



## A Cat That Travels: Camper Style

**Jack McClellan**

**Yvonne Abuda, Illustrator**

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*A Cat That Travels is a fun, fact-filled family travel adventure for young readers.*

Jack McClellan's lighthearted middle grade tale *A Cat That Travels* follows the adventures of an inquisitive kitten and her newly adoptive family during their RV escapade across Europe. Fun and educational opportunities arise as the furry feline tests the boundaries of the adage about cats having nine lives.

Tom and Cindy Dodd are on a road trip with their parents when a young cat makes its way into their camper. Mr. Dodd agrees to her staying as long as she proves to be a good traveler. From the windmills of Holland to the artistry of Belgium to the majestic Arc de Triomphe, "Campy" joins in the family's exploration of various monumental sites that lend themselves to lessons in history, culture, and customs.

Descriptive, detailed writing highlights festive carnivals, beautiful gardens, and palatial landmarks. Campy's daydreams and catnaps are creative transitional links to the past. In one instance, two street felines witness the historic beheading of Marie Antoinette. An inspiring moment arises in a visit to Notre Dame Cathedral, where Campy's thoughts bring to life the beautiful stained-glass images that relate a story about Napoleon's rise to the seat of emperor.

The steady pace of this narrative gains intermittent momentum through Campy's antics, including a wild run through the Paris Louvre and an incident at the monkey-infested Rock of Gibraltar that lands her in harm's way. Other anxious moments for this mischievous character are a bit more cut and dried.

While the primary focus is Campy and the Dodds, new friendships form during their travels. The commonality of compact accommodations proves a bonding moment with a family living on a boat. Campsite visits introduce fellow travelers from around the globe and provide lessons that "people are the same everywhere." Character conversations adopt a tour guide tone, and the commentary of the younger Dodds often seems too stylized.

The book's black-and-white photos are a lackluster complement to the middle grade–geared story; they do not capitalize on the historic beauty and detail of the visited locations. Drawings render Campy as a big-eyed striped kitten, but their lack of color and energy diminishes the star quality of their subject.

Chapters often close with a touch of humor, keeping the story upbeat even in the aftermath of Campy's troublesome situations. The book ends on an abrupt note, perhaps indicative of adventures to come. *A Cat That Travels* is a fun, fact-filled family travel adventure for young readers.

CAROL DAVALA (January 3, 2019)

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