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Opening extract from  
**The Language of Cat**

Written by  
**Rachel Rooney**

Published by  
**Frances Lincoln  
Children's Books**

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**I.M. Elizabeth Quinn**

JANETTA OTTER-BARRY BOOKS

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# THE LANGUAGE OF CAT AND OTHER POEMS

Poems by

**RACHEL ROONEY**

Drawings by

**ELLIE JENKINS**

**F**  
FRANCES LINCOLN  
CHILDREN'S BOOKS

# Contents

Who?	8	Calculation	40
The Language of Cat	10	This Modern Monster	41
Nought to Nine	12	Predictive Text	42
Sonnet for a Sphere	14	Charm Bracelet	43
O the wonderful shape of an O	15	Crossing the Rockery	44
Gravity	16	Sir!	46
Icarus	17	Three Goldfish	47
Unfair	18	The Poem and the Poet	48
Signature	20	Ig-pay Atin-lay	49
Russian Doll	22	Bring and Buy	50
She Said	24	Recycling	52
Three Monkeys	25	Boast	53
The Thing I Can't Have	26	A Greengage is a Type of Plum	54
The Making of the Gingerbread Man	28	Growing	58
Reflection	30	Halfway	59
Post	32	Counting Days	60
80% of People Prefer Chips to Poems	34	Driving Home	61
Mermaid's Lament	36	Mirror	62
Just Her and the Poet	38	Acceleration	64

What I Really Mean	66
Fishing	68
Defending the Title	70
Tornado	72
The Statue	74
The Trouble is...	76
Timetable	77
Elizabeth Quinn	78
On the Way Back	80
Bookmark	82
The Edge of Things	84
Take It	86
Daisy's Answer	87
Target	88
Question	89
How to Say Goodbye	90



## Who?

Who cast the **P** from a spell  
sold it for profit as sell,  
then kept what was left  
in a locked letter chest?

And who sucked the **O** from a hoop,  
hopped off with that loop  
which she balanced for fun  
on the tip of her tongue?

Who stole the **E** from a cheat  
in the street when they met for a chat,  
slipped her hand in a bag  
and made off with the swag?

Then who plucked the **T** from a thorn,  
carved an ivory pen out of horn  
and dipped it in ink...  
Well, who do you think did that?



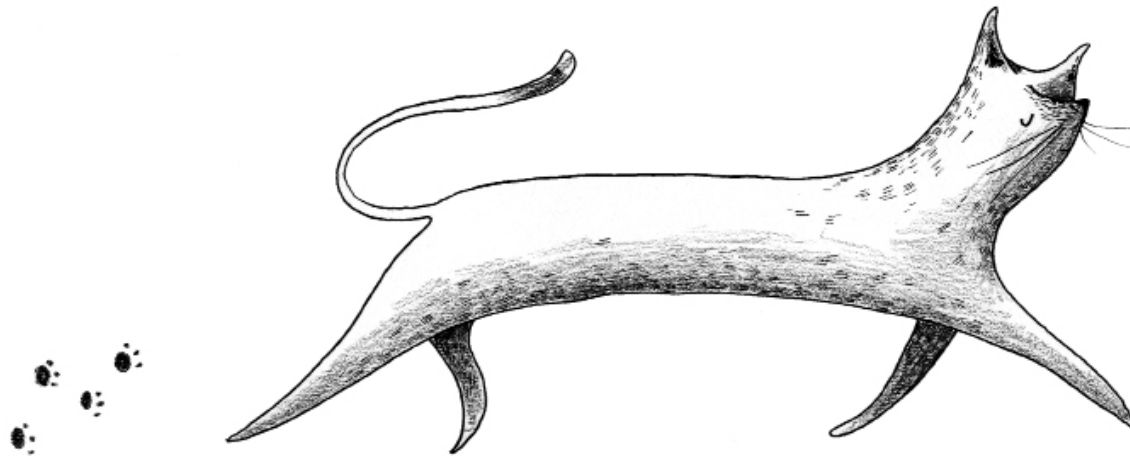
## *The Language of Cat*

Teach me the language of Cat;  
the slow-motion blink, that crystal stare,  
a tight-lipped purr and a wide-mouthed hiss.  
Let me walk with a saunter, nose in the air.

