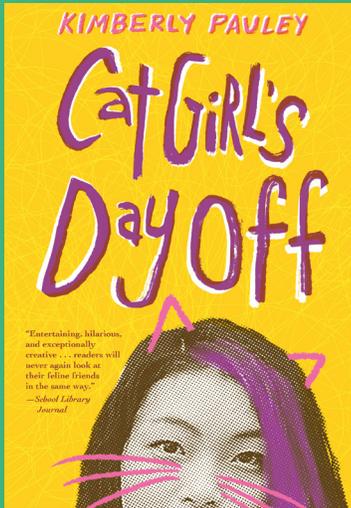




LEE & LOW BOOKS

Teacher's Guide



Cat Girl's Day Off

Written by Kimberly Pauley

About the Book

Genre: Fantasy/Adventure

Format: Hardcover, \$19.95
336 pages, 5.5"x 8.25"

ISBN: 9781620142813

Reading Level*: Grade 5

Interest Level: Grades 6–12

Guided Reading Level: Z

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:
N/A

Lexile™ Measure: 660L

*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

Themes: Animal/Biodiversity/
Plant Adaptations, Middle Grade, YA
interest, Siblings, Identity/Self Esteem/
Confidence, Friendship, Dreams &
Aspirations, Cultural Diversity, Biracial/
Multiracial Interest, Asian/Asian
American Interest, Animals, Fantasy,
Mystery, Paranormal, Persistence/Grit,
Self Control/Self Regulation, LGBTQ

Resources on the web:

leeandlow.com/books/cat-girls-day-off

SYNOPSIS

Natalie "Cat Girl" Ng comes from a family of the super-Talented: levitation, lie-detecting, chameleon-like blending into one's surroundings. Her Class D (as in dumb) Talent of talking to cats isn't something they ever discuss and she'd rather no one—ever—knew about it anyway. Her life would be over if she became forever known as Cat Girl.

But when Nat's celebrity-addicted best friends show her a viral Internet video of a celebrity blogger being attacked by her own cat, it's only Nat who can see the true story. To solve the mystery and prevent a murder or two, Nat and her friends must race through Ferris Bueller's Chicago from movie set locations (such as Wrigley Field) to the suburbs, accompanied by wise-cracking cats. Perhaps Cat Girl might save the day after all!

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.

BACKGROUND

Author's Note from Kimberly Pauley

Ferris Bueller's Day Off, written and directed by John Hughes, was released in 1986. Starring Matthew Broderick as Ferris, as well as Alan Ruck, Mia Sara, and Jennifer Grey, it has been called on of the best 100 films of all time by Total Film magazine and the number one teen film of all time by Empire magazine.

Hughes, who died in 2009, went to high school in Northbrook, Illinois, and he often returned to that locale in his films, though he either left the actual town name unreferenced or called it "Shermer" (Shermerville was the original name of Northbrook.)

The movie was filmed in 1985 primarily in the Chicago area, including scenes at two local high schools (New Trier High School and Glenbrook North High School) and many of Chicago's most famous landmarks. Many students served as extras on the film and it has a huge following even today, so many years.

Hughes once said, "Chicago' is what I am. A lot of Ferris is sort of my love letter to the city."

While author Kimberly Pauley lived in the Chicago area for the only a few years, she enjoyed her time there and loved exploring Ferris Bueller's Chicago, from Wrigley Field to Sears Tower (now Willis Tower). In many ways this book is a love letter to Chicago, John Hughes, and to teens everywhere who don't realize how special they are.

An Interview with Natalie Ng

Find out more about Natalie Ng, the spunky teen whose friends have her chasing a celebrity kidnapper in Kimberly Pauley's *Cat Girl's Day Off*. Read more about Natalie in this fictitious interview to get more into her character and find out what she likes to do in her free time, how she relaxes when she's had a stressful day, and some of her favorite things (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/cat-girl-s-day-off/interviews>) as a way to engage readers.

