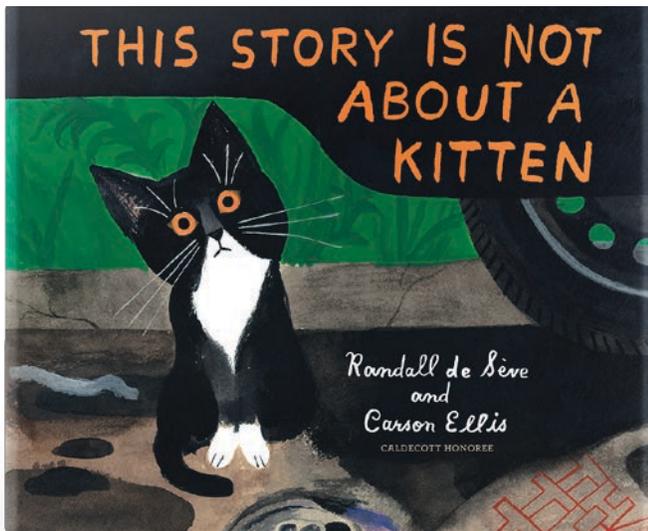
CALDECOTT HONOREE

EDUCATORS' GUIDE & ACTIVITIES

RHTeachersLibrarians.com



THIS STORY IS NOT ABOUT A KITTEN



HC: 978-0-593-37453-5 • GLB: 978-0-593-37454-2

EL: 978-0-593-37455-9 • Grades: Preschool-3

Themes: Animals, Acceptance & Belonging,
Family & Relationships

About the Book

This is a heartwarming picture book about a neighborhood coming together to help a kitten find a home, from bestselling author Randall de Sève and Caldecott Honor-winning illustrator Carson Ellis.

Contrary to what you may believe, this story is not about a kitten, hungry and dirty, scared and alone, needing a home. It is also not about the dog who heard the kitten meowing sadly. Even less so about the woman and child walking the dog, who stopped when their dog heard the kitten. Nor is it about the friends who brought a box for the kitten or the man who offered it some milk. No, this story is not about a kitten—well, maybe a little. This is a story about community, compassion, and generosity.

Randall de Sève's thoughtful and warm story is sure to fill readers of all ages with hope and the warm fuzzy feeling that rescuing animals brings. Wonderfully complemented by Carson Ellis's breathtaking illustrations, this book is sure to be cherished by animal-loving readers everywhere!

About the Author and Illustrator

Photo credit: Key Sujit Photography



Randall De Sève is the *New York Times* bestselling author of award-winning picture books that have been translated into many languages worldwide. All of her stories spring from real-life

experiences, then take shape in her imagination. *This Story Is Not About a Kitten* was inspired by a team of huge-hearted Brooklyn neighbors who rescued a kitten from under a car outside Randall's home. Visit her online at randalldeseve.com or find her on Twitter at [@randallde](https://twitter.com/randallde).

Photo credit: Autumn de Witte



Carson Ellis is the author and illustrator of the bestselling picture books *Home* and *Du Iz Tak?* She also collaborated on the Wildwood Chronicles with her husband, Colin Meloy. She lives

with her family near Portland, Oregon. Visit her online at carsonellis.com or find her on Twitter at [@cfellis](https://twitter.com/cfellis).



Take Action!

In the story, each character took action to help. Read the prompts below and think about something you could do to be kind and helpful in each scenario. Jot down your ideas. Afterward, compare your thoughts with others to see how many small acts of kindness can result in a more compassionate and generous community.



Scenario	Ways to Be Kind
You have a substitute teacher for the day.	
The neighborhood park and playground need cleaning up.	
You are at a busy restaurant and notice that your server looks overwhelmed.	
An elderly neighbor is having trouble keeping up with yardwork.	
You hear news that your local animal shelter is at full capacity.	
A house in your neighborhood has been damaged and the family is in need of help.	

