



Gobbolino The Witch's Cat

Ursula Moray Williams , Paul Howard (Illustrator) , Joan Aiken (Foreword)

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Why was I ever born a witch's kitten? Why - oh, why? With his bright blue eyes and sparky magic whiskers, no one could mistake Gobbolino for a kitchen cat, but that's just what he longs to be. So, while his sister Sootica learns how to ride a broomstick and turn mice into toads, Gobbolino sets off to find a nice warm fire and a family to care for him. He has many adventures along the way and makes many friends, until he finally finds the home he dreams of. First published in 1942, Gobbolino the Witch's Cat continues to delight children - a true modern classic.

Gobbolino The Witch's Cat Details

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Author : Ursula Moray Williams , Paul Howard (Illustrator) , Joan Aiken (Foreword)

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From Reader Review Gobbolino The Witch's Cat for online ebook

Penni Russon says

This was a favourite of mine as a kid. I think I tried reading this to Fred once but she wasn't interested. Una however loved it and summed up the plot to Martin "It's about a cat and he just wants to be a kitchen cat but it isn't fair because nobody understands him." A great deal of the dramatic tension of the book filters through "unfairness" which particularly resonates in a 7 year old's heart and perhaps as second-borns we could both relate to the idea of being the one who can't conform to the dominant family paradigm.

Helena Spiteri says

Here is my second book review and it's about the adventures of a very cute and kind-hearted cat called Gobbolino. The story revolves around Gobbolino's adventures, but Gobbolino is no ordinary cat, he is a witch's cat! However, the trouble with our cat is that he does not want to be a witch's cat. Instead, he longs to be an ordinary kitchen cat that spends his time sitting by the fire and catching mice for his mistress. Being so kind-hearted and not keen to perform spells and magic tricks, he gets abandoned by his mistress witch and sets off on a series of adventures to find his fortune elsewhere. The story revolves around his search to find a lovable home. Although everyone he meets likes him at first, being a witch's cat means he often gets himself into some tricky situations. But in the end, after much wandering about and meeting all sorts of characters along the way, he loses his ability to perform magic and is finally accepted as a proper kitchen cat, and he can happily give lots of affection to his new owners.

Gobbolino the Witch's Cat is suited for children in Years 1, 2 and 3. I like the book because it is packed with adventure. Although it is quite a long book for a younger audience, each chapter is a like a mini story so children could dip in and out of it because they would not have to remember what happened before to understand the entire story. This makes it an ideal choice for a teacher who wanted to introduce a longer story to a young audience. It would be ideal to be read out aloud in class or for guided reading. A class activity could include listing the different characters in the book and then drawing pictures of them.

janetandjohn says

Lovely children's book suitable for early readers and of course for read-aloud. This little kitten, born to a witch's cat, never quite "gets it". He doesn't want to be a witch's cat, but fate has dealt him a hand he can't quite shake off, whatever he tries. and he just wants to be an ordinary kitchen cat, with a warm place by the fire and a family to love him that he can love back. Each adventures sees him on the road again when things go wrong - so will he ever find his dream? What do you think?!

Orinoco Womble (tidy bag and all) says

Maybe if I had read this as a child I would have liked it more. Maybe. Coming to it at the age I am now, I found it repetitive and rather exasperating--the cat does nothing but cry all the time. It never occurs to him to strike out on his own, rather than letting circumstances just carry him along. He wants to be a kitchen cat,

and yet he goes through town after town without actively looking for a kitchen that wants a cat. All his troubles are blamed on his birth: "Why oh why was I born a witches' cat?" It's very revealing that in all those weeks and months--*Gobbolino never grows up*. I've owned kittens, they grow very fast, and his sister certainly becomes an adult cat in the same time, but Gobbolino remains stunted, kittenish--*immature*. I wonder if the author was aware of her own symbolism, or if it just wrote itself that way? I realise that the repetition of whole sentences reflects the style of old fairy tales, but it didn't make it any more interesting to read.

Tweedledum says

I can recall little about this story, read around the age of 7, except that it was a fun read. I was a voracious reader then as now and books raced through my brain like water to the thirsty. Sadly have little excuse to re-read with no grandchildren on the horizon yet but hey, who needed an excuse ?

Ursula Moray Williams no doubt inspired many of our more well known children's authors to write about cats and magic etc etc. One could easily draw a line from Gobbolino to The Worst Witch to Harry Potter etc.

Sherry says

This book was a thank you gift from my sister <3.

In this book, talking animals, witches' curses and real dragons are a common thing. I so wish the world shown in this book, where everybody loves cats (even though they can't stand witches' cats) was real. I read this book as a child. I loved it!