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

- **Class Discussion:** *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* was a popular teen movie in the 1980s and even today. Ask students if they have seen *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* and to share their impressions, based on seeing the movie or having heard about it. Why do they think the story was/is considered a teen classic?
- **Quote Analysis:** Use quotes from the novel to analyze character traits and predict the plot. Type select quotes from the novel (enough for each student in the class) and cut the quotes into individual paper strips. Using the graphic organizer, students will analyze their quote and then walk around the classroom and switch with a classmate until they have analyzed a minimum of five quotes. The chart can be extended or shortened to meet classroom needs. At the end of the activity, lead a whole class discussion on the quotes and how they can help students get to know the characters and the plot before diving in to the text. See the last page of this guide for a full quote analysis chart.
- **Create a character list.** Have students flip through the book to see what names they see appear the most frequently and have them create a running list of characters.
- **As a hook for readers,** have students read the interview with main character Natalie Ng (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/cat-girl-s-day-off/interviews>).
- **As a hook for readers,** consider showing this video by Time Magazine on the history of cats (<http://time.com/4093516/house-cat-history/>).

Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1; Craft & Structure, Strand 5; and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

- **Talk about the title of the book.** Ask students what they think this book will most likely be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?
- **Take students on a book walk** and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, title page, author's note, etc.
- **Point out that this book uses epigraphs about cats.** Ask students why the book might use these quotes. How does it enhance the story?

Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- what problems the main character, Natalie Ng, encounters
- what the title, *Cat Girl's Day Off*, refers to
- how Natalie overcomes her obstacles throughout the book
- how Natalie changes from the beginning of the book to the end

Encourage students to consider why the author, Kimberly Pauley, would want to share this story with young people.

VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4) (Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word. (Many of the Spanish words can be found in the book glossary, but there are also some that are not included. Students could be encouraged to create a log of these words—they will not be listed here.)

Content Specific

extrasensory, covert-ops, Nordic, schlepped, snarky, concierge, smarmy, baleful, paroxysm, presume, eddied, flubbing, spawn, twine, goggle eyes, maniac, lanyards, concession, antennae, isotope, vector, pointillism, clout, cul-de-sac, kamikaze, Ibuprofen, nunchucks, trussed, syndicate, spastic

Academic

gestation, enveloped, toxic, domestic, remotely, charred, vile, ambition, levitation, conductivity, olfactory, inhibitor, meddled, disembowel, dainty, crusade, scandalous, frivolous, rousing, sensationalistic, reverently, conspicuously, keen, distraught, grimace, perennially, malevolently, grandeur, fumigate, notorious, divert, reciprocal, inverse, kneading, telepathic, Testosterone, addled, remotely, pandemonium, incoherently, homicidal, decipher, plague, harried, conspicuous, mantra, paraphernalia, incriminating, devious, translucent, brittle, haranguing, paranoia, intrepid

AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite textual evidence with their answers.**

Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. What is the name of Natalie's cat?
2. Who are the members of Natalie's family? What Talent do they each have, including Natalie?
3. What are the racial dynamics of the Ng family?
4. What does BERM stand for?
5. Who are Natalie's best friends?
6. What high school does Natalie attend?
7. How do Melly's family and Oscar's family compare to Natalie's?
8. What is the name of the movie being filmed at Natalie's high school? Why is this movie important and why are Oscar and Melly excited about the movie?
9. Who is Easton West?
10. What does Natalie notice in the video of Easton being attacked by her cat?
11. What is the name of Easton's cat? Her dog?
12. Who does Natalie have a crush on?
13. What is Natalie's mom allergic to?
14. Who is Victoria Welling?
15. Why is Natalie accused of being a stalker?
16. What are the different places in Chicago the movie, *Freddy's Day Off*, is filmed?
17. Who is Regina Fedroka? What is her Talent?
18. What alliances does Natalie have to form to rescue Victoria and Easton?
19. How long had Victoria been kidnapped by Regina?
20. How do Natalie's parents feel about her Talent towards the end of the book?
21. How does Natalie feel about her Talent being shared with the world?
22. How does Regina escape BERM custody?

