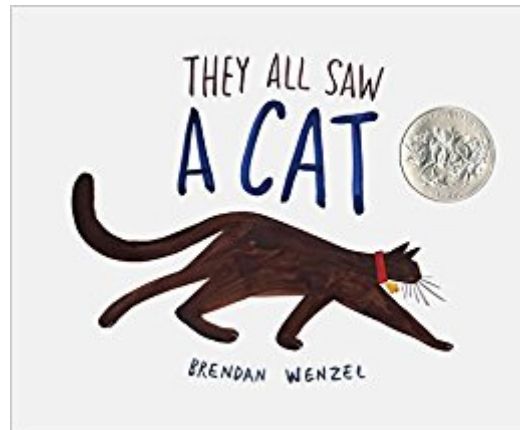




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# They All Saw A Cat



## Synopsis

A 2017 Caldecott Honor Book A New York Times bestseller "An ingenious idea, gorgeously realized." — Shelf Awareness, starred review "Both simple and ingenious in concept, Wenzel's book feels like a game changer." — The Huffington Post The cat walked through the world, with its whiskers, ears, and paws . . . In this glorious celebration of observation, curiosity, and imagination, Brendan Wenzel shows us the many lives of one cat, and how perspective shapes what we see. When you see a cat, what do you see?

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 310 (What's this?)

Hardcover: 44 pages

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Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars 173 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #2,320 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #14 in Books > Children's Books > Animals > Cats #58 in Books > Children's Books > Activities, Crafts & Games > Activity Books #73 in Books > Children's Books > Early Learning > Basic Concepts

Age Range: 3 - 6 years

Grade Level: Preschool - Kindergarten

## Customer Reviews

Brendan Wenzel They All Saw a Cat 4 Starred Reviews "An ingenious idea, gorgeously realized." — New York Times Bestseller School Library Journal Best Book of 2016 Junior Library Guild Selection ABC 2016 Best Books for Children Best Book of the Month Meet the Author Brendan Wenzel Brendan Wenzel is an illustrator based in Brooklyn, New York. A graduate of the Pratt Institute, his work has appeared internationally in children's books, animations, and magazines. They All Saw a Cat is his debut as both author and illustrator.

"Brendan Wenzel is the hottest new name on the picture book scene." — Entertainment Weekly.

They All Saw a Cat [Ã¢â¬Â... Ã¢â¬Â... Ã¢â¬Â... Ã¢â¬Â... 4 Starred Reviews](#)

"Fascinating" [Ã¢â¬ÂBooklist, Starred Review Ã¢â¬Â....](#) "Thoughtful" [Ã¢â¬ÂSchool Library Journal, Starred Review Ã¢â¬Â....](#) "Ingenious" [Ã¢â¬ÂShelf Awareness, Starred Review Ã¢â¬Â....](#) "Marvelous" [Ã¢â¬Â Publisher's Weekly, Starred Review Ã¢â¬Â....](#)

Brendan Wenzel is an illustrator based in Brooklyn, New York. A graduate of the Pratt Institute, his work has appeared internationally in children's books, animations, and magazines. *They All Saw a Cat* is his debut as both author and illustrator.

It's funny. Unless you're a teacher or librarian, a grown adult that does not work or live with children will come into very little contact with picture books. Then, one day, they produce a few kids and BLAMMO! They are shot into a world they haven't visited since they were young themselves. They grab frantically at the classics, discover that a lot of them don't work with very very young children (since when did *Horton Hatches the Egg* have so many words?!?), and then occasionally turn to the experts for help. And why? Parents' reasons are not united on this front. Some read to their kids to instill a love of reading. Others to build little brains. Others to simply fill the long hours of the day. Occasionally a parent will also use a book to teach some kind of a lesson. If the parent is unlucky they will get stuck with a book sticky with didacticism (an unpleasant book that sucks all the joy out of the reading experience). But if they are lucky (or they are in the hands of a capable professional) they might find just the right book, teaching just the right lesson. Here's an example: Let's say you wanted to teach a kid empathy or how our perceptions change depending on our own experiences and who we are. How do you show that in 32 pages? Well, you could pick up some cloying, toxic dribble that overuses words like *hugs* and *friendship*. Nine times out of ten, that's what's going to happen. Or, if you are a clever parent, you pick up a book like *They All Saw a Cat*. It looks at first glance like it's just about a cat. Delve a little deeper and you'll find it about science and art and perception and empathy. And it does it all with very simple sentences, repetition, and a lot of white backgrounds. Not too shabby. Not too shabby at all. *The cat walked through the world, with its whiskers, ears, and paws . . .* In that walking it is seen. It is seen by a child, a dog, and a fox. It is seen by a fish, a mouse, and a bee. It is seen by a bird, a flea, a snake, a skunk, a worm, and a bat. And what's important is that this *seeing* changes with every creature. For mice and dogs, the cat is perceived

