



experimental
typography
2024



ATLAS

ATLAS

Experimental Typography
ATLS 4130/5130, Fall 2024

Lila Anson

Alyssa Cady

Ethan Cherry

Destiny Cool

Kai Franks

Adina Glickstein

Claire Grossman

Mariela Mejia-Guzman

Klara Nitsche

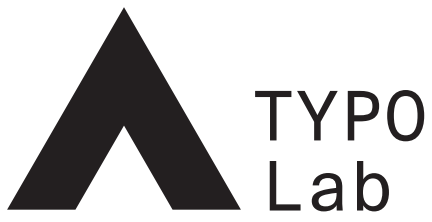
Jade Singer

Lizzy Spann

David Stuhlemmer

Evelyn Upchurch

Joel Swanson, Instructor



Experimental Typography

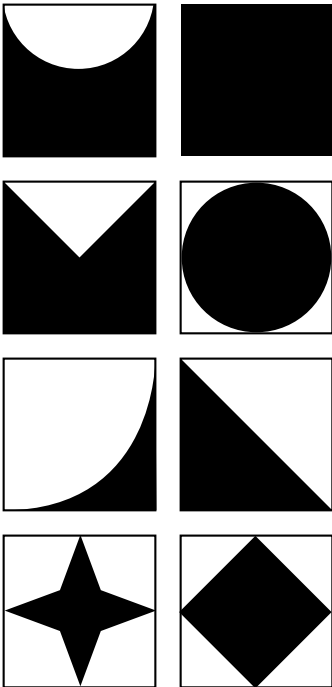
Experimental typography challenges traditional letterform design and typographic conventions by treating text as both a communication tool and visual art form. While conventional typography emphasizes the established rules of legibility and readability, experimental approaches explore how pushing boundaries can create new forms of visual expression and meaning.

This course traces the evolution of experimental typography from the Bauhaus to today's AI-driven innovations, examining how designers have re-imagined the foundations of type design. Students study historical movements while developing their own experimental approaches through hands-on projects. The course culminates in students designing original experimental typefaces, which are documented through limited-edition type specimens.

The TYPO Lab serves as our hub for typographic exploration and production. This lab combines traditional tools like hand-set letterpress type with contemporary technology including a RISO duplicator and CNC pen plotter. By integrating analog and digital processes, the lab encourages students to discover unexpected combinations and new directions in typography.

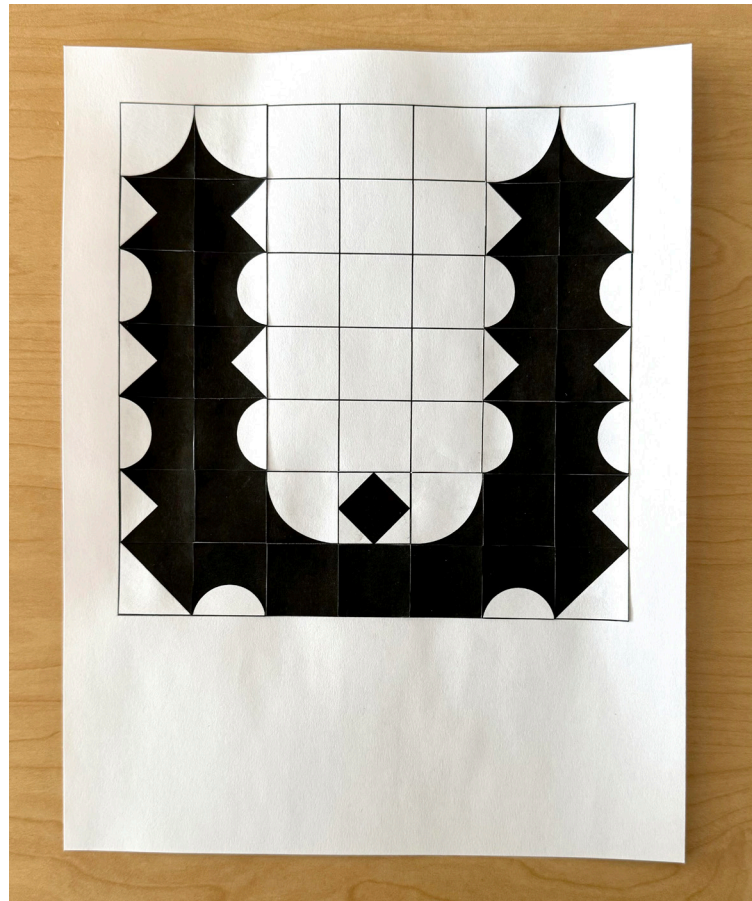
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Swann". The signature is fluid and stylized, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

COLAB



This typeface was the result of a collaborative effort by the 14 students enrolled in the course. Each student was responsible for designing a subset of characters based on specific guidelines: every character had to be created within a 7 x 7 grid using only a set of predefined shapes.

