



It's a Secret!

John Burningham

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What if you were as small as your cat — and took off with him on a nighttime adventure? A gorgeously illustrated tale from the award-winning John Burningham.

Every night Marie-Elaine's cat, Malcolm, goes out, and every morning he comes back in and sleeps. "Where do cats go at night?" the girl wonders. So when she sees him at his cat door dressed to the nines, she begs to come along. And amazingly, Malcolm agrees — as long as she puts on her fancy clothes, gets small, and keeps it all a secret. With a whimsical story and breathtaking artwork, the acclaimed John Burningham takes us on an exciting night's journey, braving hoodlum dogs and precarious climbs for a rooftop party that is cause for celebration indeed.

It's a Secret! Details

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Author : John Burningham

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From Reader Review It's a Secret! for online ebook

Kelly says

This is another book that started out strong but then it kind of went nowhere really interesting. Props for a cool cover that made me want to look inside.

Ziwei Cheng says

This story is talking about a cat bring a little to a party's story. There has a cat called Malcolm. He lives in the Marie Elanie's house. One day Marie came down to kitchen, she saw Malcolm dressed up in very fancy clothes and a hat. Marie asked him where he was going, Malcolm told him he was going to a secrete party. Marie put her party dress and got small. When they walked through the street more and more friends joined their team. Then, they all wanted to go to party with them. During this time, the dogs started chasing them. Malcolm brought them to a very high staging. So, the dogs could not chase. After a long adventure, they finally arrived at a place on the rooftops, where the party started. They saw lots of cats. The cats were very nice to them. Later, they met the queen of the cats. Before they go cat queen give Marie a rat to be the present. When they came back, they saw the dog chasing them. So, they very carefully avoided them and got away.

This is a fiction story about a cat bringing a little girl to their party. It imagines that human's party is different from cat's party. The design is very good, full pages with pictures and only one corner with three or four line sentences. It's very suitable for young kids.

The picture is simple and easy and it uses white as background color. White means calmness and peace. So it's a very good book for bed story. The whole book design is also simple and easy. I highly recommend this book for the parents and their kids.

Barbara says

If you ever wondered what your cat is doing at night when he leaves the comfort of your house, then this is the book for you. Marie Elaine is very curious about the life that her cat Malcolm leads when he scampers through the cat door each evening. One night when she comes down to the kitchen, she finds Malcolm dressed in a natty red coat and a hat with a feather. He says he's leaving to go to a party. Full of curiosity, Marie Elaine asks if she can come. Malcolm says she has to wear a party dress and get small, so she does. Little Norman sees them as they walk by, and he wants to come too. They manage to evade the degenerate dogs who hang around the garbage cans, and before long, they arrive at the party, a fancy affair given for the Queen of the Cats. What fun! John Burningham knows just what kinds of questions young children ask, and his stories give answers perfectly attuned to their sensibilities. While the palette is a bit dark, the pictures capture the fun of the whole adventure.

RH Walters says

Magic is simple.

Sunah Chung says

The story intrigues children's curiosity and imagination about their cats who disappear at night and come back to home in the morning. The author illuminates the curiosity in the story by holding a cat's party at night. One night Marie Elaine witnesses her cat, Malcolm, in his fancy outfits, and she joins to the party with him. On their way to the party, Norman Kowalski, her neighbor, also joins the group. They enjoy the party, with cats and their queen and then go back home.

To be honest, I am not interested in this story. It looked good at first, and raised my attention, but the story is flat and nonsensical even though it is a fantasy fiction for children. It sounds adventurous to go to a secret party with cats, but these unusual and exciting events do not happen. The dogs who chase them seem to be easy to leave out, and the cats welcome to the strangers for their party.

The distinctive artworks draw my attention. The illustrations are mixed with realistic photos and sketches with colored pencils. The book cover shows an example of the artworks, sketches are cut and pasted over the photo. Childlike drawings are well matched to the imaginative story of the book.

Emily McKnight says

Summary: A young girl oh so curious about where her cat goes at night, finds herself in a mysterious and magical adventure on the run with her cat-in miniature form

Personal Response: This is such a fun and relatable book for people of all ages. Who isn't curious about what cats do at night-even all day?! This book is so creative and fun, and gives a great imaginative possibility to the question we are all asking.

