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# **CHAPTER 1:** The Cat

**1.** Why is the cat valued as a domestic animal?

It is clean and orderly in its habits and an effective hunter of mice.

**2.** What is the Latin word from which the name "cat" derives?

*Catus*. The adjective *catus, -a, -um* means sharp or cunning, and the other Latin word for the cat, *feles, felis*, is sometimes used to name a thief.

**3.** Why does it seem likely that the cat would have been first domesticated in Egypt?

As the granary of the ancient world, Egypt had large stores of wheat, and thus ample fodder for mice. It seems likely that the cat would have been domesticated in order to hunt mice. The medieval custom of making the killer of a cat pay a fine in the form of a sum of grain further supports this theory.

**4.** How is the domestic cat chiefly different from the wild cat?

The wild cat is a much larger, thicker, more powerful, and more fierce animal.

**5.** What is the normal life-span of a domestic cat?

Usually about twelve years, and occasionally as long as eighteen.

**6.** How many kittens might the owner of a mated pair of cats expect to have every year?

With a female cat having three or four litters per year and generally five or six kittens per litter, the owner should expect to see from 15 to 24 new kittens every year! For this reason, most cat owners choose to have their cats neutered.

7. Why is knowing the history of the domestic cat and its various breeds not "scientific knowledge" in the most strict sense?

Scientific knowledge in the most strict sense is the knowledge of causes. Only the knowledge of causes will allow us to give a compelling answer to the question "What is a cat?"

8. Why is it important to recall that we naturally learn by making distinctions?

Because when we remember that point, our learning will be more easily won and retained. By continually asking, "What is it?" and "How is it different from what I already know?" our little steps will give us solid gains of knowledge.

9. What does it mean to say that an organism is a "complex whole in which all the parts are reciprocally ends and means"?

The different parts of the body have different but complementary tasks, and each of them needs the others in order to perform its own activity.

10. Which four chemical elements are the principal ones into which living things can be dissolved after death?

Carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen.

11. What does it mean to say that an organism is "made up" of these elements?

It means that it can be more or less readily dissolved into them after its death.

12. Should an organism be understood to be a collection or mixture of these elements?

No; while it is alive, the living thing is one continuous whole made up of different parts. It is not a mixture; it is an ordered whole.

13. How do living things differ from non-living things?

Living things differ from the non-living by the powers of taking in food, growing from within, and reproducing according to their kind, and by the fact that they are ordered wholes.

**14.** What are the most basic activities shared by all animals—those activities, that is, because of which it is said to live and be an animal?

The taking in of food, growth, reproduction, movement, and sensation.

**15.** How can we negatively characterize the difference between all animals and plants?

Animals are unable to nourish themselves by converting non-living elements into the fabric of their own bodies, and they have no cellulose.

**16.** How are the higher animals, such as the cat, further differentiated from plants?

Higher animals are primarily different from plants in their powers of locomotion and sensation; further differences include the reception of food into an internal cavity, their non-tree-like external form, their incapacity to reproduce by budding, and the importance of the element nitrogen to their physical constitution.

**17.** What, then, is an animal?

An animal is a living thing with the powers of sensation and locomotion that must obtain its food from other living things.