

## **Whittington**

### **Book Battle Blog Discussion Guide**

Whittington is set in Bernie's barn where a collection of animals, adopted by Bernie, continues to grow as they are entertained by a storytelling tomcat named Whittington. Bernie's grand children, also seek refuge in the barn; they live with Bernie because their mother is dead and they don't know where their father is. Over the course of seasons, from winter till fall, Whittington tells the story of his namesake, Dick Whittington, and his famous cat. Entwined with Whittington's storytelling is grand son Ben's struggle to learn to read, and the commitment of both humans and animals to his success. The story going back and forth from the barn to London in the 1350's is a great book to read aloud.

Discussion questions:

Whittington is a story within a story. The tale of Dick Whittington and his cat is told by the cat Whittington to the animals and children in the barn. The farm life of Bernie and his sister is the other part of the story. Is it difficult to read a story like this that goes back and forth in time? Why? What helps you to understand the story?

The following questions were written by Pat Scales, retired Director of Library Services , SC Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities, Greenville.

Ben and Abby don't live in a traditional family, but nonetheless, they do belong to a family. Who are the members of their family? Describe the sense of family in Bernie's barn. Explain each animal's purpose in the barn family. Which animal is the head of the family? How is he/she qualified for this position? Discuss how the animals decide who to admit to their family. How does the barn family help Ben?

Dick Whittington has a lot of courage. How does he find courage by reading about Marco Polo's journeys? Describe Dick Whittington's most courageous moment. How does Dick Whittington's story give Ben courage? Which of the animals in Bernie's barn displays the most courage?

**Web links**

The original tale of Dick Whittington and his cat.

[http://www.longlongtimeago.com/lta\\_folktales\\_dickwhittington.html](http://www.longlongtimeago.com/lta_folktales_dickwhittington.html)

Museum of London for a look at life in London in 1350.

<http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/English/Learning/Learningonline/features>

Dyslexia site, since this is Bernie's reading problem.

[http://www.kidshealth.org/kid/health\\_problems/learning\\_problem/dyslexia.html](http://www.kidshealth.org/kid/health_problems/learning_problem/dyslexia.html)