Through multiple rounds of critique, the class worked to achieve a cohesive aesthetic while gaining hands-on experience with the technical aspects of font design. The final designs were scanned and digitized using Glyphs, a professional font-creation software. To showcase the typeface, we printed type specimens on an Asbern letterpress with a custom polymer plate.



ORNAMENTED
PSEUDONYMS
QUESTIONERS
ETYMOLOGIES
INTOLERABLE
HEARTLANDS
PROCLAIMERS
ENDANGERED
PERSPECTIVES
0123456789!@?*

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

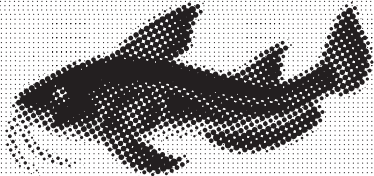
(MMXXIV)

Elysium

Lila Anson

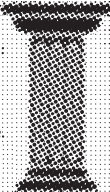
Elysium is a display typeface inspired by the halftone technique, where images are composed of dots that vary in size to create a uniquely textured surface. Each character began as a design within a 24x24 grid, but this was expanded as letterforms dipped below baselines and above standard heights. Surrounding each letter is a grid of dots, establishing a seamless visual rhythm as the font is typed. The space character is intentionally sized to allow the grid to be extended beyond the text itself.

Designed for balance, *Elysium* is not intended for mixed font sizes; its alignment depends on maintaining a consistent scale across all text. Its natural look is enhanced by imperfectly rounded circles and a high-contrast style that distinguishes it from existing halftone fonts, which tend towards symmetry and uniformity. Mimicking the use of a chisel-tip marker held at a 45 degree angle, *Elysium* is a compelling choice for unique and design-forward visual statements.

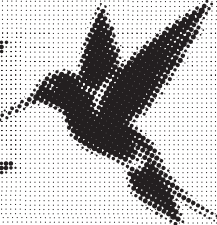
ELYSIUM 

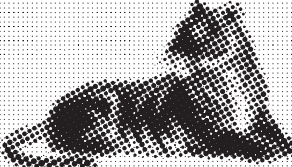
abcdefghijklm

nopqrstuvwxy

z  ABCDEFGH

IJKLMNOPQR

STUVWXYZ 

 1234567890

LILA

2024

Isoblocks

Alyssa Cady

Isoblocks is an isometric block font intended for display use. It experiments with differing dimensionality and depth perspective giving the typeface a 3D “off-the-paper” visual effect. The design is loosely based off of a page from Romano Hänni’s book *It is Bitter to Leave Your Home* where the author used a repeating box-like form with simple variations to create visual rhythm within typography. *Isoblocks* is constructed entirely from straight lines and maintains a consistent height and width across the characters with a unique type size for capitals, lowercase and numeric characters.

Each character showcases one of the four unique dimensional perspectives which is rotated across the typeface based on common letter pairings. The opposing depth between characters creates an illusion of movement and variation in x-height. *Isoblocks* is designed with a kerning value of 0em to ensure that letters sit edge-to-edge, seamlessly contrasting one another in isometric perspective. The altering depth perspective allows words to rise, pop, and shrink on the page, achieving a dynamic and harmonious visual experience.

Inky Bit

Ethan Cherry

Ethan Cherry introduces *Inkybit*, a digital typeface that merges the worlds of bitmap video games with the spontaneity and handmade touch of analog art. Inspired by the pixelated art of arcade games and modern titles like *Minecraft*, *Terraria*, and *StardewValley*, *Inkybit* also draws from the liquid letterforms seen in Ed Ruscha's word paintings. Cherry's typeface utilizes a chunky, visible pixel grid that unexpectedly flows into a script-like, expressive form.

