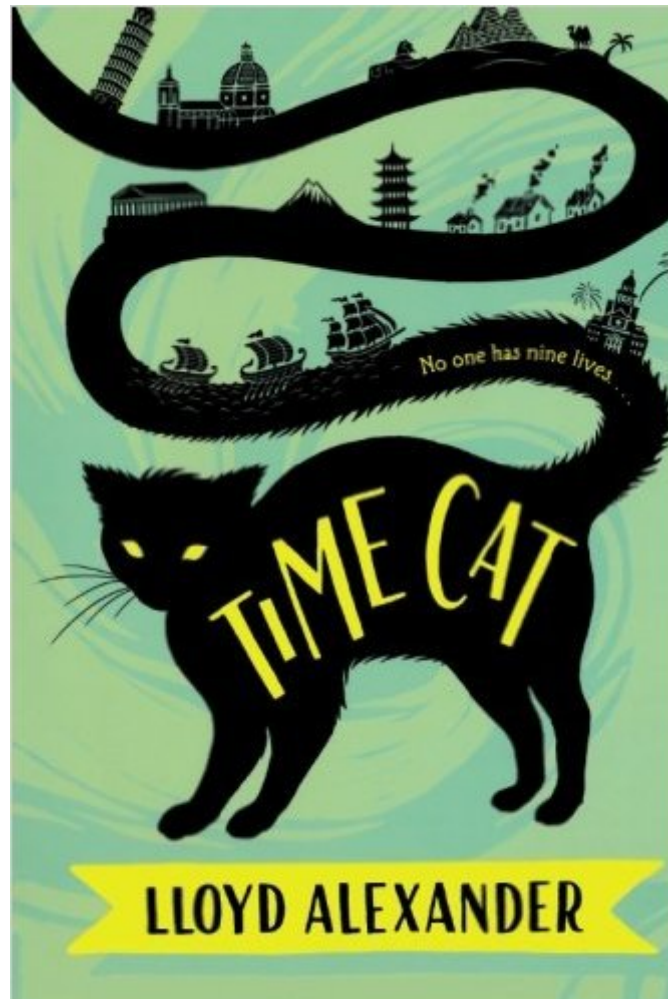


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Time Cat: The Remarkable Journeys Of Jason And Gareth



Synopsis

Gareth doesn't have nine lives, but he is definitely not an ordinary cat. For one thing, he can talk. For another, he has magical powers that Jason never dreamed of. "Anywhere, any time, any country, any century" Gareth tells Jason he can take them traveling through time. And in the wink of a very special cat's eye, they're off. From ancient Egypt to Japan, from the land of young Leonardo da Vinci to the town of a woman accused of witchcraft, Jason and Gareth are whisked from place to place and friend to foe. This fantastic tale grabs the imagination and takes it far and wide, on the adventure of not one, but nine, amazing lifetimes.

Book Information

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

"Time Cat" was the first book by classic writer Lloyd Alexander. It's a fluffy but enjoyable time travel adventure for cat-lovers and historical fantasy buffs alike; there's a little roughness around the edges, less detailed writing, but it's a pleasantly whimsical little trip through time. Jason is up in his room after a fight with his mother and brother, with only his cat Gareth for company. To Jason's surprise, Gareth suddenly starts speaking to him. He is, surprisingly, a magical cat who can travel through time and space -- to any nine lives in the past. He takes Jason on a trip through time, to ancient Egypt where the boy-pharaoh wants to worship him; the Roman empire, where they are recruited by a legion and then captured by Celts; ancient Ireland, where they make enemies with a

court magician and friends with a very special saint; Imperial Japan, where a young Emperor is given Gareth and a bunch of kittens as a gift; Renaissance Italy, where the two bump into a talented young painter; Spanish-dominated Peru, where they befriend a scatterbrained, silver-tongued young captain; they introduce a special cat to the Isle of Man; witch-hunters in medieval Germany; and finally making friends with a kindly cat-peddler in 1775 Boston. "Time Cat" has no central plot. Instead, it is a series of vignettes: A couple of chapters are devoted to each time period. It's like an extended daydream, displaying what are presumably the time periods that interest (or possibly frighten) Alexander himself. He also displays some educational material about cats -- how they were seen through history, things about Manx cats, and about all the roles that cats can play in a person's life.

Hail the hometown hero. Or rather, the home country hero. With the massive collection of British fantasy writers out there, sometimes it's nice to reflect that at least we have Lloyd Alexander. Fantasy author extraordinaire. As prolific as he is talented, his books have remained in circulation since the 1960s. Therefore, it was with great surprise that I consulted the copyright date on his delightful "Time Cat", only to find that my newly published paperback copy was the latest edition of a title that originally came out in 1963. 1963 was a long time ago, yet this book has stayed relatively fresh for a historical fantasy. There are problems with it, no question. But on the whole it's an interesting story that holds up in the end. In "Time Cat" there are two protagonists. One is Gareth, a cat capable of talking and time traveling when it pleases. The other is Jason, Gareth's human friend. At the insistence of Jason, the two set off on a series of cat-based adventures around the globe at different points in the past. They find themselves entertaining a pharaoh, running from the witch-obsessed Germans of the 1600s, prisoners of Incas, and friends with Roman conquerors. For the kid who likes cats and likes adventures, this book is ideal. If, on the other hand, the reader doesn't particularly care for felines, they'd do well to choose another book. This is strictly a cat-lover affair. Each time period, in its way, relates to a period of history in the cat species. We see the way the Manx cats got their names, how cats were worshipped in Egypt, and called the devil in the 17th century. Jason and Gareth also proceed to make the acquaintance of several historical figures, from St. Patrick to Leonardo Da Vinci.

Published way back in 1963, "Time Cat" was the first book ever written by Lloyd Alexander, and as such, exists as an interesting comparison to many of his later books, with echoes of plots and characters that will later be used in his more famous and sophisticated works. It is quite a simplistic

book, with a straightforward story told in clear but sparse prose, but there are certainly traces of the excellence that is to come in Alexander's later books, particularly the award-winning *The Prydain Chronicles*. Jason has been sent to his bedroom in disgrace, only to find that his black, orange-eyed cat can talk! Gareth informs him that rather than the oft-believed saying that cats have nine lives, it is in fact the ability to *visit* nine lives that make cats so special - and Gareth offers to take Jason on the journey that he intends to take that very moment. What follows is not so much a single over-arching story as a series of short-stories detailing the adventures that take place in nine different locations across time that Jason and Gareth make. Starting in Egypt in 2700BC and working their way forward to America in 1775, Jason learns about history, personal wisdom, and himself, before finally returning to his own time. In each location there is some commentary on mankind's progress and how it relates to their relationship with cats, moving from Egypt in which cats were venerated as gods, to Germany in the 1600s, in which they were destroyed as devils. As Jason puts it: "In Egypt they thought you were a god. Here they think you're a demon. Won't anyone ever understand you're a cat?"

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