Lesson 1: Meet the Contestants

TRANSCRIPT

HOOK 1

Hi. It's Anne.

Recently, my kid's school put on a science fair contest. Lots of kids entered the contest to make amazing science experiments. I got to be a judge for the contest, and I was so impressed by how much thought and work all the kids put into their projects.

It turns out there are lots of contests for all sorts of things, like contests for baking, robotics, sports contests like the Olympics, and one of my favorites—the wildlife comedy photography contest where people try to take funny pictures of animals.

It can be a lot of fun to watch contests like these and see all the things in the competition.

DISCUSSION 1

Discuss: If you could see any kind of contest, what contest would you want to see?

HOOK 2

I don't know what you said, but I would want to see a singing contest and hear all the amazing performers.

This is my friend Morgan. She is a member of a club that is about to hold their very own contest. This club is a bird watching club, and they go on outings to see birds and learn all about them.

Most of the time, she sees common birds like sparrows or pigeons, but one time, she saw a gray crowned crane.

Every year, the club has a contest for bird of the year. Check out some of the winners from previous bird of the year contests.

These birds are amazing. And here's the winner of last year's contest—the peregrine falcon. Peregrine falcons are medium-sized birds with huge wings. They are mostly gray and white, but when they are babies, they look like this.

These birds can fly high in the sky over 3,000 feet in the air. And when they see something they want to eat, they dive straight down. They can dive so fast. Their dive makes them the fastest animal in the world—check it out—the peregrine falcon starts here. Wow!

DISCUSSION 2

Discuss: What do you think makes peregrine falcons amazing birds?

HOOK 3

Maybe you said you thought it was cool how they have huge wings, or can fly so high in the sky. Or maybe you were amazed by how fast they can dive, or maybe you liked how adorable they are as babies. You may have said something else, and that's great.

When Morgan participated in last year's bird of the year contest, she took notes on the peregrine falcon. Here's what she wrote: "gray and white with spots, can dive 200 miles per hour. I think: so cool when they dive, cute babies."

Notice how Morgan's notes have some facts about the peregrine falcon, and she also wrote what she thinks and feels about this bird. She used these notes later on when she wrote in to the bird of the year contest. Her writing helped the peregrine falcon become the bird of the year.

The new bird of the year contest is about to begin, and this year, you can write in to share which bird is your favorite. The members of the birding club will read your writing to help them decide which one should be the bird of the year.

There are two birds that have been submitted for this year's contest. Today, you'll learn about both of them. You can take notes on what they look like, and each bird's unique skill. Along the way, you can include your thoughts and feelings about each bird. The notes you take today will help you write your opinion later, which you'll then submit to the birding club to help them pick the bird of the year.

Ready to meet this year's contestants? I'll get you started, step by step.

STEP 1

Get your supplies.

STEP 2

In today's lesson, you'll need someone to share ideas with. This could be a partner or someone you sit near. When everyone knows who their talk partner is, move on to the next step.

STEP 3

It's time to meet our contestants. The bird of the year this year could be the weaverbird or the lyrebird. You'll learn more about both of these birds. Then later on, you'll pick which one is your favorite.

Let's start by learning more about the weaverbird. As you watch this video, notice what the weaverbird looks like. This bird has a yellow body and a face and beak that are black. It is a small bird, only about five to eight inches long—that's about as long as a pencil.

They are very careful flyers and have strong feet. They use their wings and feet to land on things sideways or even upside down. Here's a slowed-down video of a weaverbird landing upside down.

Discuss with your partner: What did you notice about what the weaverbird looks like?

STEP 4

Get your Bird Notes worksheet. Today, you'll take notes on the weaverbird on this side of your worksheet, and the lyrebird notes on this side of your worksheet.

Find the "How it looks" box for the weaverbird. Write a few facts about what the weaverbird looks like. If you want, you can use the notes on the screen.