Being an animal lover(Previous cat owner & current birds owner) and a mother to many of my birds I can sometimes relate about my pets to Gobbolino because I have spent many years with them and can now understand them. It is written perfectly from an animal's perspective.

The only thing that bugged me was Gobbolino's SUPER kind nature. (He, he) After being an adult and facing the world and its good and bad sides, everyone changes. But that is not any serious issue as this was a childrens' book.

I loved it. Simple and such a beautiful plot.

Nadhira Ramadhani says

Gobbolino... A character with so much humility.. Love this story book!!!

Racheli Zusiman says

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Katy Noyes says

Classic author, classic tale of a magic cat trying to find his place

Born to a witch's cat, Gobbolino wants nothing more than to find a home amongst the warmth and bustle of a kitchen. His heritage gives almost everyone around him reason to move him on, and his life becomes one adventure after another as yet another home becomes unwelcoming and rebuffs the kitten.

Blessed with some magic, Gobbolino is able to use this to his advantage at times, but superstition follows him wherever he goes. Travelling between such establishments as an orphanage, a Punch and Judy show, a princess's castle - will the black cat ever find somewhere he can settle and make his home?

I listened to the audiobook of this, and though I enjoyed this as a 'listen', I didn't like the voice of Gobbolino much, though it didn't come along too often.

It's a good choice for readers maybe just too young for Harry Potter but ready for magic. With lots of fairly short episodes, it will make a good bedtime series for several nights, and even lead to discussions about differing beliefs, about witches and treating others with kindness.

The story may be 75 years old now, but the style shouldn't put off readers/listeners, the language is readable and moves along nicely. Gobbolino and his magic bring a quirkiness of their own to the story. I was glad to finally discover this one.

For listeners aged 6 and over, readers of around age 9.

Rose Heartfilia says

This book has a bright orange cover that caught my eye and was about a cat with the most amazing name. So I bought it and started to read it in the evenings during my London holiday.

Gobbolino is such a cute little thing that every setback in his adventure to find a kitchen was really sad and you wished him all the best. I am sure I would read this story again some time. Mainly because it is easy, short and funny.

Krista the Krazy Kataloguer says

I love this story of a little cat who, though born to a witch's cat, just isn't cut out to be a witch's cat like his mother and sister. All he wants is to be a kitchen cat, but Gobbolino has many adventures in his journey before he finds the place where he belongs. I like the circular nature of the tale, as Gobbolino begins his

journey with the river and ends at the river. The illustrations by Paul Howard are soft pencil sketches, giving the tale an old-fashioned quality that suits it very well. I wanted to reach into the pictures and pet Gobbolino myself! I read this one aloud to my cats, who all sat on the bed with me, rapt with attention, and, in the end, gave it a unanimous paws up. I must get a copy of this for my collection. Highly recommended!

Mandi Ellsworth says

We read this (the kids and I) for Halloween. It reminded me of "Heidi" in that, pretty much everyone encountered is kind, and willing to help out a poor soul. And everything always works out to the good... almost impossibly. So, not terribly realistic, but not bad if you have children who scare easily. It was written in the old style which assumes children, and the parents who read to them, aren't terribly intelligent.

Tania says

quotes#585470 from my notebook ...

Night fell, and the loneliness of the forest fell on Gobbolino.

He was an easily pleased and independent little cat, but company meant a great deal to him. He did not ask for much, only the murmur of friendly voices about him, the click of a knitting-needle, the bubble of a kettle, or the hiss of a cooking-pot.

Here, deep in the forest, the trees sighed as if they, too, missed the companionship of human beings, and Gobbolino, treading its gloomy ways, looked eagerly for the sign of some cottage or farmhouse, where the candlelight, shining through the window-panes, might bid him welcome. p176

[my comment: not profound but I do like the sentiment]

Riv says

Flew through this one! I'm absolutely in love! Totally recommend this, just like Adventures of the Little Wooden Horse!

Ceri says

I decided to read this book to my kids after seeing a recommendation on a parenting website that this was a 'classic'. I never read it as a child so I thought I'd give it a go. The book begins with two kittens, born to a witch's cat. One kitten, Scootica, is black with green eyes (as is traditional for a witch's cat) wants to follow in her mother's footsteps and become apprenticed to a witch. The other kitten, Gobbolino wants to be a kitchen cat and live with a family. He doesn't look the part of a witch's cat either, he is dark tabby rather than black, he has one white paw and blue eyes so he gets abandoned by the witch after she can't find another witch to take him on, and Gobbolino is alone in the world. He tries time and again to find a home, but the fact he was born as a witch's cat always follows him and spoils his chances. My daughter (aged 6) got a little upset with the book a few times, as life is repeatedly harsh on Gobbolino, and though the ending was happy, it made her quite angry! She said she enjoyed the book but it's not one that I enjoyed all that much, the

repetitive format began to pall a bit.

