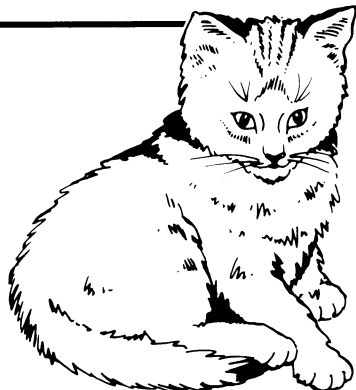


# EVERYDAY CAT

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO  
UNDERSTANDING AND  
ENJOYING YOUR PET CAT



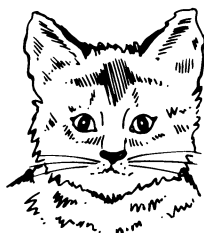
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— from the publisher

Howell Bk, 1991,  
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Letters continued from p.227

or her guardian, has the right of informed consent: The doctor must dispassionately explain the advantages and disadvantages of the new therapy, and then obtain agreement or accept the patient's refusal. If the therapy is still experimental, the doctor must say so, and specific formal procedures exist to ensure a fully informed, noncoerced decision from the patient. These formal procedures also ensure that treatment outcomes will be tracked in a systematic and useful fashion. These restrictions have substantially improved the doctor-patient relationship: The doctor is still a professional, but the patient, appropriately, has the control.

Students and their guardians, however, have no individual right of informed consent. Consequently, educators are sloppy: There is no need to assemble convincing data about a new teaching method, such as whole language, which is still controversial, before using professional prestige to inflict it on an entire school district or state. Fads are the result.

If each set of parents has the right to choose or refuse chemotherapy for their child, they can certainly handle decisions about whole language, new math, year-round schooling and so on. Moreover, educators need to learn, as physicians have, that a profession can improve by relinquishing power to individuals. A professional who says, "I don't know what's best for your child; what do you think?" is no longer playing God.

Kevin Jon Williams  
Wynnewood, Pa.

Poor readers apparently have a lot of difficulty in associating sounds with printed

letters. What if they had a multicolored text to read from, with words that rhyme all printed in the same specific color? "Hat" and "cat" and "rat" all could be in one color, "who" and "clue" and "through" in another, and so on.

The text with rhyming elements identified through colors could be part of either a whole-language approach or the more traditional step-by-step instruction in phonics.

Dan Gollub  
Winfield, Kans.

It has been my observation that teacher training in whole-language instruction is not being conducted in a consistent manner. The varied approaches may serve only to confuse children more. Only when researchers with opposing views collaborate will reading instruction truly progress. Until that time, it is the children who suffer.

S.C. Kroon  
Tallahassee, Fla.

As a school board trustee visiting elementary schools in southern California during the 1960s, I noticed that the children liked reading when their teachers were enthusiastic about teaching it.

The staff of each school was encouraged to adopt the reading method it liked best. Some chose phonics, some chose word recognition, some even worked in kinesthetics (tracing letters with one's finger). Most selected a combination. Tests showed good results from each method, when the staff had chosen it.

I am amazed that the fight about teaching methods goes on.

Marylalice Norman  
Bainbridge Island, Wash.

## Extinction distinctions

"Counting the Dead" (SN: 2/1/92, p.72) was a very balanced and thorough treatment of the K-T extinctions, and I enjoyed the humor. Regarding causes of extinction, however, I did not say that "climatic changes lie closer to the truth." Rather, I said that a major contributing factor was the fragmentation of habitats caused by the documented loss of global epicontinental seaways at the end of the Cretaceous.

The author notes that according to Peter Sheehan, our data show that only a fraction of land-dwelling vertebrates survived; however, our data actually show 29 to 41 percent. Peter Sheehan is cited as saying that "those species that did die out represented the largest animals in the ecosystem." In truth, only the percentage of extinctions among largest vertebrates is higher, not the total number of extinctions. This pattern characterizes all major terrestrial vertebrate extinctions, including those at the end of the ice age some 11,000 years ago.

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