

## The Gift of Nothing



• PATRICK McDONNELL •

This story features characters from McDonnell's comic strip *Mutts*. Mooch (a cat) wants to give Earl (a dog) a gift, but he already has a bowl, a bed, and even a chewy toy. In fact, Earl has it ALL. In a flash of inspiration,

Mooch decides to give him nothing, and sets out to find it. Though the kids say there is nothing to do, they always seem to be doing something. And even though Millie says there is nothing to buy, Mooch finds plenty in the stores. In the end, he wraps a big box with nothing in it and presents it to his friend. There's nothing here, says Earl. Nothing but me and you, Mooch replies. And that's the point. As Mooch ponders over his dilemma, he is engulfed by question marks. The picture of the two friends sitting wrapped paw-in-paw as they enjoy nothing and everything is charming. This story is a fine vehicle for a discussion of the meaning of friendship and gift-giving.