The Cat Came Back – Fred Penner - Notes

- **Activity types:** gap fill, telling a story, writing.

- **Grammar:** Past Simple – regular and irregular.

- **Level:** Elementary / Pre-Intermediate

- **Note:** This is a popular children's song written by Harry S. Miller in 1893. It tells the story of a man who cannot get rid of his cat despite many often disturbing attempts. Fred Penner, a children's entertainer (and author of the book "The Cat Came Back"), recorded a five-verse version with four of the milder episodes. This version was used in a 2010 Italian advertising campaign for the Audi A3.
  An award-winning Canadian short animation feature based on the song was made by Cordel Barker in 1988.

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1) Elicit the Past Simple of the verb "to come". Play the song, and ask students to count the number of times they hear the verb "came".
   (**Key:** 20, three per chorus, repeat six times, and one on both the third and fifth verses)

2) Give each student a copy of the worksheet and ask them to fold it so they cannot see the lyrics. In pairs ask them to complete the first exercise. Do not correct at this stage.

3) When they have completed, play the song. Ask them to listen for the verbs, and to put them in the order they hear them. If they hear them more than once, count just the first time.
   Key:

can (not) - 6	to have - 1	to love - 12	to think - 5
to come - 4	to hit - 13	to swear - 7	to toss - 16
to find - 10	to jump - 14	to tear - 15	to try - 2
to give - 3	to load - 8	to tell - 11	to wait - 9

4) Ask students how many of these verbs are regular? (**Key:** 5) Irregular? (**Key:** 11)

5) Ask them them to unfold the page to see the lyrics. They can complete these with the verbs - they should be able to this without listening to the song, using context and their answers to the previous activity.

6) Play the song, students check and correct.

7) Discuss the story told in the song. Tell students they are going to watch a short film based on the song. The film features just two verses (printed below) of the song. Which episodes from the Fred Penner version are featured in the film? Are there any other episodes? Students should take note, and write a storyboard for the film. This can be done in class or as homework. Play the film (available on www.tuneintoenglish.com).

8) Sing the song together.

Lyrics in film:

Now, old Mr. Johnson had troubles of his own.
He had a yellow cat that wouldn't leave his home!
A special plan with deception as the key.
One little cat—how hard could it be?

Well, old Mr. Johnson had troubles of his own.
Still the yellow cat wouldn't leave his home!
Steps were needed to remove the little curse.
The old man knew it couldn't get any worse.

Worksheet written by Prof. Silvana Fazio, Sondrio
and Prof. Margaret Mower, Prato

The Cat Came Back – Fred Penner

1. Write the Past Simple form of each of these verbs.

can (not)	to have	to love	to think
to come	to hit	to swear	to toss
to find	to jump	to tear	to try
to give	to load	to tell	to wait

2. Now listen to the song – you will hear the Past Simple verbs. In what order do you hear them?

_____FOLD_____

3. Complete the lyrics with the verbs.

Now, old Mr. Johnson _____ troubles of his own.
He _____ a yellow cat that wouldn't leave his home!
He _____ and he _____ to give the cat away,
He _____ it to a man goin' far, far away.

But
Chorus:
The cat came back the very next day,
the cat came back, they _____ he was a goner
but the cat came back; he just _____ stay away
Give me a meiow, go – "meiow!"

Now the man around the corner _____ he'd kill the cat on sight,
He _____ up his shotgun with nails and dynamite;
He _____ and he _____ for the cat to come around,
Ninety-seven pieces of the man is all that they _____.

But you know - **Repeat Chorus**

So he _____ it to a man going up in a balloon,
he _____ him for to take it to the man in the moon;
the balloon _____ down about ninety miles away,
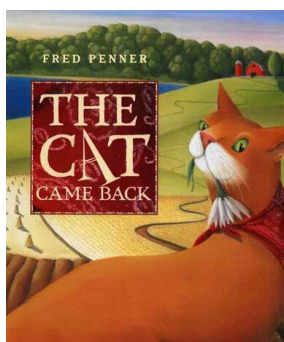where the man is now, well I dare not say.

But you know - **Repeat Chorus**

So he _____ it a to a man going way out West,
He _____ him for to take it to the one he _____ the best;
First the train _____ the track, then it _____ a rail,
Not a soul was left behind to tell the gruesome tale.

But you know what? - **Repeat Chorus**

Now the cat was the possessor of a family of his own,
with seven little kittens till there _____ a cyclone;
It _____ the houses all apart and _____ the cat around,
the air was filled with kittens, but not one was ever found.

But you know what? - **Repeat Chorus**
Sing it all again! Now - **Repeat Chorus**

Louder meiow! "meiow!",
Louder! "meiow!"
A little quieter "meiow!"
Queiter meiow "meiow!"
Quieter now "meiow!"
Quieter, "meiow!"
Shh, as quiet as you can!

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Now, old Mr. Johnson had troubles of his own.
He had a yellow cat that wouldn't leave his home!
He tried and he tried to give the cat away,
He gave it to a man goin' far, far away.

But
Chorus:
The cat came back the very next day,
the cat came back, they thought he was a goner
but the cat came back; he just couldn't stay away
Give me a meiow, go – "meiow!"

Now the man around the corner swore he'd kill the cat on sight,
He loaded up his shotgun with nails and dynamite;
He waited and he waited for the cat to come around,
Ninety-seven pieces of the man is all that they found.

But you know
Repeat Chorus

So he gave it to a man going up in a balloon,
he told him for to take it to the man in the moon;
the balloon came down about ninety miles away,
where the man is now, well I dare not say.

But you know
Repeat Chorus

So he gave it a to a man going way out West,
He told him for to take it to the one he loved the best;
First the train hit the track, then it jumped a rail,
Not a soul was left behind to tell the gruesome tale.

But you know what?
Repeat Chorus

Now the cat was the possessor of a family of his own,
with seven little kittens till there came a cyclone;
It tore the houses all apart and tossed the cat around,
the air was filled with kittens, but not one was ever found.

But you know what?
Repeat Chorus

Sing it all again
Now
Repeat Chorus

Louder meiow! "meiow!"
Louder! "meiow!"
A little quieter "meiow!"
Queiter meiow "meiow!"
Quieter now "meiow!"
Quieter, "meiow!"
Shh, as quiet as you can!

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