As a current MFA candidate in Drawing and Painting, not traditionally trained in typography, Cherry approached the creation of *Inkybit* with a unique, handmade sensibility. Each letterform was meticulously hand-drawn on grid paper, reminiscent of the techniques employed by Susan Kare during her iconic tenure at Apple in the 1980s. Cherry then scanned these drawings and digitally retraced each glyph, bit by bit. This hybrid process allowed for a deeply personal touch within the digital medium, challenging the typically rigid, geometric norms of bitmap fonts. *Inkybit* exhibits a dynamic tension between the structured order of pixels and the organic flow of hand-written script, making it feel both nostalgic and fresh.



AaBbCcDdEeFfGgHhIiJjKkLlMm

1234567890
IJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

designed by
Ethan Cherry

NnOoPpQqRrSsTtUuVvWwXxYyZz



Skadica

Destiny Cool

Skadica is a modern, experimental typography tribute to the rugged beauty of the Nordic goddess Skadi and the ancient Nordic runes, Young and Old Futhark, that tell her story. Resembling stone carvings, *Skadica* aims to showcase the evolution and versatility of human letterforms over the centuries.

Rooted in Skadi's origin in Norse mythology, *Skadica* embodies her strength, independence, and connection to nature through sharp, rigid geometric letterforms. Inspired by Skadi's role as the goddess of winter, mountains, bowhunting, and skiing, *Skadica* mirrors the jagged peaks of mountains, the coldness of winter, and the delicate feathers of an arrow.

Distinguishing itself from other "Viking" fonts, *Skadica* blends mythological storytelling motifs, the beauty of asemic typography, and today's English alphabet to distort one's conventional perceptions of written language. With no two lines being exactly the same, *Skadica* invites viewers to take a moment and immerse themselves in the abstraction of the letterforms, where they may uncover the hidden language within.

Star Head

Kai Franks

A clear star-filled sky can be hard to come by these days, *Star Head* is an attempt to allow writers and artists to create this sky without worrying about light pollution. With the inspiration from *Cooper Black* and through the integration of thick lettering, curves in every corner, and a star that occupies every counter, constellations can be seen through the touch of a keyboard. To keep consistency throughout this font, two sizes of rectangles were used for sizing the letters, and corners of each letter were decided beforehand. Utilizing the size of the uppercase, this font is intended to be vast and create a dark void on the page while using small editions of the lowercase letters to communicate what is shown.

Operational

Adina Glickstein

Operational is a typeface inspired by the evolving history of character encoding, emphasizing the gap between how humans and computers comprehend written language. Rendering the alphabet unfamiliar to the human eye, it stages a distinction between the comprehensible (i.e., human-readable) and the operational (i.e., data usable by computers) to explore how meaning functions differently across human and nonhuman use-cases. The name “Operational” is an homage to Harun Farocki, a German artist and filmmaker who coined the term “operational images” to describe images produced by and for machines. They are the visual language of machines talking to machines; even when they are visible to humans, their meaning is encrypted. Likewise, computers do not understand language the same way that people do. Each period in the history of computing has had to reckon with the question of how letters and words can be broken down in such a way as to be “meaningful” to a machine.

Each letter in *Operational* is made up of a set of numbers, which correspond to that letter’s numerical codes in various moments from computer history. Capital letters are three tiers high. The bottom number is that letter’s character code from the EBCDIC encoding convention used by IBM punch cards; the middle number is that letter’s ASCII code; and the top number is that letter’s OpenAI token ID. Because the IBM character chart only accounted for capital letters, the lower-case glyphs in the Operational alphabet only consist of two numbers: the ASCII code and OpenAI token ID. The shape that appears as an illumination on certain glyphs and in the “space” character is based on a marking that appeared on IBM punch cards. Although Operational turns text into strings of numbers, the typeface itself does not convert your words into computer-readable text. Rather, drawing together these details from computing history, it playfully renders language illegible to both humans and machines. While each glyph references, the past, present, and future of text encoding, the end result of this synthesis is strictly decorative. In this way, it is a *détournement* of the labor of language-processing: a refusal of the “work” of comprehension, by computers and humans alike.



is an asemic
typeface inspired
by the history of
text computing

* 32 33 34 35 36 *37 38 39 40 41 42 43 *44
065 066 067 068 069 070 071 072 073 074 075 076 077
121 122 123 124 125 126 127 128 129 *111 112 113 114

46 46 *47 49 50 51 52 53 54 *55 56 57
078 079 080 082 089 084 085 086 087 088 089 090
115 116 117 119 *02 03 04 05 06 07 08 *09

