

Comet's Nine Lives

Jan Brett

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Like all cats, Comet knew he had been born with nine lives. But he'd never thought much about it until the day he lost life number one in a flower garden on Nantucket. He'd spent lazy days wandering all over the island, not calling any one place home. Now he knows it is time to settle down. But Comet's lives begin to disappear all too quickly, as he gets into one humorous predicament after another. Then comes the day of the big hurricane....

Beautiful island scenes--sandy beaches, hillside flower gardens, seaside trails, villages, and the sea itself are set within exquisite shell borders. Once again Jan Brett brings her originality and charm to a familiar setting as she inhabits her Nantucket with colorful canine residents, among them a shaggy sheepdog captain who travels through the story and into the borders looking for a friend to live with him and his lighthouse cat.

Comet's Nine Lives Details

Date : Published 1997 by G. B. Putnam's Sons (first published August 27th 1996)

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Author : Jan Brett

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From Reader Review Comet's Nine Lives for online ebook

Lisa Vegan says

Despite my horror of dogs that wear clothes, I thought the illustrations were beautiful. The story was okay too, although I was disturbed by the way one of the eight lives was lost; it was a bit too mean spirited, even though there was a valid reason for it.

Lstirl says

Poor Comet. How will he ever find a save place to relax?

As a fan of Jan Brett, I had high hopes for this book. The cover art pulled me in and I sat down to peruse. However, I found this book lacking in wit and charm. Comet's character seemed rather flat and uninteresting. The art, while pretty and perhaps appealing to adults, wasn't fun and the dogs in dresses came across more contrived than cute. The whole thing came across as too busy to me. I felt overwhelmed and slightly claustrophobic at the relentlessly art packed pages.

I liked the Nantucket setting and the sense of adventure the book elicits. As a one time through read, it was enjoyable and the story was pleasant with a nice, clean, happy ending, despite Comet's 8 brushes with death. However, with so many charming, clever books with more to offer than this one, it would wind up at towards the back of my bookshelf. Not a terrible book, but there are just so many better choices.

Publishers Weekly

Brett (The Mitten; Armadillo Rodeo), a Massachusetts resident, stays close to home with this latest book, setting it on Nantucket. Capturing the island's rustic charm, her characteristically bustling, elaborately bordered art showcases weathered shingle buildings, a gray-blue sea and shell-sprinkled beaches. Comet, the protagonist, appears to be just about the sole feline in a Nantucket otherwise populated by nattily dressed canines. In search of a home as well as adventure the roaming cat meets with peril. Snoozing in a bookstore, he is buried under a pile of books; taking a ride on a scallop boat, he's swept overboard by a huge wave; visiting an ice cream shop, he falls headfirst into a milkshake. Though some of these scenarios have comic potential, all eight of them prove fatal to poor Comet, whose ghostlike, winged image is in each case seen fleeing the scene. Brett, of course, makes it all better in the end; observant readers will have noticed that Comet isn't the island's only cat: side panels throughout show another cat in obvious search of a companion. Though not the author/artist's most finely wrought story, the book delivers a visual treat her fans (and Nantucket admirers) shouldn't miss. Ages 4-8. (Sept.)

School Library Journal

I agree that this isn't this author/artist's most finely wrought story. This review mostly just summarizes the plot, because, really, that is all there is. Comet just isn't a loveable character. I think this might be a book more for Brett fans.

PreS-Gr 1-Comet, a white cat with orange markings, goes through eight of his nine lives in one of Brett's more playful offerings. Readers will enjoy anticipating how Comet will lose his next life: eating foxglove,

having a shoe thrown at him by a famous actress, falling into a tuba-these are just a few of the humorous demises he suffers (and he always manages to look catlike, dignified, and somewhat surprised that any of these disasters should be happening to him). The Nantucket setting is lovingly shown and expertly woven into every picture. Elaborate borders are fashioned with shells, wildflowers, and fishing line; the island is populated by dogs, all quite realistic looking and all wearing human clothes. Attentive children will enjoy poring over these detailed pictures and will feel satisfied by the conclusion, which has been nicely foreshadowed throughout. Brett's many avid fans are sure to love this book.-Lauralyn Persson, Wilmette Public Library, IL

I found the anticipation of Comet's lives ending rather anxiety inducing rather than fun. I didn't find them humorous at all. Yes, the borders are elaborate, but I don't think young children will appreciate this and it makes it hard to find the more subtle aspects of the illustrations which are trying to further the story. Perhaps this detail would appeal to a more "attentive" child, but I don't see this as having wide appeal.

