



## A Lesson on Pigeon Express by Miranda Tidwell

**Grade Level:** Grade 4

**Subject Area:** English Language Arts

**Lesson Length:** 1 hour

**Lesson Keywords:** Pigeon Express, Vocabulary, Writing, Comprehension

**Lesson Description:** The objective of this lesson is to make students use their critical thinking skills and reasoning to comprehend the provided text by closely reading and re-reading the story. The student will then identify vocabulary words with correct sentences, partake in a student discussion, and finally create an essay based on the reading. In line with the Common Core Standards, students will go back into the text to cite evidence, and draw inferences from the story, as well as expose them to new vocabulary words and encourage creative thinking.

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

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.4.1b: Provide reasons that are supported by facts and details.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

=====

## 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.

=====

---

## 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:** In the text, the narrator says that the pigeons "...live in a coop on the roof of his apartment building..." What does the word "coop" mean in this sentence?

- A: Cooperation.
- B: A pen or enclosure for birds.
- C: A small tree.
- D: Paradise.

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

- A: The hopeful refugees saw coop shining at the end of the tunnel.
  - B: We relaxed on the grass and watched leaves fall off of the coop.
  - C: My friend and I play Dungeons on coop every Saturday night.
  - D: The chicken coop desperately needed a cleaning.
- 

**Q: 2 WordPhrase:** carrier pigeon **WordPhraseTier:** 3

**Question:** In the text, the narrator says that "My uncle had carrier pigeons when he was a child." What is a "carrier pigeon" based on this text?

- A: A pigeon that is carried by the Uncle everywhere.
- B: A pigeon who carries disease.
- C: A strong pigeon.
- D: A pigeon who carries notes and letters.

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

- A: The soldier sent a carrier pigeon out to warn his allies of the coming attack.
  - B: The carrier pigeon is known by scientists as the strongest bird to ever live.
  - C: Carrier pigeons are selling tickets to their concert next month.
  - D: True to its name, the carrier pigeon is commonly carried around in ladies' purses as a new style of fashion.
- 

**Q: 3 WordPhrase:** flooded **WordPhraseTier:** 2

**Question:** "It rained so hard and so long that everything was flooded." What does "flooded" mean in this sentence?

- A: Rushing in at once.
- B: Light.
- C: An area submerged with water.
- D: Impressive.

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

- A: The river overflowed and flooded the entire area.
  - B: Billy went to get flooded at the store.
  - C: Jill flooded into the classroom.
  - D: Her work load flooded her desk.
- 

**Q: 4 WordPhrase:** urgent **WordPhraseTier:** 2

**Question:** "He says it's not urgent to tell her the news." What does "urgent" mean in this sentence?

- A: Trivial.
- B: Irrelevant.
- C: Nice.
- D: Important.

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

- A: Sam cried because he thought he missed urgent.
  - B: The need to have the baby delivered was not urgent.
  - C: The urgent was expected to arrive in the afternoon.
  - D: He came to deliver an urgent message about the father.
-

=====

## 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 - In the story, the uncle says that it's not urgent to send her news on his everyday life, but does so anyway.

In the story, the uncle says that it's not urgent to send her news on his everyday life, but does so anyway. Why doesn't he use the telephone instead? Give at least two reasons why.

2 - In the story, when the sister receives the note she reads it and usually does not send anything back.

In the story, when the sister receives the note she reads it and usually does not send anything back. When does she send a note back, and why?

3 - Reasons why the Uncle likes carrier pigeons.

Using the text, cite three instances for the reason why the Uncle likes carrier pigeons. Do you think that we should use carrier pigeons today? Explain your reasoning.

=====

=====  
Task 3: Writing Activity

**Instructions:** You are to write and post here a 500 word?essay on one of two topics: 1. If you were to have access to carrier pigeons to send messages, would you send messages with them even though using technology would be faster? Should we use carrier pigeons today? Why or why not? Explain your reasoning. 2. Did the Uncle's time in the army have long lasting consequences on him? If so, how? If not, why not? Explain.

=====