*64 *65 *66 67 68 69 70 *71 72 73 *74 75 76
097 098 099 100 101 102 103 104 105 106 107 108 109

77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89
110 111 112 113 114 115 116 117 118 119 120 121 122



Care Tag

Claire Grossman



The *Care Tag* typeface is a playful yet functional exploration of everyday details. Inspired by laundry care symbols, it reimagines their clean, structured forms into a cohesive typographic system. Each character blends geometric precision with the charm of its symbolic origins. The design process involved dissecting and abstracting the recognizable features of laundry symbols, then integrating them seamlessly into letterforms. The resulting typeface retains a bold, minimalist aesthetic, marked by clean lines, angular strokes, and subtle nods to its source material. *Care Tag* is well-suited for projects that emphasize simplicity, utility, or a connection to the everyday. It is particularly effective in branding and packaging for fashion or home goods, where its playful reference to laundry symbols adds both relevance and personality. By transforming the familiar into something fresh, the typeface bridges the gap between functionality and creativity, celebrating the beauty in everyday details.

Δ TYPEFACE THAT CLEANS UP NICELY

C Δ R E τ Δ Γ

MΔΔE IΠ



☼☼%. COTTON

IMΔΓIΠΔTIOΠ



I R O Π

Δ R Y

Δ B C Δ E

F Γ H I J

K L M Π O

P Q R S τ

U V W X Y



α β γ δ
ε ς ζ η
ι ϳ Ϸ ϸ
θ ϰ ϱ ϲ
ϳ ϴ ϵ Ϸ
ϸ Ϲ Ϻ ϻ

C
L
E
Δ
Π

Δ
I
R
τ
Y

MΔΠΔLE WITH CARE

CLAIRE



GROSSMAN

Lingua Form

Mariela Mejia-Guzman

Lingua Form is all about mixing the old with the new. It takes ideas from ancient scripts like Greek, Arabic, Etruscan, Chinese calligraphy, and Anglo-Saxon lettering and blends them into something fresh and modern. The letterforms are light, detailed, and carefully crafted to feel timeless and futuristic. Creating *Lingua Form* was about finding a balance between these historical influences and modern readability.

L I N E M A

F O R M

M A R I E L A M E V I A

3 1 3 4

U P P E R C A S E

A B C D E F G H I J K L M

N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

N O W E S C A S E

a b c d e f g h i j k l m

n o p q r s t u v w x y z

N U M B E R S

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9



Code of Conduct

Klara Nitsche

This project explores handwriting and materiality as a marker of community. Inspired by anonymous methods of communication such as graffiti, chalk writings, and unauthored notes, *Code of Conduct* documents student handwriting across whiteboards on CU Boulder's campus to investigate how the act of writing can create a sense of kinship and local identity. Whiteboards, by design, encourage impermanent and easy writing. They often act as stations for community-erected in study rooms, classes, and open-floor spaces such as the Norlin Library to assist students in academic reasoning and discussion. Through random (and anonymous) sampling of whiteboard writing, the artist collected over 2000 marked letterforms from campus whiteboards which were then categorized, compiled, and digitized to display Boulder's current writing style. Each letterform is layered together over its kin, resulting in a chaotic, dysfunctional typeface that echoes countless student cram sessions and test reviews.

Code of Conduct takes the behavior of students as it is, and celebrates our ephemeral expressions as part of a larger whole.

code of conduct

by Klara Nitsche
effective 2024

A
B
C
D
E
F
G
H
I
J
K
L
M
N
O
P
Q
R
S
T
U
V
W
X
Y
Z

a
b
c
d
e
f
g
h
i
j
k
l
m
n
o
p
q
r
s
t
u
v
w
x
y
z



The student will understand the impact of their behavior on others. The student will contribute positively to the EU Boulder community and beyond.

., - , .

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

Visibilis

Jade Singer

This project explores the boundaries of typographic form through the development of the experimental typeface *Visibilis*. Specifically designed for people who have dyslexia, *Visibilis* incorporates certain key design elements: heavier, weighted bottoms; bigger letter openings; and taller x-height for increased legibility. *Visibilis* took inspiration from several well-known fonts such as *OpenDyslexic* and *Dyslexie*, which also aim to improve readability for those with dyslexia. *Dyslexia* is a learning disorder characterized by experiencing difficulty reading. It is caused by disruptions in how the brain processes writing and letterforms.