through the lens of their own interactions with it. For worms and bats the cat is only visible through the ways in which it moves through space (vibrations through the ground and the ways in which echolocation shape it). By the end we see a hodgepodge cat, a mix of how each animal sees it. Then the cat comes to the water, viewing its own reflection, and imagine what it saw? The book this actually reminded me of the most was that old Rudyard Kipling story "The Cat Who Walked By Himself". Unlike that tale we never really get this book from the cat's perspective. Indeed, the cat is often only visible when others see him. The similarity to Kipling comes with the language. That very first sentence, for example: "The cat walked through the world, with its whiskers, ears, and paws . . .". And as in the original art for that story, the cat here is often pictured from the back. There's a lot of debate about whether or not a book written by one person and illustrated by another can ever be as strong as a book that is written and illustrated by the same artist. "They All Saw a Cat" makes a fairly strong argument that artist who are also authors are the better way to go. Wenzel's sentences are so perfectly layered here. If anything, they match the personality of a cat. There aren't many words, true. But the measured tone is at once soothing and scintillating. I liked how the book broke up the animals. The first three are potential predators. The second three are potential prey. The final six are strict observers. It also ends perfectly with the best possible sentence. Not all picture books, no matter how beautiful they look, are capable of sticking their landings. This one does. In this book the publication page (where they tend to describe the artist's process) gets a little slaphappy. It reads (and I am quoting this precisely), "The illustrations in this book were rendered in almost everything imaginable, including colored pencil, oil pastels, acrylic paint, watercolor, charcoal, Magic Marker, good old number 2 pencils, and even an iBook." The other day I was listening to a podcast where one of the speakers speculated that including this kind of information in a book changes the adult reader's perspective. Would I think less of this book if I found out it was done in digital ink? Possibly, though I should note that I was blown away by the art long before I ever turned to see how it was made. And while digital art is great and has its place, I'd like to see the program that replicates what Wenzel's done here. The sheer beauty of the book is what strikes you first when you read it. Consider the two-page spread where on the left-hand side you see the cat through snake vision, and on the right-hand side you see the cat through skunk vision. The snake's view is a vibrant shock of color, all yellows and reds and blues. The skunk's in contrast, looks like the soft grainy sepia-tones of an old film. Maybe "Casablanca". Put together, side-by-side, the same cat is its own opposite. But if Wenzel were constantly wowing

you with eye-popping images that wouldn't really support the narrative flow. That's why the pacing of the book is key. Wenzel starts the book out very slowly, with lots of white backgrounds and views akin to what we see as people. The child, dog, and fox all see the cat similarly (though I loved the oversized bell around its neck, indicating the fox and dog's superior sense of hearing through a visual medium). The fish is the first moment you start to separate from human visuals. The cat's large, yellow eyes are 80% of the two pages. But it is the mouse's Basquiat-esque view of the cat that steals the show. The red background, and the cat all teeth and claws, and terrifying eyes is a far cry from the cuddly creature at the start of the story. It's also the moment when the child readers come to realize that perception is personal. An interesting criticism of this book is linked precisely to the more science-y aspects of the text. One of the commenters on a blog post I wrote, that included this book, said that, "I desperately wanted some nice science-y back matter to tell us how and why different animals see the cat the way they do. Sure, we can go OH, this animal must be colorblind! This animal 'sees' by sonar! But c'mon, throw us an edu-bone here. It felt like such a missed opportunity." This is an interesting note. We've grown used to useful backmatter in this post-Core Curriculum world of ours. Would this book have been stronger if it had contained a science element to it? Yes and no. It would have been a real boon to teachers, you betcha, and probably to perceptive parents who could have turned it into a lesson for young readers. If I had to guess I'd say the reason it wasn't done may have had something to do with the fact that Wenzel is mixing his fact and fiction here pretty closely. Each animal is 'seeing' as it would in the wild, but that is not to say that the art is by any means scientific. The cartoonish quality to the animals (no better exemplified than in the mouse's bulbous eyes) doesn't hold up to close scrutiny. I would have very much liked notes on the accuracy of the art, but I can understand the fear of asking the reader to take the work too seriously. I don't necessarily agree, but I understand it. How do you discuss this book with kids? Well, you might read it to them, start to finish, and then ask them which picture shows what the cat really looks like. When they select (some will go with the human view but I've no doubt a couple will prefer the dog or bird p.o.v.s) you then tell them that actually all the pictures in this book are true. And if you really want to blow their little minds, you tell them that there's a good chance that the way you see the world isn't the same way the person next to you does. Everyone, everywhere sees the world different from his or her neighbor. Is it any wonder we have problems? The solution is to try and see things from another person's view. Now, if the kids think you're speaking literally or figuratively, it

