

# An Unlikely Friendship

Have you ever observed two animals of different species form a friendship?

<sup>1</sup> Have you ever heard of a friendship between a cat and mouse? An unlikely friendship developed between a domestic black cat named *Muschi*, which means *pussycat* in German, and an Asiatic shaggy black bear named *Maeuschen*, or *little mouse*. A relationship between these two creatures may seem even less likely than one between a cat and a real mouse. Yet *Muschi* and *Maeuschen* seem to live quite happily in *Maeuschen*'s cage at the Berlin Zoo in Germany.

<sup>2</sup> No one is quite sure how the friendship first began. One day, zookeepers noticed the tiny black cat in the bear's outdoor pen. They were surprised to see how well the small cat seemed to get along with the half-ton bear. Because the two animals were living together peacefully, the zookeeper allowed the cat to stay in the bear's cage. The pair and their unusual friendship became a special attraction at the zoo.

<sup>3</sup> After several years, the time came to build *Maeuschen* a new, larger cage. The bear was moved into temporary housing while the new cage was constructed. *Muschi* was not moved with her friend, and she made her displeasure quickly known. She paced back and forth outside *Maeuschen*'s temporary cage, crying to be let in. The zoo workers finally took pity on *Muschi* and allowed her to move back in with *Maeuschen*. The cat and bear happily cuddled together, and then went back to their normal routine of lying in the sun and sharing meals.

<sup>4</sup> *Muschi* isn't the only cat to have made friends with an animal more than a hundred times her size. In 1972, psychologist Francine Patterson was teaching a gorilla named Koko how to communicate using American Sign Language. Koko loved listening to books about cats and seeing pictures or photographs of cats. For the gorilla's birthday, Patterson allowed Koko to choose a kitten as a pet.

<sup>5</sup> You might think that a kitten would be terrified of such a large animal, but All Ball (as Koko named her kitten) seemed perfectly comfortable cradled in the gorilla's enormous hands. Koko was ecstatic to have a pet of her own and treated All Ball with gentleness and tenderness.

<sup>6</sup> It seems that animals sometimes have their own ideas about who would make a good companion or friend. These ideas may come as a surprise to humans, who generally expect animals to form bonds with others of the same species. This doesn't appear to concern the animals, though, who just go about their business until the opportunity for a new, maybe very different, friend comes along.



Write the words from the selection that are homophones for the words below.

1. pear

\_\_\_\_\_

Par. 2

2. billed

\_\_\_\_\_

Par. 3

3. paste

\_\_\_\_\_

Par. 3

4. fourth

\_\_\_\_\_

Par. 3

5. What do *Muschi* and *Maeuschen* mean?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. What is humorous about the names *Muschi* and *Maeuschen*?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Why were *Muschi* and *Maeuschen* separated?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. How did Francine Patterson and Koko communicate with one another?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. How did Koko treat All Ball?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. Check the sentence that best states the main idea of the selection.

\_\_\_\_\_ Koko showed a great deal of interest in stories about cats.

\_\_\_\_\_ Some animals can occasionally form strong friendships with animals from other species.

\_\_\_\_\_ *Muschi* and *Maeuschen* live at the Berlin Zoo in Berlin, Germany.