

PIGEONS IN THE CITY

Grades: Pre-Kindergarten - 1

Objective I:

Affective:

- Students will be able to observe pigeons.
- Students will be able to make a list of pigeons' basic needs, to prove that pigeons are living animals with needs. The list developed must include shelter, food and water.

Academic:

- Students will develop observational skills.
- Students will conduct research using their observational skills.

Materials: Paper and pen for the teacher to record answers, bread crumbs in a bag, binoculars and camera optional. Plan this activity when the weather is warm enough for the students to be able to sit on the ground.



Procedure:

Mini-Lesson:

- 1) Discuss the fact that everyone is going to watch pigeons as a class. They must sit as quietly as possible and watch what the birds do. After a while, they will discuss what they see and the teacher will list their responses.
- 2) The children are then taken to a park, quiet street or lot where pigeons gather. Sit and observe pigeons. Use the bread to attract and keep the pigeons nearby. Take pictures to be used for a big book.
- 3) Key Questions: What keeps pigeons warm? What do most birds do with their wings? Where do they live? What do they eat? Where do they get their food? How do they get water? How do they keep clean? Who takes care of them when they are sick? Do pigeons make sounds? How do people treat them? What do you parents/friends say about them? If people do not like pigeons, why not?

Objective II:

Affective:

- Students will be able to collect fallen pigeon feathers, examine them and classify them by size, shape or color

Academic:

- Students will collect and examine materials.
- Students will classify materials by size, shape and color.

Background Information for Teachers:

Pigeons have feathers made from a protein called keratin and they are strong and flexible. As the feathers grow, they split apart. This cuts off their blood supply, so that fully-grown feathers are dead. They are lost by molting or as a result of accidents. Feathers may become dirty and lice-infested, so pigeons must clean them, by combing their beaks through the feathers. They also take dust baths to absorb or scrape away bits of dirt.

The feathers must hook together to produce a smooth surface for flight. Pigeons preen their feathers back to the correct position when they become separated. There are four main types of feathers: down, body, tail and wing.

- **Wing:** These feathers are light yet strong. By changing their position the pigeons use these feathers to steer during flight. Wing feathers are not all the same. Inner wing feathers are usually shorter.
- **Body:** These feathers vary greatly in size and shape. Some insulate the body while others are for display and camouflage.

- Down: These feathers are next to the bird's skin. The edges spread out to form a soft, fluffy mass. Down is an excellent insulating material.
- Tail: These feathers have three functions: to steer the birds while in flight, to help them balance when not flying and to impress a male during courtship.

Materials: Pigeon feathers, oak tag, stapler or glue, marker and magnifying glass.

Small Group Activity:

- 1) Have the students collect pigeon feathers. Have students wash their hands thoroughly after they have done this. Teacher should wash the pigeon feathers.
- 2) Using a magnifying glass, the students will examine and describe different feathers.
- 3) Separate the feathers into three equal piles. Divide the students into three groups and give each group a pile of feathers and a piece of oak tag. Tell each group which category (size, shape or color) they will glue on the oak tag and allow the students to make their displays and label them.
- 4) Check each display to see that students have categorized the feathers properly.

Objective III:

Affective:

- Students will be able to make pigeon hats and a nest.
- Students will be able to dramatize the life of a pigeon

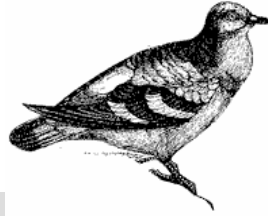
Academic:

- Students will present information they have collected clearly, concisely, and comprehensibly.

Materials: Paper plates, gray paint and brushes, scissors, paper scraps, glue or tape, stapler and yarn. For the nest: many foot long twigs, yarn and a tablecloth.

Mini-Lesson:

- 1) Cut plates in half and have the students paint them with the gray paint. Use paper scraps to make facial features. Make a head-band from paper and attach a six inch piece to each side with the stapler. Attach yarn to the headband ends. Make a pair of wings to attach on each side. Make sure to staple from the inside out so that hair won't get caught in staples.
- 2) Place the tablecloth on the floor and make a child-sized nest, using the twigs and yarn. The students may take turns sitting in the nest and then act like the pigeons they have observed.
- 3) Groups of students should alternately: strut, peck at food, fly, puff their pretend feathers or flap their wings.



Objective IV:

Affective:

- Students will be able to feed the pigeons using a variety of foods.
- Students will be able to chart the results.
- Students will be able to determine what pigeons like and dislike to eat.

Academic:

- Students will collect data.
- Students will discover relationships and make generalizations.

Materials: Kernels of corn, lettuce, breadcrumbs, birdseed, apples, peanuts, oak tag, markers and camera (optional).

Mini-Lesson:

- 1) Put some of each food in separate bags. Take the students to a pigeon site, feed one food at a time and observe results. Clean up and dispose of food not eaten (likely to be lettuce and apple).
- 2) When back at school, chart the results. Discuss findings.

Objective V:

Affective:

- Students will be able to observe pigeons.
- Students will be able to notice and record the attitudes of people towards pigeons.

Academic:

- Students will collect data.
- Students will discover interpret information and make generalizations.

Materials: Paper and a pen are needed. Camera optional.

Small Group Activity:

- 1) Take the class to your pigeon observation site. Keep a group of students with you and have another group observe with the paraprofessional and/or class parent.
- 2) Sit several feet from the pigeons and record what other people do when they walk by the pigeons.

- 3) Key Questions: How many people stopped to feed or talk to the pigeons? Did anyone notice them or did most people walk right by? Did anyone chase them? Did anyone do something negative to them? Was anyone scared of them? Did you see any people feeding them? As a pigeon, what would you do if children chased you, if no food was available or if someone threw a rock at you?

Follow-up Activity:

Language Arts and Art

Students will create a big book about pigeons. They will title the book and decide what information is to be included. The pictures may be drawn by the students or cut from magazines. They may use the photos taken during previous activities. The book should be at least ten-pages. Because of the humane awareness used in each activity, the big book must reflect this attitude along with the general information the children have acquired.

Math

Count the number of pigeons that you observe during each activity.
Count the different color patterns you see on pigeons.
Count the pigeons in a group who have a particular color pattern.

Resources and Literature

- Burnie, David, *Eyewitness Books: BIRD*, Alfred A. Knopf, NY 1988
- Cohen, Caron Lee, *Pigeon Pigeon*, Dutton Books, 1992
- Garber, Steven D., *The Urban Naturalist*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1987
- Herberman, Ethen, *The City Kid's Field Guide*, Simon & Schuster, 1989
- Hinshaw, Dorothy, *Pigeons*, Clarion Books, 1997
- Mainwaring, Jane, My Feather, Doubleday, 1989
- Naether, Carl, Pigeons, T.F.H. Publications, 1984
- Nature Scope - Birds, Birds, Birds, National Wildlife Federation, 1988
- Sales, G. and J.M. Parraon, My First Visit to the Aviary, Barrons, 1990.

New York State Standards Addressed:

ELA Standard 1 – Language for Information and Understanding:

Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding.

Listening and Reading

1. Listening and reading to acquire information and understanding involves collecting data, facts, and ideas; discovering relationships, concepts, and

generalizations; and using knowledge from oral, written, and electronic sources.

Speaking and Writing

1. Speaking and writing to acquire and transmit information requires asking probing and clarifying questions, interpreting information in one's own words, applying information from one context to another, and presenting the information and interpretation clearly, concisely, and comprehensibly.