

## Macavity : The Mystery Cat

*Do you have a pet cat? Have you ever noticed anything mysterious about it? It is not easy to say whether every cat is a mystery, but Macavity is one, for sure. What is it that makes him a perfect mystery cat? Read the poem and find out.*

Macavity's a Mystery Cat: he's called the Hidden Paw —

For he's the master criminal who can defy the Law.

He's the bafflement of Scotland Yard, the Flying Squad's despair:

For when they reach the scene of crime — Macavity's not there!



Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like Macavity,

He's broken every human law, he breaks the law of gravity.

His powers of levitation would make a fakir stare,

And when you reach the scene of crime — Macavity's not there!

You may seek him in the basement, you may look up in the air —

But I tell you once and once again, Macavity's not there!

Macavity's a ginger cat, he's very tall and thin;

You would know him if you saw him, for his eyes are sunken in.

His brow is deeply lined with thought, his head is highly domed;

His coat is dusty from neglect, his whiskers are uncombed.  
He sways his head from side to side, with movements  
like a snake;  
And when you think he's half asleep, he's always wide awake.

Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like Macavity,  
For he's a fiend in feline shape, a monster of depravity.  
You may meet him in a by-street, you may see him in  
the square —  
But when a crime's discovered, then Macavity's not there!

T.S. ELIOT

### glossary

**defy:** disobey or resist openly

**Scotland Yard:** the headquarters of the London police force

**Flying Squad:** a group of police or soldiers ready to move into action quickly

**levitation:** floating in the air without support

**fiend:** devil

**feline:** of, or relating to, a cat

**depravity:** moral corruption

### working with the poem

1. Read the first stanza and think.
  - (i) Is Macavity a cat really?
  - (ii) If not, who can Macavity be?
2. Complete the following sentences.
  - (i) A master criminal is one who \_\_\_\_\_
  - (ii) The Scotland Yard is baffled because \_\_\_\_\_
  - (iii) \_\_\_\_\_ because Macavity moves much faster than them.
3. "A cat, I am sure, could walk on a cloud without coming through".  
(Jules Verne)

Which law is Macavity breaking in the light of the comment above?

4. Read stanza 3, and then, describe Macavity in two or three sentences of your own.
5. Say 'False' or 'True' for each of the following statements.
  - (i) Macavity is not an ordinary cat.
  - (ii) Macavity cannot do what a *fakir* can easily do.
  - (iii) Macavity has supernatural powers.
  - (iv) Macavity is well-dressed, smart and bright.
  - (v) Macavity is a spy, a trickster and a criminal, all rolled in one.
6. Having read the poem, try to guess whether the poet is fond of cats. If so, why does he call Macavity a fiend and monster?
7. Has the poet used exaggeration for special effect? Find a few examples of it and read those lines aloud.

Rick: What did Papa Firefly tell Mama Firefly?

Hick: I don't know.

Rick: Isn't our child bright for his age!

---

Mary: Why isn't a nose twelve inches long?

Jo: I don't know. Why?

Mary: Because if it was twelve inches long it would be a foot.

---

Anita: I got a hundred in school today.

Mother: That's wonderful. What did you get a hundred in?

Anita: Forty in Maths and sixty in English.