

The Cat That Slept for a Thousand Years – Self-led Early Years and Family Resource



A FREE exhibition at Wakefield Exchange, Union Street, WF1 3AD

Commissioned by Manchester Museum, part of the University of Manchester:



This resource offers play-based ideas inspired by *The Cat That Slept for A Thousand Years*, a large-scale installation brought to life by Air Giants' pioneering robotic technology. Activities focus on care, empathy, rest, imagination and gentle sensory exploration.

This installation is designed to be gentle and open-ended. There is no right or wrong way to explore. Use and adapt these ideas in ways that suit your children, setting and family routines.

View the exhibition opening times here:

[Check the opening times!](#)

We hope you enjoy visiting our very special feline friend!



Pre-visit: *Something has fallen from the sky...*

Introduce the idea of the cat before your visit to support curiosity and emotional readiness.

Activity ideas:

- share a simple story:
- "Something fell from the sky... it's big, very tired, and needs care."
- "We're going to meet a cat who fell from the sky. It's sleeping. I wonder what's its dreaming about?"
- "I wonder where it came from and what it's dreaming about."
- explore soft textures (fabric, scarves, blankets)
- use low light (fairy lights, torches, coloured tissue paper)
- play quiet sounds (purring, slow music)



Care & comfort play

Invite children to think about what a big, tired cat might need:

- what kind of blanket would it like?
- what sound might help it rest?
- what kind of light feels calm?
- what food and drink might a big cat like to eat?

Talk together

- what helps us when we feel tired?
- how do we look after something new?
- how do we know when someone needs care?

You could extend into:

- role-play cafe or kitchen
- preparing pretend meals
- talking about favourite foods
- exploring smells
- using play dough to cook



During your visit

Meeting the cat

When you arrive, try slowing the pace. You might:

- sit quietly and look at the cat
- gently stroke the cat together
- stretch like a cat
- curl up small
- whisper stories to help her sleep
- notice the lights and colours
- listen quietly for sounds

There is no need to rush...

During
your
visit

Questions you could ask:

- *how do you think the cat feels?*
- *how can you tell?*
- *what helps you when you're tired?*
- *what do you think it's dreaming about?*
- *what colour might its dreams be?*



Extending the experience at home

You might try:

- making a den for the cat
- creating a bed for a toy
- drawing a dream
- playing with lights to make shadows
- reading your favourite cat story
- pretending to prepare a meal or actually preparing one

These simple activities build:

- language
- emotional understanding
- creativity
- self-regulation
- connection



Looking up: Cats in the sky

Post-visit

This story of a cat falling from space opens up playful conversations about the night sky.

You could explore:

- Feline constellations
 - Leo - The Lion, a well-known zodiac constellation
 - Leo Minor - The Lesser Lion, near Leo and Ursa Major
 - Felis - Established in 1799 by French astronomer Jérôme Lalande. Lalande, a cat lover, thought the night sky needed a domestic cat to go along with the existing lions and lynx.

Further reading:

<https://www.skyatnightmagazine.com/space-science/cosmic-cats-in-night-sky>

Activity suggestions:

- Looking at stars together
- Drawing your own cat constellation
- Making star shapes



Cats around the world!

Cats appear in stories and beliefs across many cultures.

- Ancient Egypt: Sacred, associated with goddess Bastet (protection, fertility, motherhood).
- Japan: Good luck, fortune (Maneki-Neko, beckoning cat).
- Norse Mythology: Goddess Freya's chariot pulled by cats (love, fertility).
- China: Attract good fortune, ward off evil spirits, used for pest control.
- Ireland/UK (Black Cats): Good luck, protection, entering a home is a good omen.
- Hinduism: Goddess Durga rides a black cat (power, protection).

Explore some of these cats: [Cats throughout culture](#)



Many of the activities in this resources link directly to [50 Things to Do Before you're Five.](#)

How many can you do inspired by the cat?

#LessScreentimeMorePlaytime

