Name: _____ Date: _____

Looking After a Cat

Reading level 8 (4th grade) · 514 words

On the first day, Maple the cat hides under Leo's bed. Leo lies on the floor and peeks at her two green eyes shining in the dark. Mom says, "Cats who feel worried may hide, so let her be." Leo sits quietly nearby, and Maple has a safe, comfortable place to rest while she gets used to her new home.

Maple needs fresh, clean water at all times. Every day, Leo and Mom wash her bowl and fill it again. Leo wonders if milk would be better. Mom says no, because cow's milk is not a good swap for water. Maple only gets clean water in her bowl.

Maple eats food made for cats. Cats need meat in their food, and a vet can help Mom decide what is best for Maple. Mom feeds her a few small meals each day. Leo does not share his snacks, because some of our food, like onions, is poison for cats.

Maple has a litter box in a quiet spot. Cats will not use a box that is messy and smelly, so every day Mom scoops it out. Leo does not touch it. Afterward, Mom washes her hands with soap, and Leo washes his hands after he pets Maple.

Maple scratches the tall post by the window. Cats need to scratch. It keeps their claws sharp and their muscles strong, and it is also how they mark things as their own. A good post is sturdy and at least three feet tall. Maple scratches the post and leaves the sofa alone.

Maple sleeps a lot. Cats sleep for many hours each day. But when she wakes up, she wants to play. Leo wiggles a toy on a string, and Maple jumps and pounces. Playing helps a cat to run and have fun, and Leo loves it, too.

Leo wants to hold Maple, but Mom says to let her choose. She sniffs his hand carefully, and then she steps a little closer. When Mom picks her up, she puts one hand behind her front legs and one hand under her back end. She never lifts Maple by the neck. A grown-up is always nearby.

Leo has learned to read Maple's tail. When her tail points up with a little curve at the tip, she feels calm. When her tail is tucked tight against her body, she feels worried. Then Leo gives her room, and he does not try to pick her up.

One day Maple does not want her food. Leo tells Mom right away. Mom watches Maple and calls the vet. A vet knows what to do, and a cat should see the vet at least once a year, even when she seems well. Leo never gives a cat medicine.

Leo has jobs now. He helps with the water, plays with Maple, and washes his hands. Mom does the rest, and a grown-up decides about getting a cat. At bedtime, Maple jumps up beside him and settles in, warm and purring. Ask a grown-up to look at Peabody Pets with

you. You will find it at pet.peabody.kids.

Questions

1. Why does Maple hide on the first day?

A. She is worried in a new home
B. She wants to sleep in the sun
C. She is looking for food

2. Why does Leo not give Maple milk?

A. Cow's milk is not a good swap for water
B. Maple has not seen it
C. The bowl is too small

3. What should a scratching post be like?

A. Small and soft
B. Sturdy and tall
C. Wobbly and short

4. What does it mean when Maple's tail is tucked tight?

A. She is calm
B. She wants to play
C. She feels worried

5. In the book, what does "sturdy" mean?

A. Strong and steady
B. Very old
C. Brightly colored

Words to know

worried: feeling nervous
scratch: rub claws on
sturdy: strong, steady
vet: animal doctor
pounce: jump on

Answer key: Looking After a Cat

1. A. She is worried in a new home
2. A. Cow's milk is not a good swap for water
3. B. Sturdy and tall
4. C. She feels worried
5. A. Strong and steady