

Henry Heron, a Litter Story

OVERVIEW

Students will listen to a short story, sequence an order of events, and predict an outcome. Students will demonstrate the actions in the story and discuss their observations. Through the activities, students will learn how litter causes water pollution and harms animals.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will be able to recognize litter and explain how it affects animals.
- Students will be able to identify ways to reduce and prevent littering.
- Students conduct a simple experiment and predict an outcome.
- Students will understand that animals need food, water, and a safe habitat.
- Students will demonstrate comprehension of a story.

BACKGROUND

Animals need food, water, air, and space. Litter is trash that is misplaced. The water and the space must be clean and free of litter to provide a safe and healthy habitat.

PROCEDURE

1. Ask for a show of hands of students who have recently visited a park on the river or a park with a lake. Discuss the things they saw 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. Share the picture of a heron with the students. Point out that the heron is a large bird with long legs and neck, and it eats fish.
2. Read “Henry Heron” (found on page 6). 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 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. Pass out the rubber bands and let 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.
5. Have the students place the rubber band around the tips of all four fingers and thumb together. Have them try to use a crayon. Talk about how litter can prevent an animal from its normal activities like eating or flying.

ASSESSMENT

1. Have students retell the major events of the story, verbally, through illustrations or in writing. Have students suggest what might have happened differently.
2. Discuss the following: **What are other items of litter that might be found around the park?** *bottles, food packaging* **How could an animal get into a situation in which these items might be dangerous?** *swimming into plastic, mistaking it for food, etc.* **What can individuals do to lessen the amount of litter?** *Make sure your trash is in a trash can and pick it up when you see it on the ground.*

Target Level:
Grade 1

SOLs:

Health: 1.7

Science: 1.1, 1.5, 1.8

English: 1.1, 1.3, 1.9

Materials Needed:

- “Henry Heron” story
- Plastic six-pack ring
- Rubber bands (one for each student)
- Crayons
- Picture of a heron

Time Needed:

One class period



Henry Heron

Henry is a heron. He likes to hang out at the park's lake. He often stands as still as 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 too. It was stuck on his long neck!

He 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 his 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 what 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 went 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 they were in uniforms.

The next day Henry was tired, hungry, and terrible 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 standing alone. 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!