STEP 5

Now you can add what you think about how the weaverbird looks. Maybe you think it looks cute, or maybe you think it looks impressive when it lands upside down, or maybe you think it looks like a banana, or something else.

Add some notes that are your opinion on what the weaverbird looks like.

STEP 6

It's time to meet our second contestant—the lyrebird.

As you watch this video, notice what the lyrebird looks like. These birds are much larger and can grow to be three feet long with their tail feathers—that's as long as a yardstick.

They have huge tail feathers that are fluffy white, and some have stripes. They can fan out their tail feathers in interesting shapes. These birds don't fly very much. Instead, they run on the ground. They have powerful legs for running and for digging in the dirt to find food.

Discuss with your partner: What did you notice about what the lyrebird looks like?

STEP 7

Write some notes that are facts about what the lyrebird looks like here. If you want, you can use your Word Bank to help.

STEP 8

Now you can add some notes about what you think about how the lyrebird looks. Maybe you think it looks silly, or maybe you think it looks like a mustache when it fans out its tail, or something else.

Add some notes that are your opinion on what the lyrebird looks like. If you want, you can use the "I think" section of your Word Bank to help.

STEP 9

It's time for these birds' unique skill. The weaverbird is the only bird known to be able to tie knots. Check out how this bird is tying grass in knots around the stick. These birds tied thousands of knots using grass and other materials to make their amazing nests. See how this bird is carefully weaving grass to complete his home.

Here is a sped-up video of a weaverbird building his nest. Since weaverbirds live in groups, they often build their nest together, making beautiful hanging orbs in the trees.

Find the "Unique Skill" box on your notes worksheet. On the weaverbird side, take some notes about how the weaverbird builds its nest. If you want, you can use your Word Bank to help.

STEP 10

Discuss with your partner: What do you think about the weaverbird's unique skill?

STEP 11

Add what you think about the weave bird's nest to your notes. If you want, you can use the "I think" section of your Word Bank.

STEP 12

Now it's time for the lyrebird's unique skill. This bird can make amazing noises—listen to this lyrebird. But that's not all. Lyrebirds can recreate sounds that they hear around them. In the wild, they copy the sound of other birds.

But when lyrebirds are around humans, they can copy human sounds, too. This lyrebird lives at a zoo. Listen to the sounds he makes.

He often hears the sound of a camera taking a picture, a backpack zipper, or the zoo staff talking on their walkie-talkies. And check out this lyrebird. The zoo where he lives is under construction, listen for the sound of construction tools.

Take some notes on the lyrebird's special skill. If you want, you can use your Word Bank to help.

STEP 13

Discuss with your partner: What do you think about the lyrebird's unique skill?

STEP 14

Add what you think about the lyrebird sounds to your notes. If you want, you can use your Word Bank.

STEP 15

Read all the notes that you took about the weaverbird and the lyrebird. As you read, think about which bird is your favorite.

When you're done, give a silent thumbs up.

STEP 16

It's time to decide. Write the name of the bird you think should win the bird of the year contest on the line at the bottom of your worksheet.

STEP 17

The papers shown on screen are V.I.P.s—very important papers. Your teacher will tell you where to put them so you'll have them for the next lesson.

WRAP UP

Great job, writers! You learned about two birds and picked which one is your favorite. You're on your way to helping Morgan's bird club decide who will be the winner of this year's bird of the year contest.

Along the way, you might have gotten an idea about how these birds got their names. The weaverbird got its name because it weaves grass, just like how people weave fabrics. The lyrebird didn't get its name because it never tells the truth. Instead, it got its name because of this musical instrument, which is called a lyre. When the lyrebird holds its tail feathers up like this, it looks like the shape of this musical instrument.

Both of these birds are amazing in different ways, and there are great reasons why each one should be the bird of the year. In the next lesson, you'll start your letter to the birding club to convince them to select your favorite bird as bird of the year.

I'll see you next time.