Miriam says

Marie Elaine wants to know where her cat, Malcolm, goes at night.
He can't tell her because it's a secret...

Nah, nevermind, he'll tell her! It's a party! An awesome cat party with dancing and a feast! Put on your party clothes, kid, and let's get going because there's a long trek through dark alleys and past mean dogs and up fire escape. Woo, partay!

My favorite image was the one used for the cover, where the characters appear to be crayon cut-outs collaged onto a photo of a dark street. Most of the pictures are not like that. We start with crayon sketches in the style of the cover figures, a little washed out and on a pale background. Then after the party starts the illustrations become more colorful, like marker and then finger paint. I assume the intent is to replicate the style of a

child's art, which usually isn't a favorite technique for me, but it worked here.

Fun book.

Tracey says

picture book for readalouds (1st grade through 4th?).

I haven't tried this with schoolgroups, but this is a good candidate for a book to read aloud to the older kids or a mixed aged-group (other librarians report success). I like the whimsical story a lot.

T. says

Promising to follow the fancy dress code and keep his whereabouts a secret forever, Marie-Elaine gets the opportunity to follow her well-dressed cat out on the town one night to see where he goes and what he does when the rest of the family is sound asleep.

What if you were as small as your cat -- and took off with him on a nighttime adventure? A gorgeously illustrated tale from the award-winning John Burningham. Every night Marie-Elaine's cat, Malcolm, goes out, and every morning he comes back in and sleeps. "Where do cats go at night?" the girl wonders. So when she sees him at his cat door dressed to the nines, she begs to come along. And amazingly, Malcolm agrees -- as long as she puts on her fancy clothes, gets small, and keeps it all a secret. With a whimsical story and breathtaking artwork, the acclaimed John Burningham takes us on an exciting night's journey, braving hoodlum dogs and precarious climbs for a rooftop party that is cause for celebration indeed.

Jenny Young says

Age:

Grades K-4

Genre:

fantasy fiction

Diversity:

Imagination; fantasy

Illustrations:

The illustrations are created with mixed media.

Personal response:

The story is very fun and imaginative as the girl wonders why the cat sleeps all day and what it might possibly be doing at night. I enjoyed the illustrations because it looks so different from average book illustrations. The author and illustrator did a great job capturing the child-like essence of this book.

Curricular or programming connections:

This book would be good for a creative writing lesson.

Robert Owens says

Picked this up to read to the students today. I rather liked this one. The art is excellent!

A little girl wonders what cats do at night. She stays up to find out. Her cat is all decked out for a party. She promises to keep the location a secret if he will take her along. He agrees. Norman, the next door neighbor sees them slinking off. He threatens to tell if they don't take him with him. He ends up coming along.

Of course, they need to avoid the dogs.

They arrive at the party where the queen cat is. There's a good time had and party favors too before they return home.

The little girl crashes on the couch. When she awakens, her mother says that she looks as though she was out with the cat. Indeed!

Parry Rigney says

I'm a big fan of John Burningham, and his newest is totally magical.

A little girl wonders where her cat goes at night...and one evening when she comes down from bed for a glass of milk she finds the cat, Malcolm, dressed in finery and all ready to go to a party. Malcolm agrees to let Marie Elaine come with (she has to get on her party dress and make herself "small" first). What follows is a fantastical account of a nighttime party with cats coming from far and wide, complete with the arrival of the Queen Cat and a midnight feast. The story is pretty light on plot, but it's really all about the magical atmosphere - captured perfectly in Burningham's dreamy/silly illustrations. I read this one in my evening storytime the other night and the kids loved it (my favorite was when they spontaneously echoed the line of the party cats when the Queen Cat is approaching: "She's coming! She's coming!").

The book is nice and big, the pages are thick and creamy, great for storytime and in general a perfect bedtime story for kids 2 to 5...

April says

This book put a big smile on my face. It gave me the warm fuzzies like reading an old Steig, Sendak or Ungerer book.

Kristen says

Marie Elaine follows her cat on a night escapade. Cool art. OK story.

Dolly says

Where do cats go when they are out all night? This is a fun book with interesting illustrations - colored in sketches and some mixed media.

It's an imaginative tale and a great book to read aloud. We really enjoyed reading this book together.
