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Anushka Ravishankar, Tushar Vayeda, Mayur Vayeda

"Cat is fed up with her tail  
It never does what it should  
She now wants a brand new tail  
A tail that she can choose..."

Celebrated children's poet Anushka Ravishankar's deliciously absurd tale of a rather confused cat in search of its tail is brought to vivid life by young artists, Tushar and Mayur Vayeda, from the Warli community in western India. Silk-screened by hand onto handmade paper, [Tail Tale](#) features intricate yet playful art.

Here is a set of activities, asking children to do a variety of tasks. An educator can take them through this list carefully and explain what needs to be done.

#### TEXT

1. Ask the children to look at the cover of the book carefully. Call attention to how the words 'tail tale' are written? Does this tell us something about the story? Or does it not?
2. Divide children into groups. Each group has to read out a page of text aloud. Let them do this at least twice, until they get their timing right. Once they have learned to read on cue, get them to put some emotion in their reading.
3. What kind of story is this? Have they heard other stories like this one?
4. The cat in the story wants a new tail – and she looks at the tails of various animals. Ask children to list these animals.
5. Call attention to how the writer has used words. For example, get them to make a list of all the words used to describe the tails of various animals. Would they describe these tails differently?
6. Get children to look at the shape of words on the page: is there anything special about the way some words or even some alphabets are shown?
7. Could the story have ended differently? Using the same set of pictures, get children to come up with a different ending.

#### ART

1. What is special about the illustrations that feature in this book? Get each child to come up with at least one thing she or he finds interesting about the pictures in the book.
2. Call attention to the way the natural world is shown: fields, trees, rivers, ocean... point to the detailed work that has gone into the making of each page.
3. Now point to how the artists have created a special place for animals shown in the book: get children to look closely at each intricately drawn space and say a few words about each.
4. Ask children to look closely at how the animals are drawn: for example, the use of dots to convey the cat's expressions; the way the dog is portrayed, in movement; how the mouse's whiskers tell us that this is indeed a mouse and not a rat; at how the pig's curly tail brings the pig alive on the page, and the shape of the snake that conveys how it moves.
5. When Cat wants to choose a new tail, she considers the tails of many animals. Get children to look closely at the many animals whose backs she observes. Get the children to guess the animal from the shape of its tail.
6. The artists show the tails of the various animals do interesting things – from stretching out like a line, to becoming a squiggle. Get children to observe how the words on those pages are also differently arranged, so as to match the shape of the tails.

7. Pictures often tell stories or communicate emotions. Get children to notice how the artists have made the cat look different on almost every page. In some pages, she looks sad, in others anxious, in yet others inquisitive ... How have the artists managed to show so many emotions? Lead the discussion to the point where the children start noticing how by varying the shape and size of the dots, the artists communicate emotion. Also point to the shape of the cat's body, and how it is different on different pages, in keeping with what the cat does.

8. Get children to think of the following: Besides the main characters in the story, the pictures feature many other creatures – are they part of the story or not? If not, why has the artist drawn them? If they are part of the story, how do they add to our enjoyment of it?



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