

## Activity and Teacher's Guide: *Groucho's Eyebrows*

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*Groucho's Eyebrows* introduces children ages 6-10 to the loving bond between Kristie and her new kitty Groucho who bears a remarkable resemblance to a famous comedian! Students will learn that being unique may just be an advantage over normalcy! Enjoy reading about the adventures Kristie and Groucho have together!

### Reading/Writing/Language Arts

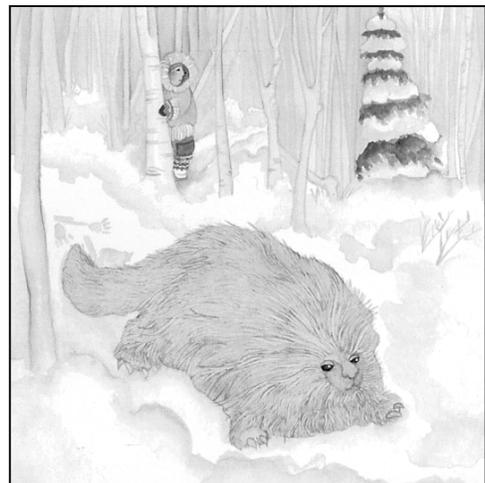
1. Read *Groucho's Eyebrows* and answer the following questions:

- What is so unique about Kristie's new kitty? Explain.
- Who does the kitty remind Kristie's mother of? Have you ever heard of this person?
- What kind of activities does Kristie and Groucho do together?
- What happens to Groucho to make Kristie so worried?
- How does Kristie eventually find Groucho?

2. Kristie and Groucho like to play Nanook out in the snow. Do you have a favorite pet you like to do activities with? Write or draw about an adventure you had together.
3. Do you have a special feature or trait that makes you unique? If so, write about it. If you think not, what kind of special feature or trait would you like to have? Explain.
4. Make up a story about your own pet and give it a unique feature. Write about an adventure you would like to do together.

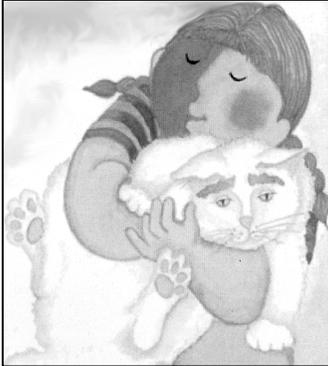
### Science/Natural History

1. Can you name all of the animals that Kristie encounters on her quest to find Groucho?
- a. What kind of food do they eat?
  - b. In what kind of homes do they live?
  - c. What sounds do they make?
  - d. What do their tracks look like?
  - e. Do they migrate?
  - f. Draw a picture to illustrate your answers.



2. What characteristics do these animals have that make them dangerous?
3. Groucho's eyebrows make him stand out. In nature, this kind of feature would make him unsafe against predators. Most animals have features that allow them to hide from their predators called **camouflage**. Can you name and describe 5 animals, birds, or insects that have unique features that camouflage them from danger?

## Math



1. Make a list of pets that everyone in the classroom has.
  - a. How many mammals?
  - b. How many amphibians?
  - c. How many fish?
  - d. How many birds?
  - e. How many insects?
  - f. How many total?
2. Measure the amount of snow or rainfall you receive at your home or school for one month.
  - a. Record the amount each day. Make a graph for the month.
  - b. Divide the total number of inches for the month by the number of days in the month to get the average daily amount.

## Geography

1. Kristie lives in a cabin and has to put on many warm layers to get to school. Where do you think she lives?
2. Kristie searches for Groucho in the woods where it is easy to get lost. Do you think she knows where she's going? What kind of tools could she take with her to help her find her way?
3. Do you know how to determine which way is north, south, east, and west by looking at nature? Learn about different visual indications of direction. *Example:* Moss grows on the north side of trees!



## Art

1. Make a Groucho mask!  
*Supplies:* template, white construction paper, black markers or pencils, scissors, staples, elastic.

Print out cat mask template from [www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/Maskcat.shtml](http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/Maskcat.shtml)

Color the mask (don't forget the black eyebrows!). Cut it out around the edges and cut out the eyeholes. Staple one end of the elastic onto the mask (the places for the staples are marked and are by the eyes). Determine how much elastic it will take to fit on the child's head. Trim to size. Staple the remaining side of the elastic to the other side of the mask.