We Are All Linked

- Create a community kindness chain that shows how small acts of kindness accumulate to help others. Begin by brainstorming needs in your class, local community, and the world. Using strips of construction paper, have each child write down one action that could address the larger issue. Glue or tape the strips to create links in a paper chain. Display the community kindness chain where others can see it.



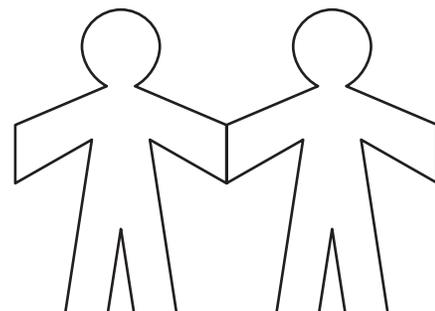
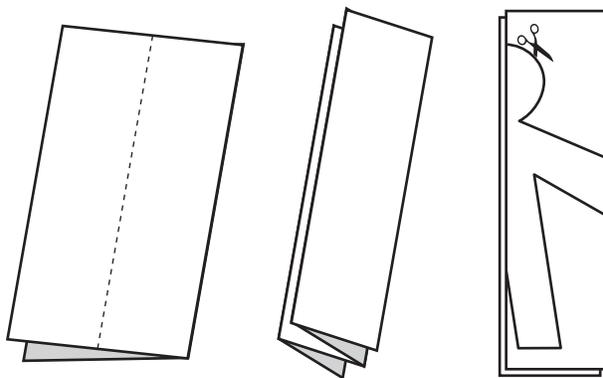
- Create a paper doll chain to illustrate the bonds created between people in a community. Decorate each figure individually to represent the members of your classroom or neighborhood. On the back of each figure, write down their name and role in the community. You can also try the following variations of this activity:
 - Decorate the paper dolls to represent the characters in the story. Use the paper chain to tell how each character helped to rescue the kitten.
 - Think of a small-scale (e.g., a chaotic lunchroom) or large-scale (e.g., climate change) issue that requires collective action to address. Have each student come up with an idea of how they, as an individual, could help change the situation. Decorate and label the figures accordingly.

Materials:

Paper, pencil, scissors, tape

Instructions:

1. Fold a piece of paper to create an accordion pleat. First, fold the paper in half by matching edges and making a firm crease. Then, fold one edge back to meet the crease. Turn the paper over and repeat. You will have an accordion pleat with four equal sections.
2. Draw half of a figure onto the folded edge with the arm extending to the edge.
3. Cut the figure out with scissors.
4. Unfold your paper doll chain and decorate. You may tape papers together to create a longer chain.



Discussion Questions

- As the book's title reveals, this story is not about a kitten! In your own words, explain what you think this story is about.
- Why do you think the author chose this title for the story?
- Each character played a role in rescuing the kitten. How did each person help coax the kitten out from under the car?
- The neighbors don't know one another well at the start of the story. Why do you think they were distant at first?
- At the end of the story, the kitten finds a home. However, she is not the only one whose circumstances have changed. What else changed over the course of the story?
- Think about how you could help if you were a character in the story. What could you do, and how could your actions affect the other characters?

More Classroom Activities

- Cumulative stories use rhythm and repetition to build a narrative. The patterned prose helps readers develop essential skills such as predictability and sequencing, making them wonderful read-alouds. Be expressive and play with pace, tone, and volume as you read this book aloud, and encourage children to do the same with a partner.
- Practice sequencing skills through partner reading. Have pairs retell the story using their hands, lifting up one finger for each character in the correct order.
- Reflect on the story elements such as plot, characters, and theme. Which one was most essential to the story and why?



This educators' guide was prepared by Joanne Yi, PhD.

Joanne is a former elementary teacher and an adjunct assistant professor of curriculum and instruction at Indiana University. She researches diversity and inclusion issues in children's literature.



Visit [RHTeachersLibrarians.com](https://www.rhteacherslibrarians.com), your online destination for all the resources you need for your school or library!



@RHCBEducators



@TheRandomSchoolHouse