Belling the Cat

Long ago, a large number of mice lived on a farm. One night they came together in the farmer’s barn. They met to talk about the farmer’s cat.

“She chases us away from the best food,” said one mouse.

“We can’t go in the open because she’ll catch us,” said another.

“I’m afraid to let the children go out to play,” said a third mouse.

All the mice began shouting about the ways the cat made their lives hard. The oldest mouse waited for quiet. Then she said, “The cat does make things hard for us. But what shall we do about it? We must think hard together to get some ideas.”

The mice had lots of ideas. But none of them seemed to be any good. Then one of the younger mice stood up.

“The cat comes on us so quietly,” he said. “We don’t know she is there until it is too late to get away.”

“Yes, that’s so,” said the mice.

“We should put a bell on the cat. We will be able to hear her coming. Then it will be easy to get away.”

The mice all shouted and clapped at this idea. When they were quiet again, the oldest mouse got up. “Yes, yes, this is a fine idea,” she said. “So who will put the bell on the cat?”

The mice looked at each other. No one said a word. The young mouse that had had the idea looked scared. He quietly backed away. The oldest mouse said, “Yes, it is a fine idea. But a good idea is of no use if it cannot be done.”

1. Why are the mice having a meeting to talk about the cat?

2. All the mice think putting a bell on the cat is a good idea. Why do none of them want to do it?

3. In one sentence, write the lesson of this story.
**Answer Key**

1. Why are the mice having a meeting to talk about the cat?

   Possible answers: Because the cat is dangerous to them and they need to think of a way to solve the problem. Because the cat makes their lives hard so they need a way to fix all the problems she causes them. Or similar.

2. All the mice think putting a bell on the cat is a good idea. Why do none of them want to do it?

   Possible answers: The cat will probably hurt them if they try to put a bell on her. They are afraid of the cat. She is too big and strong for them. The cat will not let them put a bell on her. She will probably try to eat them. Or similar.

3. In one sentence, write the lesson of this story.

   Possible answers: An impossible idea won’t help anything. A good idea to solve a problem is not good if you can’t actually do it. Or similar.

   [TEACHER: Students may write the moral of the story word for word from the text (which shows they have identified it) or they may rewrite it in their own words.]