23. How is Regina caught again at the end of the book?
24. What is the relationship between Natalie and Ian?
25. How does Natalie feel returning back to school during the final chapter?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. At several points throughout the novel Natalie reflects on her being half Asian, half white. Why is being mixed raced important to Natalie? How do racial stereotypes inform how we see ourselves and other people?
2. How does this novel defy stereotypes associated with sexuality? Cite specific examples from the text. What makes you think that? Why?
3. Why didn't Natalie have confidence in herself in the beginning of the book? Why does she have confidence at the end of the book? What caused her to change? Show instances in the book that exemplified her change.
4. What does Natalie learn about herself and her family? How did this experience shape her as a person? Was it a positive or negative experience? What makes you think that?
5. In chapter eight, Natalie makes sure to correct Ian when he calls her Talent a superpower. Do you think there is a difference between Talent and superpowers in the book? Why or why not?
6. How do you think Natalie felt about having her Cat Girl Talent? How do you know?
7. What features in this book demonstrate that it is a fantasy? Why?
8. What character traits would you use to describe Melly? Why?
9. What character traits would you use to describe Oscar? Why?
10. What character trait would you use to describe Ian? Why?
11. What characteristics do Meep and Rufus share? What characteristics make Meep and Rufus different?
12. What perspective did the author use to tell the story? First person? Second person? Third person? What tone did the author use in her writing, formal or informal? How did these choices affect how you read the story?
13. How might the story be different if Rufus narrated it? Oscar? Easton? What makes you think so?
14. On page 170 Melly says, "if you know something bad is going to happen and you can prevent it, then you have to do something. It's our responsibility as human beings." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not?
15. Do you think there could be a sequel to *Cat Girl's Day Off*? Would you want to read a sequel? If so, what do you hope would happen in it?
16. Name three to five themes you found in the novel and cite specific scenes from the text where

you see those themes emerge.

Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. **Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion.** You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. What do you think Kimberly Pauley's message to the reader is? Read the Author's Note and think about possible motivations behind Pauley's intentions to write this book. What do you think she wanted to tell readers?
2. Have students make a text-to-self connection. Describe Natalie. What were her defining characteristics? Do you find any similarities between you and Natalie? Other characters throughout the book?
3. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books or movies while you read *Cat Girl's Day Off*? Why did you make those connections?
4. Have students make a text-to-world connection. What kind of connections did you make from this book to what you have seen in the world or on the news? Why did *Cat Girl's Day Off* make you think of that?
5. In a persuasive essay, describe a Talent you feel would be the most helpful in life and describe why. What made you select that Talent?
6. In the story, Natalie develops strategies to hide who she really is. Why do people often feel as though they cannot fully express who they are?

ELL Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
 - Review the chapters in order and have students summarize what is happening in each chapter, first orally, then in writing.
 - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about why Natalie is a hero.
5. Have students create a chart of the different characters in *Cat Girl's Day Off* and their Talents.

6. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

Social and Emotional Learning

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1-3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4-6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1-3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4-6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 6)

Social and emotional learning involves being aware of and regulating emotions for healthy development. In addition to understanding one's own feelings, strong socio-emotional development allows individuals to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships.

Use the following prompts to help students study the socio-emotional aspects of this book.

1. Natalie constantly doubts her Talent because she compares herself to the rest of her family. How do you respond to feelings of jealousy or inadequacy?
2. Natalie is saddened when she feels as though her friends have betrayed her trust. What are ways to deal with difficult emotions when you feel let down by those closest to you?
3. How does fear of embarrassment affect Natalie's life? What tools can be used to overcome fear and anxiety about being embarrassed?
4. Which chapter/scene in *Cat Girl's Day Off* best shows an emotion? Explain which emotion you think it is. How does it portray that emotion?
5. How do the people in Natalie's life support her when she needed help? What did you learn about community from Natalie's experience?
6. Choose an emotion that interests you: happiness, sadness, fear, anxiety, frustration, hope, perseverance and so on. Illustrate or act out what that emotion looks like in *Cat Girl's Day Off*?

