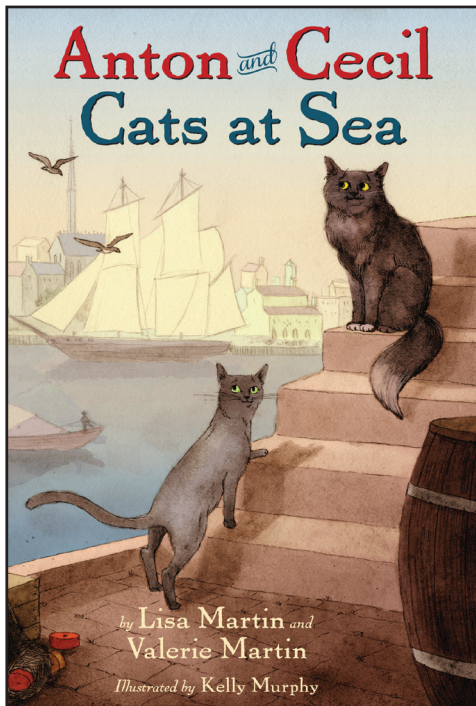


ANTON AND CECIL: CATS AT SEA

by **LISA MARTIN** and **VALERIE MARTIN**
illustrated by **KELLY MURPHY**



MIDDLE-GRADE HARDCOVER FICTION

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BOOK TALK

Anton and Cecil are brother cats who don't have much in common: Anton is slim and quiet, and content to listen to the music in the local saloon, while his bigger brother Cecil is always up for an adventure. Their harborside home has just enough excitement for Anton, but Cecil wants more. He dreams of taking a journey on one of the giant sailing ships. One day when Anton ventures to port, he is impressed by a crew of sailors. Cecil sets out on another ship in search of his brother, and though he always longed for an adventure, he finds that the sea offers more than he bargained for. Encountering creatures big and small, dodging swarthy sailors and fierce pirates, and braving storms and a "Fingerling Mist," Anton and Cecil experience a spectacular journey on the high seas. But on an ocean as vast as the one they've discovered, will they see home—or each other—ever again?

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

VALERIE MARTIN is widely acclaimed for her adult novels, among them *Property*, winner of the Orange Prize, *The Confessions of Edward Day*, and *Mary Reilly*, which was made into a movie starring Julia Roberts. She lives in New York.



Photo Credit: John Cullen

LISA MARTIN, Valerie's niece, is an educator and poet who lives in Virginia. This is Valerie and Lisa's first collaboration and their first book for young readers.



Photo Credit: John Cullen

ABOUT THE ARTIST:

KELLY MURPHY has illustrated many books, including *Masterpiece* by Elise Broach, winner of the E. B. White Read Aloud Award. A graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design, where she is now on the faculty, Ms. Murphy lives in Massachusetts.

PRAISE FOR ANTON AND CECIL: CATS AT SEA

A Junior Library Guild Selection

A Book-of-the-Month Club Selection

“Rich with seafaring vocabulary and nautical adventure.”—*Publishers Weekly*

“The story is well paced with descriptive language that firmly places readers in the midst of dangerous storms, sea battles, and islands full of strange animals . . . [C]hildren who like animal fantasies such as Avi’s *Poppy* will find much to enjoy here.”

—*School Library Journal*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what ways are Anton and Cecil different from one another? In what ways are they similar?
2. On page 9 Anton says: “Right here is the best place in the world for a cat to live. Everybody says that.” Why is the harbor a good place for cats to live? Why do you think Cecil wants to leave someplace that “everybody” says is so great?
3. After Anton is impressed, why does Sonya tell Cecil that Anton “may surprise” them with his bravery (page 68)?
4. During his travels, Anton meets different types of animals that he’s never seen before. How does he feel about these new creatures—like Dave the lizard, the clackers, and Hieronymus the mouse—when he first meets them? How do his attitudes change when he gets to know them? Why?
5. On page 81, Adrianna the dolphin says to Cecil, “This above all: to thine own self be true.” What does it mean to be true to yourself? Why is it important? Is Cecil true to himself? Who might Adrianna be quoting?
6. On page 146, Gretchen refers to herself as part of the crew of pirates aboard her ship, saying, “Some things you just get used to.” Describe her relationship with the pirates. Does she trust them? How has her time on the ship changed her?
7. Cats and mice are usually enemies. Why were Hieronymus and Anton able to become such good friends? In what ways is their friendship important?
8. “Where the eye sees the eye, the lost shall be found.” Why did Anton and Cecil see the eye in the sky so often?
9. How is Anton different at the end of the story? How is Cecil different?
10. What do you think the future holds for the three returned cats? Will they continue their seafaring adventures, or stick to dry land?
11. The sailors think black cats are lucky. When the great whale nearly tips Cecil’s ship, the sailors believe that “the whale had been an omen, an evil spirit, a test that had been passed” (page 28). And when Anton appears on deck of the new ship, the captain says, “A cat that falls out of the sky is one we’d better make welcome” (page 167). Why are sailors so interested in signs and good luck charms?

Reader’s Guide prepared by Avery Finch

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