

# Once Upon a Pigeon



**Story Introduction:** Sydney Pigeon worries she is too ordinary. But then she discovers the joy of being herself.

## Analysis of Skills:

### Background Knowledge

Original Fable: *The Jay and the Peacock*

Mentor Examples: *Petunia* by Roger Duvoisin,  
Advice Columns

**Applicable Quote:** “Always be a first-rate version of yourself, instead of a second-rate version of somebody else.” – Judy Garland

**CR Success Concept:** Variant Vowels (Single-syllable and multi-syllable words with *ou*, *ow*, *y*, *igh* spellings)

**Decodability Level:** 80% or higher, at this point in the *CR Success Reading Program*

**Number of Words:** 493

**Lexile Level:** 510L

**Lexile Grade Level:** 2.7

**Vocabulary:** *showy, dreary, ordinary, flashy, cyclones, fellows, reflection, claims*

**T.R.I.C.K.y Words:** *eyes, only, idea*

**Tense:** Present

### Syntax

- Incomplete sentences (dialogue)
- Complex and compound sentences:

Meanwhile, outside the Sky Theater, the weather is hotter than steaming minnow soup.

Sydney is still disqualified for cheating and must return each feather with an apology.

**Text Formatting:** Large print, capital letters

**Comprehension Focus:** Central Idea, Character Description

**Theme:** Self-contentment

## Day One

# Developing Schema and Activating Prior Knowledge

### Introduction



Introduce students to the fable by looking together at the title page in the reader. Facilitate a discussion about the title and illustration and the connection between the two. Here are some suggested guiding questions:

***Read the title.***

***Look carefully at the illustration.***

***What ideas do you have about this fable?***

***What do you know about these animals?***

***What do you think the setting might be?***

### Classic Fable Connection



Share the Aesop Fable, *The Jay and the Peacock*. You may search the internet for various interpretations of this fable. Here is a brief summary:

Jay strolled by the yard where the Peacocks had walked. He spotted the beautiful feathers of the Peacocks; they had fallen when the Peacocks were molting. Jay picked up the feathers and tied them to his tail. The Peacocks soon discovered his disguise and began to peck at him. The other Jays were also quite annoyed with his deceit.

Say: “Think about the quote we discussed and the summary of this classic fable. Does this new knowledge support your earlier predictions and thoughts? Or, does it change your mind in any way?”

### Focus Word



Introduce the focus word, *ordinary*. This word means *commonplace; something that is not special or unusual*. Print the word on the board and the sentence from the story: “She is gray and dreary and, well, *ordinary*.”

Ask students to give Thumbs up, good example Thumbs down, poor example.

Riding the bus everyday was an ordinary event.

Her clothes were basic, plain, and ordinary.

The new and special dessert was very ordinary.

She was so excited as she prepared for an ordinary, once-in-a-lifetime party.

Have students turn to their partners and tell what is something that is ordinary for them. This would be something they would do everyday; it is not special or unusual. Then ask them to discuss something that is the antonym of *ordinary* – *extraordinary*.

### Four-Step Vocabulary



#### Concept Words

Distribute Black Line Master Four-Step Vocabulary. Use the following four steps to develop the students' fluency in reading words:

Step One: Students read the words silently.

Step Two: Students read the word chorally with you.

Step Three: Say a word, students look, touch, and say the word.

Step Four: Give a definition, synonym, antonym, Cloze sentence for a word; students look, touch, say word. These words should be emphasized: *showy, bellows, dreary, hypnotizing, cyclones, sighs, flashy and apology*.

#### Phrases

Tell students to echo you as you read each phrase.

## Day Two

### Reading the Story

#### Guided Reading and Guided Comprehension



Students will silently read the fable (pages 97 to 104 in *Once Upon a Pigeon*). Instruct students to go back to the beginning to read again if they finish before others are finished.

Listen to each student read, and write a quick note about his/her reading:

- 3 – Student is fluent and accurate.
- 2 – Student is accurate but not fluent.
- 1 – Student is neither accurate nor fluent.

Provide Pressure Release (2-2-2 Reading) for students who score a 2 or a 1. You begin Pressure Release on the 2<sup>nd</sup> error. Sit next to the student so that you can read into the student's ear. Read with the student. Place your pencil above the text as you read. Push the speed slightly as you model how to read accurately and fluently. Be sure to read in meaningful phrases and with expression. Read two or three sentences with the student. Then leave out two to three words that you know the student will successfully read. Gradually release the reading to the student.

Discuss the fable with the students. Use the comprehension questions at the end of this section. When you discuss the answers, encourage the students to use the text to support their answers. Use questions such as these:

- What lines in the text support your answer?
- What details in the text support your answer?
- What did you read in the fable to make you answer this way? Please read this passage for us.

## Day Three

### Questions for Comprehension

#### In the Story

1. What is Pigeon reading in the dressing room at the beginning of the story?
2. What is Pigeon's goal from the start?
3. Why does Pigeon sneak into the hallway backstage?
4. What does Pigeon do to become more colorful?
5. What event ruins Pigeon's moment on stage?
6. What is Pigeon's punishment for what she's done?

#### Literal/Nonliteral

1. In this story, colors are used as symbols for power. When and where are colors mentioned in the story? When Pigeon takes the stage, how does the symbolism change?
2. How are temperature and weather used in this story to signify what is happening behind the scenes?
3. Look at the words describing Sydney's singing. How do the descriptive words here relate to other parts of the story?

**Search and Find**

1. What are the “tips” Pigeon reads at the story’s beginning?
2. Describe the sequence of events from before the show to after the show. Include what is happening both inside and outside of the theater.
3. List the birds who become victims to Pigeon’s plan. How and what does each lose?

**In Your Head**

1. Why does Sydney go to such great lengths to change herself?
2. Does Sydney deserve the cheering she received after she left the theater? Why or why not?
3. Why does Sydney decline when she is offered a colorful coat? What does this say about the changes in her character?

**Writing/Art**

1. Look through fashion magazines and collect examples of the fashion rules or tips for our times. Add to these by creating some of your own tips. Make a poster or magazine article and share your tips with others.
2. Write a story that picks up where this one leaves off – either immediately following Sydney’s departure from the theater, or a month or year(s) later.
3. Create an advertisement which sells the idea of “Being Yourself.” This can take the form of a poster, a magazine ad, or a commercial.

**Comprehension****Focus**

Using the graphic organizer, describe the prominent trait of Sydney Pigeon.

**Moral of the Story**

Choose the answer that best reflects the moral or lesson of this story:

- a) The most valuable gems are often hidden in stone.
- b) Plan for rain but play in the sun.
- c) Your talent is your greatest calling.
- d) Be content with who you are; in this comfort, you may go far!