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

English/Language Arts

- **Encourage students to read reviews for *Cat Girl's Day Off* and write their own review of the novel.** Afterwards, have students share reviews in partners, small groups, or with the whole class. Students can discuss their process for writing reviews and why they chose to include specific information. How are book reviews important?
 - For ideas, check out this Book Review Template (<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/printouts/book-review-template-30200.html>) by ReadWriteThink.org.
- **Challenge students to explore the characters more deeply with writing tasks that require perspective-taking:**
 - Write a dialogue between Meep and Rufus at the end of the book.
 - Write a letter from Victoria to her family where she tries to explain being kidnapped for two years.
 - Write diary entries from Natalie's perspective as she struggles with her Talent of speaking to cats. Have students discuss in small groups about how the diary entries are different and reflect on how Natalie changed throughout the course of the text.
- **The rich, varied, and legal language used by Kimberley Pauley provides an opportunity for students to develop their vocabulary skills.** Challenge students to learn and practice using the academic and content-specific words listed in this teacher's guide:
 - Before reading: Provide students with a list of the vocabulary words to sort into categories (e.g. very familiar, somewhat familiar, unfamiliar).
 - During reading: Have students make note of the vocabulary words as they encounter them in *Cat Girl's Day Off*. They can underline, highlight, or keep a log. Have students predict what the words mean based on context clues.
 - After reading: Have students work in pairs to look up the definitions of the "unfamiliar" words on their combined lists. Were their predictions correct? Post the new vocabulary words on your word wall.
- **What superheroes are you reminded of by characters or events in the story?** Prepare a critical essay, citing examples from the novel and your chosen superhero to justify the similarities.
- **Select a scene in which you disagreed how a character handled a situation, person, or event.** In the voice of that character, rewrite the scene as you think it should have happened.

Social Studies/Geography

- **Create a map of Chicago and mark the places Natalie and her friends went to in the course of the novel.** Consider Chicago's geography and discuss redlining and segregation within the city. Additionally, students can research specific neighborhoods in Chicago to discuss the demographics (race, class, etc). Use the follow website as a resource (<https://www.chicagomag.com/city-life/August-2017/How-Redlining-Segregated-Chicago-and-America/>).
- **Considering the importance of the high school setting, students can create a timeline of Chicago Public Schools, including the challenges and successes.** Create a visual presentation detailing this history and legacy. Include a timeline if necessary. Account for unions, charter schools, the board of education, etc. Students can share their findings in partners, small groups, or the whole class.
- **Natalie is an Asian American young woman who saves the day.** Students can conduct research about Asian/Asian American women activists and/or influencers and create a report to share with the class. What Asian/Asian American women have been influential throughout history? Other Lee & Low titles that students can consult include *Shining Star: The Anna May Wong Story* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/shining-star>), *The Story of Movie Star Anna May Wong* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-story-of-movie-star-anna-may-wong>), *Hiromi's Hands* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/hiromi-s-hands>), and *How We Are Smart* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/how-we-are-smart>).
- **Why have cats been so important throughout history?** Have students create a visual presentation of their choosing detailing their history and legacy. Include a timeline. Consult resources such as the Smithsonian's article, "A Brief History of House Cats" (<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/a-brief-history-of-house-cats-158390681/>).
- **Cat Girl's Day Off deals with issues of impersonation and cloning.** Research cloning policies in the United States (<https://www.genome.gov/about-genomics/fact-sheets/Cloning-Fact-Sheet>). Students can debate whether they believe cloning is ethical.

Arts/Performing Arts

- **Have students create a poster for each character's Talents.** Then, have students present their posters to the class and explain their creative process for creating the poster.
- **Write, recite, and film a live news segment that is reporting on Natalie's Talent being revealed.** Discuss all the details of the event. Be sure to include key details leading up to the reveal. Interview important characters who can speak to the character of Natalie.
- **After reading, have students watch Ferris Bueller's Day Off.** Ask students to take notes while watching. What in this movie is similar to and different from *Cat Girl's Day Off*? How do you think the author was inspired by *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* to write this book?