2. Draw a complex picture of your animal using grids!

*Supplies:* drawing paper, tracing paper, ruler, photo, pencil, colored pencils

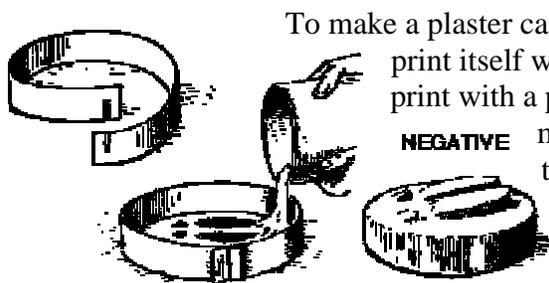
Students will be able to freehand duplicate a complex drawing of their animal if they are only working on one small section at a time. They will concentrate on the lines and shapes within each section and not be frustrated by the overall picture.

- Lightly trace a 1" grid onto desired drawing paper.
- Place a see-through grid over the picture to be copied.
- Draw freehand on lightly gridded drawing paper the corresponding square on the picture with the see-through grid.
- Work at own pace to complete square by square as accurately as possible.
- Erase the light grid lines when the picture is completed.

3. Make plaster casts of animal prints!

*Supplies:* paint brushes, firm plastic, plaster of Paris, water, newspaper, and toothbrushes

First, contact your local U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or nature center to find out where you can discover different animals tracks. They may even be available to assist your class and give a presentation over different animals in the region!



To make a plaster cast of a track, clean the area around the print and the print itself with a paintbrush or piece of stiff grass. Surround the print with a piece of firm plastic, so as to enclose the print in the middle of the area. Mix Plaster of Paris with water to the consistency of thick cream and pour it into the track. Allow the plaster about 30 minutes to harden. Remove the plastic from around the track. The plastic will come away from the plaster easily and can be used a number of times.

Carefully remove the cast along with any soil or surrounding material that sticks to it. Wrap the cast in newspaper to transport it. Give the cast another day to completely harden and then use an old toothbrush to clean the plaster. Finally, label the cast with the location where it was collected and the identification of the animal.

4. Have each student invent an animal and create its own unique footprint. Have classmates identify the characteristics from the footprint.

## Other Activities

### 1. Help your local SPCA- Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals!



Groucho was a real cat that was lucky to have been adopted by such a loving family. There are many ways that you can help animals such as Groucho by doing some or all of the following:

- Write a letter to your local Representatives in state government about your concerns for stricter protection against the cruelty to animals.
- Have a class fundraiser and donate the money to SPCA.
- Donate items from your house to the SPCA Thrift Store and also go shopping through the store. All proceeds go to help animals!

### 2. Learn about tracking and how to read a compass!

Tracking is a technique that scientists and hunters use to find and follow animals. Most people think of following the footprints of an animal, but there are other ways to track animals. For example, you can examine their “scat” or “droppings,” look for scratches in the bark of trees or ground, or look for their dens.

It is also very important to know how to find your way while tracking. Compasses are devices that determine direction by freely rotating magnetized needle that indicates magnetic north.

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## Interesting Cat Facts!

- There are approximately 73 million cats in the United States.
- Three in ten (or 34.7 million) U.S. households own at least one cat.
- One half of cat-owning households (49%) own one cat; the remaining own two or more.
- On average, owners have two (2.1) cats.
- Twenty percent of owned cats were adopted from an animal shelter

Source: American Pet Products Manufacturers Association (APPMA) 2001-2002 National Pet Owners Survey

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### *About the author*

Tricia Brown is author of several successful nonfiction books on Alaska subjects and former editor of *Alaska* magazine. Her *Children of the Midnight Sun* (Alaska Northwest Books) won a Benjamin Franklin Award, an Independent Publisher’s Award, was a Children’s Book Council/National Council of Teachers of English Notable Children’s Book in the Field of Social Studies, a “Best Book of 1998” *School Library Journal*, and a “1998 Book of the Year” *Parenting* magazine.

### *About the illustrator*

Barbara Lavalley is one of the nation’s most recognized children’s book illustrators and widely known for Chronicle’s bestseller *Mama, Do You Love Me?* Other books include the *Imagine Living Here* series by Walker & Co., including *This Place is Cold*, *This Place is Wild*, and *This Place is Hot*. Her recent releases include *The Gift* and *All You Need for a Snowman*.

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