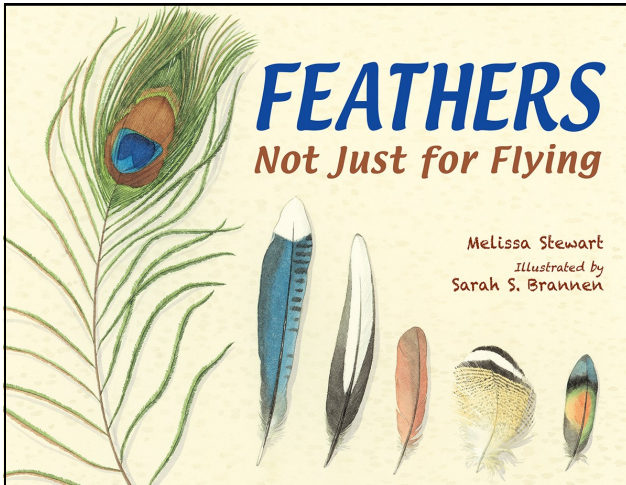


FEATHERS

Not Just for Flying

READERS THEATER

Developed by Melissa Stewart



By Melissa Stewart

Illustrated by Sarah S. Brannen

Feathers aren't just for flying. They can also protect a bird's skin like sunscreen, attract attention like fancy jewelry, or even distract a predator like a bullfighter's cape. *Feathers: Not Just for Flying* introduces young readers to sixteen birds. From the sleek emperor penguin to the fluffed-up blue jay, discover just how positively practical feathers can be.

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Also available in E-book editions

Ages 6–9

GETTING STARTED

Many readers theater scripts have just ten or twelve parts, but this script has twice as many roles! It includes nineteen animal parts and a narrator. The bird parts vary in difficulty to accommodate children at a variety of reading levels. The narrator text is the most challenging. It can be read by an adult or by an advanced young reader. The script also includes a variety of choruses—lines read by everyone.

If you are working with a small group of children, some students can perform two roles. If you have a group larger than twenty, some children can share a role or you can divide the narrator into multiple parts.

After you have matched students with parts, ask the class to read through the script a few times. As the children practice, provide as much support and advice as needed.

PLANNING THE PERFORMANCE

When the children feel confident about their roles, you may want to set out a variety of art supplies and ask the students to make identification tags, animal hats, or even animal costumes to wear during the performance. Children acting as narrators may want to wear something special too.

During the final reading, the students can perform for another class or even a group of parents.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

<i>Narrator</i>	<i>Cardinal</i>
<i>Blue jay</i>	<i>Manakin</i>
<i>Wood duck</i>	<i>Peacock</i>
<i>Heron</i>	<i>Swallow</i>
<i>Hawk</i>	<i>Lovebird 1</i>
<i>Sandgrouse</i>	<i>Lovebird 2</i>
<i>Chick 1</i>	<i>Swan</i>
<i>Chick 2</i>	<i>Anhinga</i>
<i>Bittern</i>	<i>Penguin</i>
<i>Junco</i>	<i>Ptarmigan</i>

CHORUS: *Birds use their feathers in all kinds of ways.*

Narrator: A blue jay's feathers warm like a blanket.

Blue jay: *Jay! Jay!* On cold, damp days, I fluff up my feathers. They trap a layer of warm air next to my skin.

Narrator: A wood duck's feathers cushion like a pillow.

Wood duck: *Crrek, crrek.* I pluck my feathers—ouch!—and add them to my nest. They cushion my eggs and keep them warm.

Narrator: You'll never guess how a heron uses its feathers.

CHORUS: *How?*

Narrator: To shade out the sun—like an umbrella.

Heron: *Aaah, scaah!* You bet! When I hunt I raise my wings high over my head. My fabulous feathers block sunlight, so it's easy to spot tasty fish and frogs in the water below. Yum!

Hawk: My feathers are even better than that! *Ker-ree, ker-ree.*

Narrator: Hold on, you red-tailed hawk. I didn't introduce you yet.

Hawk: Sorry. I'm just so excited to tell everyone what my feathers do.

Narrator: Okay, go ahead.

Hawk: They protect my skin like sunscreen. That's why I can soar through the sky, hour after hour.

Narrator: A sandgrouse's feathers can soak up water like a sponge.

CHORUS: *A sponge? You're kidding!*

Sandgrouse: No really, it's true. On hot days I cool off by soaking my belly feathers at a watering hole. Then I fly back to my nest, and—

Chicks 1 & 2: We suck his feathers dry!

Sandgrouse: Didn't I teach you chicks not to interrupt?

Chicks 1 & 2: Sorry, Dad.

Narrator: An American bittern's feathers clean up messes like a scrub brush.

Bittern: *Oong-ka choonk, oong-ka choonk.* The tips of my feathers crumble into powder. It's perfect for scrubbing dirt and slime off my body.

Narrator: A dark-eyed junco's feathers distract attackers like a bullfighter's cape.

Junco: *Ticker, ticker, ticker.* I flash my bright white tail feathers at predators. It startles them just long enough so I can fly away.

CHORUS: *Pretty nifty!*

Junco: You can say that again.

CHORUS: *Pretty nifty!*

Narrator: Okay, okay. Settle down you bird brains. Where's the cardinal?

Cardinal: *Birdy, birdy, birdy.* I'm right here.

Narrator: Oh, sorry. I didn't see you.

Cardinal: That's because my grayish-tan feathers hide me from enemies. They're just like camouflage clothing.

Narrator: They sure do. But a club-winged manakin's feathers do just the opposite.

Manakin: That's right! When I raise my wings and shake them, my feathers whistle. The ladies really like it.

Peacock: My peacock feathers are more like fancy jewelry.

Narrator: Yes, that's true. Your bright, beautiful feathers make you easy to spot.

Peacock: Discriminating peahens look for males with the biggest, most colorful fan of feathers.

Swallow: You'll never guess what my leg feathers can do. They dig holes like a backhoe.

Narrator: That's why bank swallows nest in holes in stream banks, isn't it?

Swallow: That's right. It's a great place to live.

Narrator: You might get along well with rosy-faced lovebirds. They use their feathers like a forklift.

Lovebird 1: Most birds carry nesting materials in their beaks, but not us.

Lovebird 2: We tuck building supplies under our rump feathers.

Narrator: Ever wondered why a mute swan glides so gracefully across the water?

CHORUS: *Yeah, that's a good question.*

Swan: Thank goodness for my feathers. Pockets of air get trapped between them, so they work just like a life jacket.

Narrator: Believe it or not, an anhinga's feathers help it plummet downward like the sinker on a fishing lure.

Anhinga: The weight of my wet feathers helps me dive deep down in search of fish, crayfish, and shrimp.

Narrator: Can you guess whose feathers help it glide like a sled?

CHORUS: *No, whose?*

Narrator: The emperor penguin's.

Penguin: My tightly packed belly feathers are perfect for whizzing across ice and snow. *Wheeee!*

Narrator: A willow ptarmigan's feathers help it sprint across the snow.

Ptarmigan: That's right. In the fall I grow a thick layer of feathers on top of my toes. They help my feet move across snow just like snowshoes.

CHORUS: *Wow! That's a great trick.*

Narrator: No doubt about it. Feathers make birds special.

CHORUS: *Three cheers for feathers. Hip, hip, hooray! Hip, hip, hooray! Hip, hip, hooray!*

*For a Teacher's Guide and more activities to use with this book,
visit the author's website at www.melissa-stewart.com.*