

MIDDLE-GRADE FICTION
Ages 8–12, Grades 3–7 • 272 pages

ANTON and CECIL: Cats on Track

by Lisa Martin and Valerie Martin

The adventurous cats who sailed the open seas in *Anton and Cecil: Cats at Sea* head west by train to rescue a missing mouse friend. With few clues, the two depend on the help of prairie dogs, bison, ferrets, and a wise lynx to solve the mystery of Hieronymus's whereabouts.

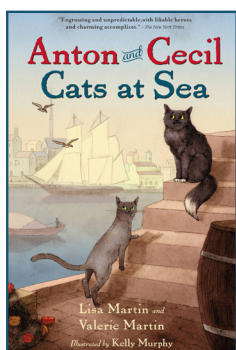
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Orange Prize-winner **Valerie Martin** is the author of eleven acclaimed adult novels, including *Property* and *The Confessions of Edward Day*. She lives in Millbrook, New York.

Lisa Martin has worked as an educator and children's poet and currently resides in Charlottesville, Virginia. *Anton and Cecil: Cats at Sea* is her first book for young readers, and the beginning of a trilogy cowritten with her aunt, the novelist Valerie Martin.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. After each cat observes the shipwreck in Lunenburg Harbor, how do their attitudes differ about wanting to venture away from home again? How do they each try to convince the other to go? (ch. 1)
2. Most of the creatures Anton and Cecil meet have their own names for the great "landships" that the cats must travel on—growler, screecher, horseless carriage, rolling death. How do these names reflect the different creatures' perspectives on trains? (ch. 3)
3. How does Willy the dog compare himself to the cats, and to the wild dogs (coyotes) he sees out in the countryside? Why does his opinion of cats change? (ch. 5)
4. Along the journey, humans (like the first mate, the train worker, the conductor, the little girl) sometimes help and sometimes hinder the cats' progress. Why do you think people often interact with Anton and Cecil, even though the cats mostly try to avoid them?
5. How do cats everywhere try to help each other? How do they remind Anton and Cecil of their family back home?
6. What does Cecil learn about himself and his prairie dog friends when he comes face-to-face with the coyote? (ch. 7)
7. The bison have set opinions and talk sparingly. What is their history with the trains? How does Cecil change Dirk's mind about cats? (ch. 9)
8. Why does Katya the lynx come rushing to help Cecil when he's injured? What does she think of the brothers? (ch. 9)
9. When Anton and Cecil are finally close to finding and rescuing Hieronymus, what great fear does Anton have? Is it justified, and what can he do about it? (ch. 11)
10. Why is Dayo confused about his job, and about what Hieronymus really wants? What is his role in the house, and how does he decide to change it? (ch. 12)
11. The Big Question: Throughout the story, the cat brothers meet creatures living in various states of captivity or freedom—the horse and his cart, the great horned owl, the dog in his cage, the lynx, the trained parrot, the Great Cat. How do these creatures feel about how they live? Would they change if they could? What are the tradeoffs of "making a bargain" with humans, limiting one's freedom in exchange for food, security, and even friendship? What do Anton and Cecil decide about how they need to live to be happy?



ANTON and CECIL: Cats at Sea

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Reader's Guide by Lisa Martin



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