

Henry Heron, A Litter Story

Target Level:
Kindergarten and Grade 1

SOLs:

Science: K.1, K.6, K.10, 1.1, 1.8

English: K.1, K.8, K.11, 1.1, 1.12

Social Studies: K.7

Materials Needed:

Henry Heron story copy

Plastic six-pack ring

Rubber bands

Optional:

picture of a heron or stuffed animal

Time Needed:

One class period

Summary

Students will listen to a short story, sequence an order of events, and predict a conclusion.

Objectives

Students will be able to recognize litter and be able to explain how it may affect animals. They will also be able to identify ways to reduce and prevent littering.

Background

Animals need food, water, air, and space. The water and the space must be clean and free of litter to provide a safe and healthy habitat. See *Quick and Dirty Fact Sheet: Litter* or visit the web site, www.deq.state.va.us/kids/kids.html.

Procedure

1. Ask for a show of hands of students who have recently visited a park with a lake. Discuss the things they saw around the lake and guide the discussion toward litter or trash they might have seen. Emphasize the animals they saw and explain that litter may hurt the animals. If you brought a visual, share it with them. Point out that the heron is a large bird with long legs and neck, and it eats fish in the water. Introduce any new vocabulary words in *Henry Heron* story before you read the it to them.
2. Read *Henry Heron* stopping in the middle to have students predict what will happen to Henry. After finishing the story, discuss how Henry might have felt and how the people helping Henry might have felt.
3. Show a six-pack ring and pass it around so students can see how strong it is.
4. Take a large rubber band and fasten it over your thumb and little finger (over the back of your hand). Ask the students if they think it would be easy to remove the rubber band without using their other hand. Let several or all of the students try. Have them discuss how hard it is to remove the rubber band. Talk about how animals have trouble removing items that get caught around their feet and necks since they don't have hands and fingers to help remove the items.

Note: Some people recommend cutting rings before disposing of them because years ago some garbage was dumped at sea. In Virginia trash is recycled, landfilled, or incinerated. If rings are recycled or disposed properly, cutting them is not necessary (unless you are on a ship out at sea which may dump its garbage in the ocean).

Wrap Up/Assessment

1. Have students suggest their own ending (what might have happened differently?) or have students retell the major events of the story. Depending upon the level of the students, this might be accomplished verbally, through illustrations, or in writing.
2. Ask students the following questions:
What are other examples of litter that might be found around the lake? How might these things be dangerous to animals?
What can you do to lessen the amount of litter?

Henry is a heron. He likes to hang out at the park's lake. He often stands as still a statue and waits for minnows to swim by so he can grab a quick snack.

Henry is a very curious heron and always explores the nooks and crannies of the lakes and rivers he visits. One day Henry saw something stuck in the grass near the edge of the lake. "I wonder what that could be?," he thought excitedly as he went closer. "Oh, it's only a soda can," he sighed. "Another piece of trash left by a lazy person. I don't know why people can't be neater!"

Just as he was about to wade away, Henry saw a minnow skimming through the water. He did exactly what comes naturally to herons. His head went down and he came up with the minnow in his beak. "Yum!," he said as he swallowed the minnow. "I love good food."

Then Henry noticed he had caught more than just the minnow. The minnow had gone beneath a plastic six-pack ring and as Henry had reached to get it, his head had gone through the ring. It was stuck on his long neck!

Henry shook, he wiggled, he rubbed against the grass, he stuck his head into the water ... but nothing he did would remove the plastic ring. "This is terrible, horrible and awful," Henry announced to the world. But no one was listening. Henry gave one more long, lonely shake of this head.

Morning dawned and Henry stretched, but was brought up short. The plastic ring pulled and squeezed his neck, and made it very hard for Henry to breathe. Then some park visitors saw Henry. They chased him, trying to catch him. We know they just wanted to help Henry, but all Henry knew was that he was scared and wanted to get away. He wished he could disappear. He flew away and landed in a nearby clearing.

After a while Henry got hungry and came out to the middle of the lake. He tried to catch some fish but the plastic ring kept getting in the way or it moved, and scared the minnows away. How could he catch some fish? Henry flew to the shore, still hungry. When he got there he was again chased by people. This time, the people were in uniforms.

The next day Henry was tired, hungry, and terribly discouraged. He went over to the other herons. They also chased him away. "You're scaring all the fish away." "You're making people chase us." "You look stupid with that plastic ring thing around your neck!"

"I didn't get it stuck on myself on purpose," Henry said. "I tried to get it off." But the herons just flapped their long wings and left Henry. One of them even pecked at Henry, and you know that had to hurt!

Teacher note:

Stop here. Ask the students to predict what they think might happen to Henry.

Henry was resting quietly in a cove of reeds when suddenly he was covered with a net. He flapped and struggled but he couldn't get away. When hands reached for him, he snapped at them with his beak. The people wouldn't give up. They finally got a good hold on Henry and tried to calm him. They held his neck very still and clipped the plastic ring and then pulled it off. When they released Henry he flapped his wings and flew across the lake. Once he had calmed down, he realized the people had helped him and had removed the plastic ring.

"Yes," he said. "I can eat again! I can drink!" and he dipped his head into the water. "I can sleep and eat and do almost anything!!!" Henry was so excited!

Note to teachers and older students:

It would be nice to say Henry was safe for the rest of his life. Many animals never get rescued in the first place and those that do may get caught in litter again. Animals do not remember what has happened to them in the past like people do. Animals would probably not realize that litter is dangerous to them either. They may even think a piece of litter looks like something interesting to eat and go after it on purpose. We can help by always putting our trash in the right places.