Cat Girl's Day Off

Teacher's Guide leeandlow.com/books/cat-girls-day-off

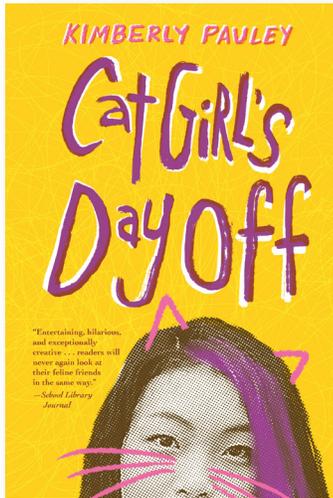
- **Put students in small groups where each group is assigned to read and perform one of the scenes from either *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* or *Cat Girl's Day Off*.** Have students discuss what they liked or did not like about the scene.
- **Citing text evidence, select a theme portrayed in the novel, *Cat Girl's Day Off*.** Create a visual media presentation to reflect how this theme is developed over the course of the text.
- **Have students create artwork depicting their own Talent.** Provide students with time and materials to create a visual representation of their art and display them in your classroom or hallway. Have students share and explain why they chose that Talent and how they would use it.
- **Have students create informational posters for International Car Day.** Provide students with time and materials to create their art and display them in your classroom or hallway.

School-Home Connection

- **Ask students to create portraits of people who are their personal role models through drawing, collage, or photograph.** In writing, students should describe what actions and qualities they admire about this person. Students can write in prose or submit a poem or song.
- **Have students interview a parent, guardian, or adult mentor about their experiences with fighting for something they believe in even when they were insecure or unsure of themselves.** How did this person react to and handle the situation when they were faced with obstacles? What advice do they have for someone trying to take up a cause and stand up for what they believe in?
- **If accessible, have students and families research other titles featuring Chinese (or more broadly Asian/Asian American) women.** How were these women influential in their respective field? What did they learn about them that they hadn't originally known?

Quote Analysis Chart

Quote	What does this tell you about a character?	Make a Plot Prediction
EX. It was like I wasn't even at the table anymore. You'd think being invisible was actually my Talent. (pg. 9)		



Ordering Information

General Order Information:

leeandlow.com/contact/ordering

Secure Online Ordering:

leeandlow.com/books/cat-girls-day-off

 **By Phone:** 212-779-4400 ext. 25

 **By Fax:** 212-683-1894

By Mail:

Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue,
New York, NY 10016

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kimberly Pauley is the author of the award-winning *Sucks to Be Me*, which was honored on the YALSA Quick Picks for Reluctant Readers list. The sequel, *Still Sucks to Be Me*, appeared on the VOYA Best Science Fiction Fantasy list. Born in California, Pauley has lived everywhere from Florida to Chicago and has now gone international to live in London with her husband and their son. She wrote *Cat Girl's Day Off* because she wanted to share with the world what cats really think. Visit her online at kimberlypauley.com.

REVIEWS

"Pauley's homage to Chicago and her favorite teen movie is entertaining, hilarious, and exceptionally creative...One thing is for certain—readers will never again look at their feline friends in the same way." —*School Library Journal*

"This title has the light, buoyant humor of a Meg Cabot book, with the same blend of superpowers and high-school life that won Pauley many fans with *Sucks to Be Me*... Helping, hindering, sniffing out bad guys, sneering at good guys, the cats shamelessly rule." —*Booklist*

"A worthwhile adventure and an easy sell for feline fanciers who already know what their pets are saying." —*Kirkus Reviews*

ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

LEE & LOW BOOKS is the largest children's book publisher specializing in diversity and multiculturalism. Our motto, "about everyone, for everyone," is as urgent today as it was when we started in 1991. It is the company's goal to meet the need for stories that children of color can identify with and that all children can enjoy. The right book can foster empathy, dispel stereotypes, prompt discussion about race and ethnicity, and inspire children to imagine not only a world that includes them, but also a world where they are the heroes of their own stories. Discover more at leeandlow.com.