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A Lesson on Pigeon Express by Kacy Wennberg

Grade Level: Grade 4

Subject Area: English Language Arts

Lesson Length: 1 hour 30 minutes

Lesson Keywords: carrier pigeons, 4th grade language arts activities

Lesson Description: This lesson plan is designed for common core standards for language arts standards in vocabulary, critical thinking, and writing. This lesson uses the story "Pigeon Express" for students to work through in developing the skills for common core standards. This lesson is suitable for fourth grade students.

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.

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CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.4: Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text relevant to a grade 4 topic or subject area.

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

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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: urgent **WordPhraseTier:** 2

Question: "He says it's not urgent to tell her the news. He just likes using the carrier pigeons."

What does the word "urgent" mean in these sentences?

- A: nice
- B: important
- C: easy
- D: funny

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

- A: The girl broke her leg when she fell so it was urgent that she get to the hospital.
- B: The teacher told the class not to worry about doing the homework tonight so it was urgent that the student finish it this evening.
- C: There is plenty of food left so it is urgent that we get more.
- D: Bedtime is not for another six hours so it is urgent that you get ready for bed.

Q: 2 WordPhrase: worried **WordPhraseTier:** 2

Question: "The pigeon did not come back immediately, so my uncle started to worry about the pigeon."

What does the word "worry" mean in this sentence?

- A: anger
- B: happy
- C: calm
- D: concern

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

- A: The daughter was not home when she was told to be so her mother began to worry.
- B: He started to worry when the bus driver said we have arrived safely.
- C: The children began to worry at the boys jokes.
- D: Everything was peaceful so the people began to worry.

Q: 3 WordPhrase: carrier pigeons **WordPhraseTier:** 3

Question: "My uncle told me that long ago people used carrier pigeons to take messages to other people."

What does the phrase "carrier pigeons" mean in this sentence?

- A: A mailman that delivered messages.
- B: A person that delivered messages.
- C: A bird that delivered messages.
- D: a car

Question: Which one of the sentence below uses the phrase "carrier pigeons" correctly?

- A: Carrier pigeons have to be 18 years of age to work at job.
- B: Carrier pigeons work long hours at the post office.
- C: People drive carrier pigeons a long way to deliver messages.
- D: Carrier pigeons will take a message from one person and bring it to another.

Q: 4 WordPhrase: coop **WordPhraseTier:** 3

Question: "They live in a coop on the roof of his apartment building."

What does the word "coop" mean in this sentence?

- A: chimney
- B: home of the carrier pigeon
- C: shoe box
- D: dog house

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

- A: You can order a coop at a restaurant.

B: The coop on the farm had eggs in it today.

C: I keep my shoes in my coop in the closet.

D: Smoke comes out of the coop.

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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 - Do you think the carrier pigeons...

Do you think the carrier pigeons bring back memories to the uncle as he sends them with messages to his sister??Give reasons for your answer.

2 - What do you think the uncles...

What do you think the uncles experience was like with the carrier pigeons as a child? Explain your answer.

3 - In the story it says, "He says...

In the story it says, He says it's not urgent to tell her the news. He just likes using the carrier pigeons. Why do you think the uncle enjoys using the carrier pigeons so much, even though using a telephone is faster? Explain your answer.

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Task 3: Writing Activity

Instructions: You are to write and post here 500 words about one of the following ideas: How the carrier pigeons affected the uncle in the story as a child, how the army affected the uncle and how he lives now, or how the carrier pigeons remind the uncle of either his childhood or the army. Use the details from the story to support your reasoning.

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