



A Lesson on Pigeon Express by Stephanie Bearkland

Grade Level: Grade 4

Subject Area: English Language Arts

Lesson Length: 1 hour 30 minutes

Lesson Keywords: Pigeon Express, reading, writing, vocabulary, comprehension

Lesson Description: The story provided in this lesson is "Pigeon Express". The objective of this lesson is to give 4th grade students the opportunity to utilize vocabulary and language arts, as well as critical and creative thinking skills to comprehend the provided text, as per the Common Core Standards. Students will be required to close read (read and re-read) the story and subsequently answer several vocabulary questions, partake in a student discussion, and finally create an essay based on the "Pigeon Express". Thus, students are given the opportunity to discover some of the necessary skills needed for the language arts component of Common Core Standards.

Common Core Standards Covered with This Lesson

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.1: Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including those that allude to significant characters found in mythology (e.g., Herculean).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.1: Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.4.4: Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.1: Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

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Lesson Content: Book/Story/Reading Passage

Instructions: Please read the following reading passage as many times as needed (aloud and silent) before starting to go through other lesson pages. Understanding the content of this passage is very important since the lesson activities will be all about this content. Feel free to print the passage if needed.

Pigeon Express

by

Content: My uncle told me that long ago people used carrier pigeons to take messages to other people. He actually has some carrier pigeons. They live in a coop on the roof of his apartment building. They aren't everyday pigeons they have been trained.

My uncle had carrier pigeons when he was a child. He grew up and went into the army, but now he works at a store. He has always loved those carrier pigeons. So when he got enough money, he bought some and trained them himself.

Every day, my uncle writes a note to his sister. His sister lives on the south side and my uncle lives on the west side. He tells his sister about his day in his notes. He says it's not urgent to tell her the news. He just likes using the carrier pigeons.

His sister thinks this is silly. When the pigeon comes, she takes the note and reads it but does not send anything back. Afterwards, the bird comes back to my uncle's coop.

One day there was a sudden rainstorm after the pigeon left my uncle's coop. It rained so hard and so long that everything was flooded. The pigeon did not come back immediately, so my uncle started to worry about the pigeon. He worried about his sister, too. But then the pigeon came back. It was very wet. It had a note in a plastic bag. The note said, I am ok.

Later that summer, there was another problem. The power was out. We did not have any telephone service. My uncle said, See, pigeons can work all the time. They don't need electricity. He wrote that in a note, too. He tied that note to the pigeon. Then he sent that note to his sister.

About an hour later, the pigeon came back. It had another note on it. You're right, it said. I have learned that you can count on pigeons. But I still want my telephone back.

The phone lines were back the next day. We were not worried, though. We knew we could always count on our pigeon express.

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Task 1: Vocabulary

Instructions: Please complete the following vocabulary activity by choosing the correct meaning of each word selected from the passage and use of each word correctly in a sentence.

Q: 1 WordPhrase: Coop **WordPhraseTier:** 3

Question: The author in our story says "They live in a coop on the roof of his apartment building". What does the word "coop" mean in this sentence?

- A: A cardboard box
- B: A chimney
- C: A cage or pen
- D: A nest

Question: Which one of the sentences below uses the word "coop" correctly?

- A: I packed my things away in a coop.
- B: My chickens and hens live in a large coop.
- C: Santa comes down the coop at Christmas time.
- D: The birds built a coop to hatch their eggs.

Q: 2 WordPhrase: urgent **WordPhraseTier:** 2

Question: The author in our story says "it's not urgent to tell her the news". What does the word "urgent" mean in this sentence?

- A: silly
- B: important
- C: hard
- D: crazy

Question: Which one of the sentences below uses the word "urgent" correctly?

- A: The classroom has plenty of pencils, so it's urgent we all bring some in tomorrow.
- B: I had an hour to get to school, so it was urgent that I hurried up.
- C: We left my dog home alone all day, so it's urgent we get home to let her out to use the bathroom.
- D: There is no school today, so it's urgent to get up and ready for class.

Q: 3 WordPhrase: actually **WordPhraseTier:** 2

Question: In our story the author says "He actually has some carrier pigeons". What does the word "actually" mean in this sentence?

- A: really
- B: does
- C: likely
- D: kind of

Question: Which one of the sentences below uses the word "actually" correctly

- A: The butterfly flew away actually.
- B: We just had dinner, so we actually had to eat soon.
- C: My actually aunt is here on vacation.
- D: We need to pay attention to what the teacher is actually doing.

Q: 4 WordPhrase: carrier pigeon **WordPhraseTier:** 3

Question: In our story the author says, "My uncle had carrier pigeons when he was a child". What does the phrase "carrier pigeon" mean?

- A: A bird who flew into cars.
- B: A bird trained to carry messages.
- C: A bird trained to carry other birds.
- D: A bird that carried presents.

Question: Which one of the sentences below uses the word "carrier pigeon" correctly

- A: The army's carrier pigeons carry important notes to the soldiers.
- B: The carrier pigeon carried four other birds to the nest.
- C: The carrier pigeon catches rides in cars to transport messages.
- D: Carrier pigeons work for money.

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Task 2: Forum Discussion

Instructions: This discussion forum will have questions for students to respond. Read the posted questions, and respond to each. Students are responsible for posting one initial and two peer responses for each topic.

1 - Why do you think...

Why do you think the Uncle keeps the pigeons in a coop on the roof of his apartment building? Explain your answer.

2 - Sister Silence

In our story the author says the uncle's sister? takes the note and reads it but?does not send anything back.? Why do you think the sister doesn't send anything back?? Explain your answer.?

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3 - Rainstorm

Why do you think it took the pigeon so long to return in the rainstorm?? Why didn't the uncle just pick up the phone to call the sister instead of sending the pigeon?? Explain your answer.

4 - Training the pigeons

Do you think it took a lot of work for the uncle to train the pigeons to deliver the messages?? Why or why not?

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Task 3: Writing Activity

Instructions: Why does the uncle continue to use carrier pigeons to send messages, even though we have more modern technology available, such as telephones, texting and email?? Respond below in a 500 word essay, using the information given to you in the story to support your response.

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