

# A Retelling of Belling the Cat

by Aesop

Long ago, a group of mice lived on a farm. The mice were happy because the farm cat was old. Lulu was a lazy cat. She liked to sleep all day. Lulu was not interested in chasing the mice, so they ate all the farmer's grain.

One day, the farmer brought home a new cat. Zeke was a young hunting cat with green eyes. The mice were afraid of Zeke. They were no longer safe.

The mice called a meeting. "Zeke is dangerous! He has sharp claws, and he is fast," the mouse leader said.

"We cannot leave our homes!" the smaller mice added.

"Zeke is a very sneaky cat! We can't hear him when he is nearby!" the older mice yelled.

The mice talked about their problem. No one had any good ideas about how they could protect themselves.

A young mouse spoke. "Yes, Zeke is a sly cat, but we are smart! Let's tie a bell around Zeke's neck. When we hear the bell tinkling, we will know he is nearby. The bell will be a warning. When we hear the bell, we can run and hide. The bell will keep us safe."

The mice cheered, and the young mouse smiled. They all agreed that belling the cat was the perfect plan. Then an older but wiser mouse stood up. All the mice became silent.

"Your plan is brilliant," he said to the younger mouse. Then he sighed. "But who will be the brave mouse that will put the bell on the cat?"

**Questions**

1. Why did the farmer bring a younger cat to the farm?
2. Why were the mice afraid of Zeke?
3. The young mouse had a plan. What was his plan?
4. The older mouse pointed out the problem with the plan. What was the problem with the plan? What is the lesson or moral of this story?

---

**Vocabulary List**

Each of the vocabulary words below are used in the reading passage. As you read the passage, pay attention to context clues that suggest the word's meaning.

1. grain
2. sneaky
3. sly
4. belling
5. brilliant

---

**Context Clues**

Using context clues from the sentences in the passage, underline the correct meaning of the word in boldface.

1. "Lulu was not interested in chasing the mice, so they ate all the farmer's **grain**."  
a. flower seeds    b. fresh cheese    c. seeds of cereal plants, like wheat    d. old onions
2. "Zeke is a very **sneaky** cat!"  
a. smelly or stinky    b. tricky, or acts in secret    c. slow and clumsy    d. old and wise
3. "Yes, Zeke is a **sly** cat, but we are smart!"  
a. clever or smart    b. thin    c. happy    d. big
4. "They all agreed that **belling** the cat was the perfect plan."  
a. wrapping a rope around    b. putting a bell on    c. laughing at    d. fooling
5. "Your plan is **brilliant**," he said to the younger mouse."  
a. stupid    b. easy    c. wrong    d. very smart