doesn't really matter. You've planted the seed. Or, rather, the book has. Let us do away with the notion of cat people vs. dog people. This book is for people. End of sentence. And if I got a little crazy in my first paragraph here, filling you in on my view of world peace via picture books, you'll understand when you read this book. That tired old phrase to walk a mile in someone else's shoes makes no sense to a kid. But travel a page through another animal's eyes? There's never been a better fictional picture book that allows you to do this. If we all see something as simple as a cat this differently, what else might we not see the same? It's a treat to eye, ear, and mind, but don't forget. We're all going to see this book through our own lenses. What will your kids see when they look at it? Only one way to find out. For ages 4-7

I am a retired early childhood art teacher. Every illustration in this book stands alone as a piece of art while serving as a wonderful manual to encourage young minds to enjoy and hone their natural observation skills. The story demonstrates without preaching, the fact that every pair of eyes sees the world in their own different way (even their peers). It may also be your kid's first zoology book, since it accurately shows the difference in each animal's capabilities of vision and sense perception. In clear and unfussy language the child gets to travel above ground, underground, fly a bit and go underwater. They will want to do that many times.

Love, love, love this book! The concept of this book - to teach about point-of-view - is brilliantly executed in such an eloquently visual way! Even I have never thought about kitties in all the ways talked about in this book - especially from the point of view of a bee or a fox. The illustrations are vibrant and engaging. This is a book that I will gift over and over again. Well done!

This book is really amazing. I'm a sucker for new picture books for my 3.5 year old son. I prefer books with at least a subtle message of social awareness. This cat book we read for the first time tonight and my son immediately wanted to read it again. The words are very simple, but there is a story. The phrasing is repetitive, which is nice for my son because he likes to contribute and quickly figured out the pattern, if you can even call it that and recite the story. The illustrations really make the book. During the first reading, it was hard for my son to always see that each depiction was (really, I promise!) the cat. The message here is that a single being appears different depending on the perspective of the viewer. It's a really lovely message for young children done in a brilliant, simple, engaging way. This is one of my new favorites.

Wonderfully written and illustrated book to entertain and provide a lesson to young children. That lesson is simply that everything (or everyone) sees the same thing differently depending on how we are "built" or wired. The book simply and clearly drives home the idea that seeing things differently is perfectly fine, and that seeing is in the context of sensory reception and processing through complex filtering that nature has adapted for each specie.

This book has become the favorite of my 3 and 4 year old kids since I got it a month ago. Not only do they ask for it every night as one of their bedtime books, but they also ask for it throughout the day. The story seems simple, "The cat walked through the world, with its whiskers, ears and paws.", but it is anything but simple. This book has an ingenious way of teaching perspective, that even my 3 and 4 year old can understand. They see the cat through various animal's eyes, and they always have questions about it. It is so easy to get completely wrapped up in this book with your kids, I love the story and the illustrations just as much as they do, and I enjoy having a teaching prop that helps me to explain complex topics in a way that they can understand. This book is beautifully illustrated and after I read it, my kids like to go back and look at all of the pictures and "read" it to themselves (they know every word by heart). I have been disappointed with other, highly reviewed childrens books on , that I believe are entertaining more for the parents, but seem murky and uninteresting for the kids. Not this book. There is a reason it gets almost all 5 star reviews, it is gorgeous and delightful for BOTH kids and parents. My only sadness about this book, is that I couldn't scoop up an additional copy during Prime Day to give to my niece because it was claimed so quickly. But that's ok - this book is totally worth paying full price for, and I know she will want it in her library as well.

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