

## **Read the beginning of 'To Be a Cat' by Matt Haig:**

Here is a secret I shouldn't really tell you, but I will because I can't help it. It's too big. Too good. OK, sit down, get ready, brace yourself, have some emergency chocolate handy. Squeeze a big cushion.

Here it is:

Cats are magic.

That's right.

Cats. They're magic.

They have powers you and I can only dream of having.

But even as I tell you this I can see what you are thinking. You're thinking, *No, they don't. Cats are just cute little pets who sleep next to radiators all day long.*

To which I would say – *That's just what they want you to think.* And now you're thinking, *These are just words in a story written by some author with a boring name, and authors aren't to be trusted one bit because they tell lies for a living.*

And you're a little bit right.

But stories aren't always lies. They are things stored in all our imaginations – hence the name *stories* – and it is an author's job to point them out. And some of the things we imagine are more true than the facts we learn in maths; it's just a different kind of truth to 76-15=61.

So yes, every cat who ever prowled the earth is capable of doing some very special things. Such as:

1. The ability to understand a thousand different animal languages (including gerbil, antelope and the ridiculously complicated goldfish).
2. Fence-balancing.
3. The capability of napping anywhere – laps, kitchen floors, on top of TVs when the theme tune to the news is blaring at full volume.
4. Smelling sardines from two miles away.
5. Purring. (Trust me, that is magic.)
6. The capacity, via their whiskers, to sense approaching dogs.
7. \*\*\*\*\*\_\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\_\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*.

Let's stop here, at number seven. OK, one to six seem quite ordinary. You might know that cats do some of these things, even if you've never understood it as magic before. But if you see magic enough it starts to look normal. And don't get me wrong, this is by no means the end of the list. Indeed the list is so long that it would fill ten whole books the size of this one, and your eyes would be bleeding by the time you got to 9,080,652: 'Radiator radar'.

But number seven is a good place to stop. This seventh power is the most important one, at least for the tale I am about to tell you. (Although, if you want to read a book about radiator-detecting felines I highly recommend A.B. Crumb's exceptional *Warmpus*, which is by far the best of its type.)

### Questions

1. What does the author do to capture our attention at the beginning of this book?

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2. Why does the author advise us to 'Squeeze a big cushion'?

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3. Use the text to give a reason why we should not believe the author.

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4. Choose the special thing that cats can do that you believe least likely to be true. Give reasons for your choice.

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5. What do you think is meant by a 'Radiator radar'? How does the author reinforce the idea that being a 'Radiator radar' is a special thing that cats **can** do?

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6. The author uses italics for three different purposes in this text. What are two of them?

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7. The author says there are 9,080,652 very special things a cat can do. Can you make up two special things of your own? (They don't have to be true!)

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