I also think that the story missed a chance to give the message that you can be who you are, instead the moral seems to be change and be accepted, which seems a little sad to me. I wondered whether this was the received wisdom back in the 1940s when this was written, but then I recalled many older books than this where characters remain themselves even though not all their traits are 'proper' (think Jane Eyre, or Anne of Green Gables), so I think it's a fair criticism. On the whole, it was ok, it kept my daughter's attention but it's not one we plan to read again.

Libby says

This book has been lingering on my bookcase since I was born. It belonged to my mum and aunt, and I can't remember ever reading it. So the other night, I picked up, and read it. It took me about forty-five minutes to read, so not hard, but it was a good story.

In *Gobbolino The Witch's Cat*, Gobbolino is born a witch's kitten. When he leaves the coven for the first time with his sister Sootica, they discover that Gobbolino is not your average witch cat! Instead of dark black fur, his coat is tinged with tabby. His eyes are blue, not green. And one of his paws is pure white! The witch promptly kicks Gobbolino out. The story charts his life, as he tries to be a farmhouse cat, a kitchen cat, a mayor's cat, a sailor cat, a princess's cat, a woodcutters hat, and a peddler's cat, until he is returned to his birthplace by a poor witch.

I really enjoyed this story. It wasn't hard to read, but it was really well-written. I'd recommend it for younger children, but it's good for any age!

Sarah Churchill says

Poor little Gobbolino! A witch's kitten who wants to be good and be a nice family's kitchen cat, but never quite gets it right. This is a lovely little kid's book about fitting in and being who you want to be. I'd give Gobbolino a home any day, even if he is the most naive cat ever!

T.E. Shepherd says

This has been a childhood favourite of mine for years, but it is also years and years since I last read it. Michelle Harrison, the author of the *13 Treasures* series, put the book to mind again when she got a new, special edition of it. I dug out my original Young Puffin edition...

I hadn't remembered much about this book, other than the title: *Gobbolino The Witch's Cat*, and that I loved it. After re-reading it now, I still love it. It's a gloriously comforting read, and a true fable as Gobbolino, the cat with one white paw, sets out to discover who he really is as he really doesn't want to be a witch's cat, but how it seems, right up to the end that a witch's cat is what he is meant to be.

aljouharah altheeyb says

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Bei says

The story started on a dark and cloudy night, when Gobbolino found himself the odd one out amongst witch's kittens - he had one white paw, blue (not green) eyes, and a hint of tabby on his coat. His appearance disqualified him to be a witch's cat, also his heart was too kind to be one. He wanted to be good, not bad; he wanted to be a kitchen cat. After being rejected by the crowd he was born into, he embarked on a journey to find the home he would belong. Along the way, his magic and kindness brought happiness to many, yet his own happiness never really lasted.

Like many good children's tales, the story of Gobbolino will give younger readers cheers and make them wonder. There are all the necessary characters that make a fairytale work: wicked witches on broomsticks, an ill but kind princess, a dragon in the tower, a kind woodcutter and his vain granddaughter... However, reading the story as an adult, I couldn't help seeing where the story was coming from: the misfit, disconnection, abandonment, and loneliness. The reader was taken on an emotional roller-coast of repeated anticipation, hope, then disappointment. The world Gobbolino ventured into was not ready to accept him as who he was; in that world, he could either be a witch's cat, or a kitchen cat, not something in between.

A similar journey was taken by The Little Prince (de Saint-Exupéry) but with a different ending. The Little Prince became a myth; he remained who he is, yet he also remained alone. *SPOILER* Gobbolino eventually found a home, yet he was rid of his power. Williams might have believed that the only way to make Gobbolino "fit" into the world, is to magically alter the root of misfit. *END OF SPOILER* Whilst this ending was realist and logical, it left me feeling unsatisfied. What made most of this story fun to read was the somewhere-inbetween-ness of Gobbolino, the kind-hearted witch's cat with blue eyes and one white paw. By conforming Gobbolino, Williams asked the reader to accept the world (which is often judgemental, cruel, black-and-white) that he lived in, rather than Gobbolino himself. I agree with a friend of mine who said the ending can also be read as a tale of trade-offs and concession. My feeling of dissatisfaction is probably more with the similarity between Gobbolino's world and the actual world we all live in, rather than the story that pointed to the similarity.