Michele Reno says

Love the illustrations, but the story is kind of lame. I read it to a first grader today and he was less than thrilled.

N says

So this is the story of a cat literally dying to find his place in this world. He loses his lives to really weird things sometimes... but ultimately it's about knowing there is a right place for you and the happiness of finding that place.

Darlene Pasquale says

1. no awards
 2. appropriate grade levels - pre-k-3rd grade
 3. Summary - This is the story of a cat who grows up on Nantucket Island. He goes from place to place on the island, embarks on bold adventures, and finds himself in danger many times. Comet needs a safe place to call "home" before his nine lives run out, little does he know there's friends searching for him in the lighthouse.
 4. Review - This cat just wants to belong, and longs for a friend who is like him. I think this would be a relatable story for children because it shows an aspect of why being kind is important. The illustrations are creative and add a quirky spin to the story; with dogs dressed up as the inhabitants of the island, and the pictures that continue on the borders throughout the book.
 5. 2-3 in class uses - This book can be used in the classroom as an introduction to teach children about beaches, and islands. A teacher can bring in seashells for students to explore, as well as talk about what happens on a beach, and in the ocean. Students can do an art project where they create their own beach scenes or light houses like the one shown in the story, with blue, red, and white construction paper and paint.
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Kristine Montgomery says

Comet lives on the beautiful island of Nantucket, but his curiosity causes him to lose his nine lives one by one. Life number one gets lost in a flower garden during a moment of curiosity and as he spends lazy days wandering all over the island he realizes after all of his mishaps that it is now time to settle down and call somewhere "home". But he keeps getting into one humorous predicament after another.

This book has beautiful island scenes--sandy beaches, hillside flower gardens, seaside trails, villages, and the ocean depicting a colorful New England landscape. I would like to use this book in a story retell activity where the students could draw pictures of what happens one by one and put them in the correct order. Then, they would discuss their drawings in a small group activity and hopefully be able to remember Comet's path as he searches for a place to call home.

Elizabeth Cochran says

Comet's nine lives by Jan Brett is a quirky, fun story about a cat named comet. As a reader, I enjoyed the way the book is written. The story starts out by learning that the cat, Comet, has lived in a lighthouse in Nantucket, and is ready to find a new home. Cats have nine lives, and Comet has a tendency to get in to trouble, and lose his lives. I liked the rhyming scheme the author used when this happened. I think the only possible drawback to this book would be the way that it casually addresses death. I think that could be difficult for some readers to understand, since it isn't clear if comet really died or not, or it could even offend other readers.

As a future educator, I could see myself using this book in multiple ways in the classroom. That being said, it is mostly because of the author, rather than this specific book. First, I could see myself doing an author study on Jan Brett. Her books are warm and inviting, and her stories tell important lessons about finding yourself in society. This is important for students to think about. I also like her as an example of an author - illustrator. If I were to do a unit on authors that were also illustrators, I would definitely include a Jan Brett book. However, this book is a little touchy, since it mentions death, so I probably would end up choosing another book by this author to accomplish these goals.

Tam says

This was tricky trying to explain the concept of cats having 9 lives to my 5-year-old. I still don't think he quite understood but I don't know if that would have made a difference. He just didn't really like this book.

Emese says

The most morbid picture book imaginable. The author describes how Comet loses 8 out of 9 lives. The methods of killing the cat in this lively picture book aimed at young ones are as follow:

- eating poisonous flowers,
- getting stuck in a tuba,

- drowning (twice),
- getting thrown in front of a taxi,
- getting kicked over a great distance,
- getting buried under a pile of bestsellers,
- and my personal favorite: drowning in strawberry milkshake.