Teach my ears the way to ignore  
names that I'm called. May they only twitch  
to the distant shake of a boxful of biscuits,  
the clink of a fork on a china dish.

Teach me that vanishing trick  
where dents in cushions appear, and I'm missed.  
Show me the high-wire trip along fences  
to hideaway places, that no-one but me knows exist.

Don't teach me Dog,  
all eager to please; that slobbers, yaps and begs for a pat,  
that sits when told by its owner, that's led on a lead.  
No, not that. Teach me the language of Cat.



## *Nought to Nine*

A ring made of gold, a doughnut and hole,  
something that's nothing that's easy to roll.

A periscope raised, a walking stick,  
the cut of a cake and a candle's new wick.

A swan on a lake, a nun knelt in prayer,  
an FA Cup handle raised in the air.

The pout of a mouth, a bird flying over,  
a bra on a line, two leaves of a clover.

A neatly pressed ribbon, a kite without string,  
the nose of a witch and an arm in a sling.

The hand of a pirate, a flat-headed snake,  
an apple divided, the latch on a gate.

A teardrop to wipe, a cherry and stalk,  
the speech mark to use when your words start to talk.

Half a triangle, a fox's ear tip,  
an arrow, an arm of a hand on a hip.

Balancing balls and a circular kiss,  
a hoop with a waist and a rope in a twist.

A hook in a curtain, chameleon's tongue,  
the whistle to blow when this poem is done.



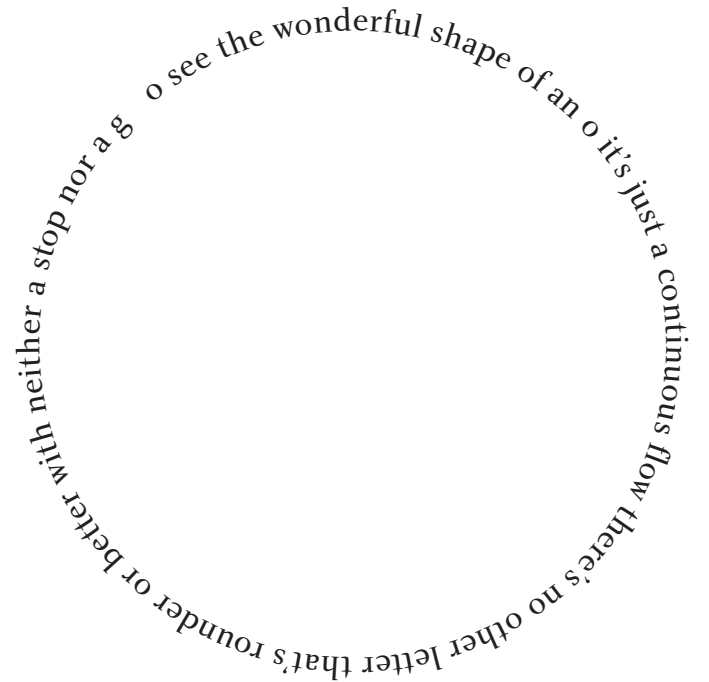
## *Sonnet for a Sphere*

Take an apple. Chop it into quarters.  
Count out three. These represent the lakes  
that nestle inside countries, all the snaking  
rivers joined with seas – the blue that's water.

Put them aside. This last remaining slice  
stands for the land. Divide it into eight.  
Discard the barren: the distant icy waste,  
the thirsty desert, rocky unreached heights.

What's left? Just one last sliver of a sphere.  
Unpeel its skin. Hold up that patch of green  
between your thumb and fingertip. It's here  
the soil is rich and seeds take root. The crops  
we need to harvest, where our livestock feed  
are all in this. Be careful now – don't drop it.

## *O the wonderful shape of an O*



O see the wonderful shape of an o it's just a continuous flow there's no other letter that's rounder or better with neither a stop nor a go