Visibilis

Jade Singer 2024



Dyslexia is a learning disorder characterized by difficulty reading. People with dyslexia may have trouble with phonological awareness, verbal memory, and verbal processing speed. They may also mix up letters, blend words together, or lose spaces. Dyslexia is caused by disruptions in how the brain processes writing. It's often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities.

This font was made with the intention of making it easier to read for people that have dyslexia. With being able to tell the difference between letters that are commonly mixed up such as b and d. Also the letters g and q. With the font having heavier weighted bottoms, bigger openings and higher x-height.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

. , : ; ! ? () [] / \ - _

Liddel

Lizzy Span

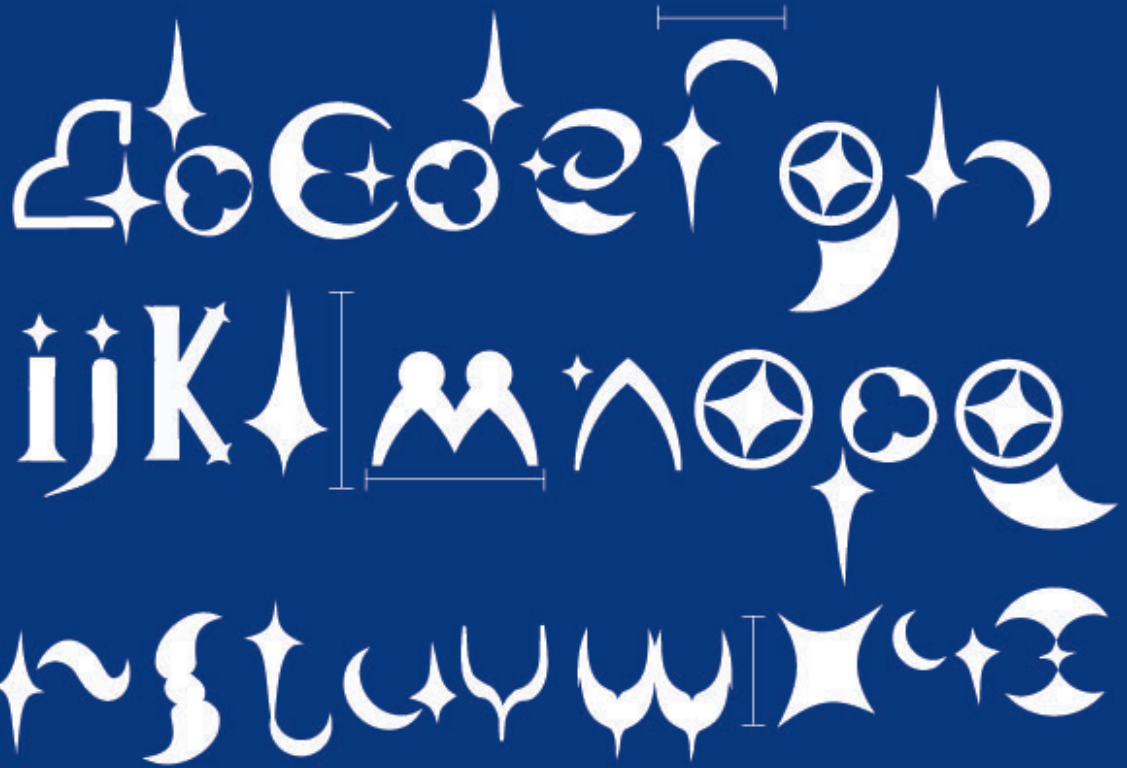
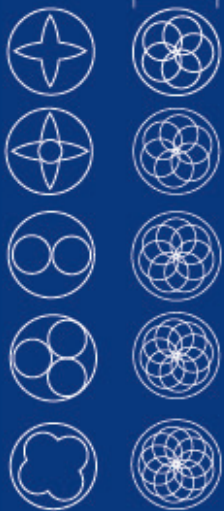
Drawing inspiration from the soaring spires and dramatic lines of Gothic architecture, this typeface embodies the breathtaking verticality and structural precision of medieval cathedrals. Its razor-sharp serifs echo the pointed arches that define Gothic style, while the dramatic contrast between thick and thin strokes mirrors the interplay of light and shadow within cathedral naves. The letterforms feature elongated ascenders and descenders that reach skyward like flying buttresses, creating an elegant rhythm across the page.