What a joyful little book! NOT. :P

R. says

This was another school library pick my daughter brought home. Comet keeps trying to find a new home or adventure, each ending up in losing one of his nine lives until the very last home he stumbles across when he finally meets another cat. Granted, it takes place on an island, but it's hard to believe he'd never find another cat in all that time. The villagers are also humanoid animals themselves, which is interesting. Don't know that it's really a great idea to perpetuate the idea that cats have nine lives when kids are this little and impressionable, but it's a common enough saying that I can't say it's surprising that there are books written playing off it. One thing is for sure, Comet has rotten luck up until the very end and can't seem to get a break as his previous eight lives flash by all too quickly.

Hill says

This was probably my least favorite Jan Brett book so far.

Ronyell says

I have read many books by Jan Brett, but I have never read a book quite like this one! “Comet's Nine Lives” is a children's book by Jan Brett which is about a cat named Comet who wanted to do more in his life, but is finding it hard to keep his nine lives together. “Comet's Nine Lives” might be a tad bit too confusing, but many children will enjoy this cute story!

Comet was born on Nantucket Island and he grew up wandering around the island. One day however, Comet was eating some fox gloves when he began to feel dizzy and then fell asleep. When Comet woke up, he realized that he just lost his first life, so he decides to find a home in the bookstore. However, when Comet was sitting on a stack of books, many islanders came into the bookstore and knocked down the stack of books that Comet was sitting on and Comet lost his second life!

Although not all that amazing, I thought that Jan Brett did an excellent job at making this book extremely cute. I loved the fact that Comet wanted to find the happiness that he is looking for in life and people who feel the same as Comet will definitely understand his desire to find that happiness at all costs. Jan Brett's illustrations are extremely beautiful and slightly surreal at the same time as there are only two cats in the entire book while the whole world they live in is full of dogs doing human activities. I also loved the beautiful images of Nantucket Island as whenever Comet goes by the sea, the sea is blue and you can actually see the froth coming out of the sea, making the effects seem so realistic! I also loved the image of Comet himself as he is drawn as a handsome cat that is white and orange stripes on his back.

Parents should know that this book might confuse smaller children since some scenes where Comet supposedly lost his life are not quite clear as we do not know whether or not he actually lost his life. Also, the death theme might upset small children who are not used to death, even though it is not clear if Comet died or not.

All in all, "Comet's Nine Lives" is a great book for children who love reading about cats and are huge fans of Jan Brett. I would recommend this book to children ages five and up since the death theme might confuse smaller children.

Miriam says

This prettily-illustrated tale of an accident prone cat is set in Nantucket. The panels are framed with seashell designs reminiscent of the craft items sold at the shore.

I was ambivalent about the treatment of death in this book. Certainly I agree with Brett that one wouldn't want to be too morbid or gruesome in a book for little children. On the other hand, I don't think it is beneficial for children to have death treated too casually, either. And practically, I would be a little concerned giving this to kids that they might read it and think it was okay to do harmful things to cats because they have extra lives. I may sound overly fussy, but I have known people whose kids accidentally killed their pets. We should be teaching children to treat animals gently and respectfully, not that they'll get up again after you drown them or throw them across the room.

And how come the cats are normal cats but the dogs are anthropomorphic? Weird.

Not Brett's best book.

Julia says

This was one of those books that although it seems to be directed for children seems to fall in the middle ground since it is also about growing up and a romance to boot so it was hard to figure out what shelf to add it to. Darling and sweet this is one book that fellow cat-lovers may enjoy for a quick read.

The story is sweet and proceeds at a regular pace of action. What I found interesting in the book was the fact that with every passing life the author found a pun-like way or action that related to the events that caused the mishap. And just like any other Jan Brett story there is a second that is being told without words if you pay attention.

The illustrations are classical for Jan Brett - gorgeous borders, bright colors, a wonderful eye to detail and if you follow it you can find the lighthouse keeper on every page. I am also in love with the decorations that are made out of seashells and starfish still lending to the coastal atmosphere of the book.

My only main question is how did the author choose dogs to replace humans, especially with a natural seeming cat?

All in all a beautiful given romance and coming-of-age story.

Syed Muhammad Danial says

An illustrated tale about how a cat spend his 8 lives into something wasteful just because of his clumsiness. But in the end, Comet's finally find a place that he wanted to live for the rest of his live

I only wish that story is much longer and a introduction about who is Comet