Each character has been meticulously crafted to capture the architectural principles of the Gothic period—where every element serves both form and function. The counters and apertures reflect the geometric rose windows found in great cathedrals like Notre-Dame and Chartres, while the overall vertical emphasis creates a sense of upward movement reminiscent of Gothic vaulting. This font bridges centuries of architectural heritage with contemporary typographic needs, making it equally suited for headlines that demand gravitas or body text that requires both readability and historical resonance.

Bi

Upper Case

Numbers



Lower Case

Notated

David Stuhlemmer

Music is a universal language that anyone from any culture can understand and relate to. With this concept in mind I chose to build an entire typeface using a common quarter note manipulated into each glyph. The same quarter note is used in each letterform. Each line of all letters and symbols is built using the same quarter note shape. I did not vary from this shape throughout the entire process, although I did resize to make more conforming and legible forms. The original inspiration for this came from the "Asemic Type" assignment where I built a Capital Letter Alphabet out of simple quarter notes. The stems of these forms were straight and blocked, making the Letters easier to form and make. One of the the main challenges in developing *Notated* in Glyphs was that I built the initial shape with a curved rounded top of the stem. *Self Critique Here* this text was too legible to actually be considered asemic, it was also difficult for me mentally to create an illegible font.

My Type Specimen is a 11x17 inch Show Poster for our headlining show at the Fox Theatre on January 10, 2025. The QR code was inserted as a way to implement the letter "Q". Other applications for specimen iterations that crossed my mind were song lyrics and also writing chord charts with Roman Numerals.

Cyats

Evelyn Upchurch

Cyats is a typeface that's simply cats. With it's bold, quirky, silly letterforms, it brings some ameowzing personality to whatever its used in! Inspired by my adorable menace, Nox!

A B C D E F

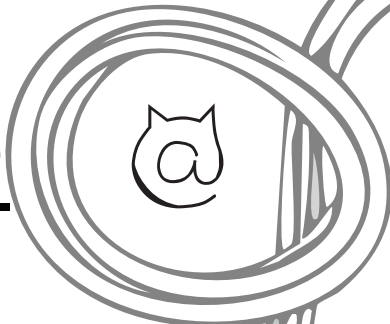
G H I J K L M

N O P Q R S

T U V W X Y Z



0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9



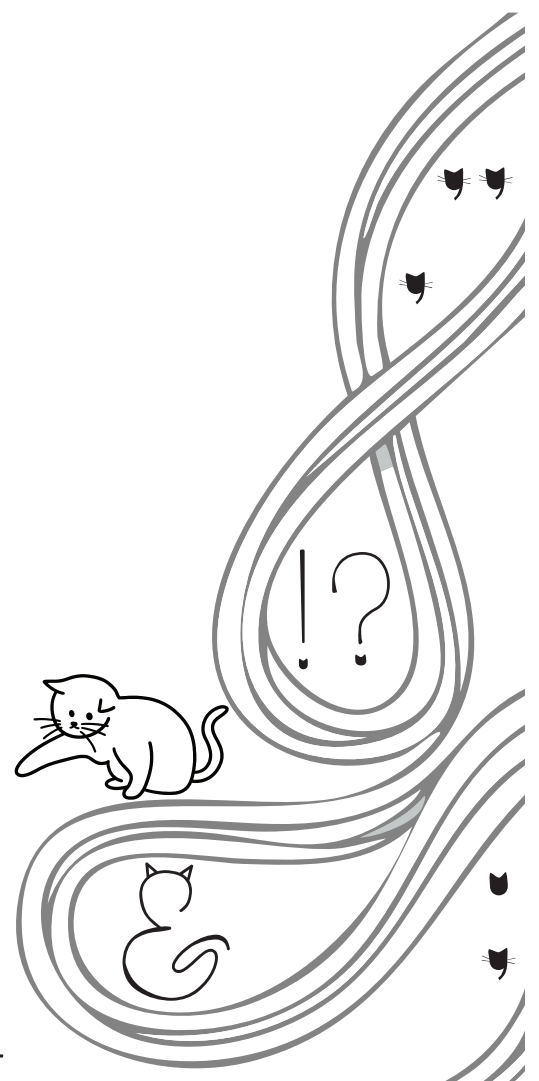
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

Would never be able to guess, but Mox is actually a menace! Shocking. * know.

Evelyn Upchurch

2024

Cyats





ATTILAS



letnemiņēze
vīdē 1900 vī
1902

