

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

K-12 Education

ABOUT THE BOOK

In this graphic novel, we follow the journey of Emilio the pigeon through New York City and beyond, as he discovers and interacts with superhero birds, The Winged Heroes. Readers discover a blend of fantasy and reality in the stories of some common, but not *ordinary*, birds.

USING THIS GUIDE

This guide features activities that target national education standards for a variety of subjects for grades 3-5. Each activity lists which standards it meets:

Science

(SCI; Next Generation Science Standards)

English Language Arts

(ELA; Common Core State Standards)

Mathematics

(MATH; Common Core State Standards)

Art

(ART; National Core Art Standards)



GUIDED
READING
LEVEL

M

GRADE LEVEL
EQUIVALENT

5

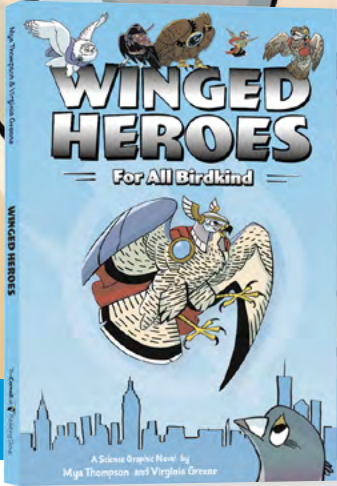
INTEREST
LEVEL

GRADES
3-8

MSL
6.4

LEXILE
490L

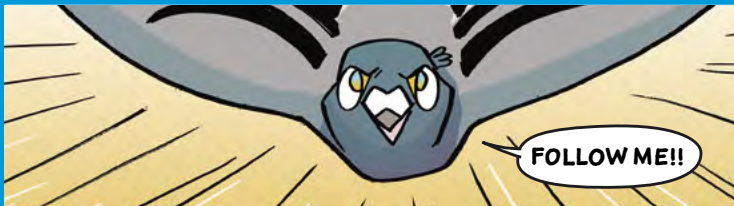
ISBN	Book Category	Page Count	Word Count
978-1-943645-21-3	Graphic Novel	128	3560



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KEY THEMES

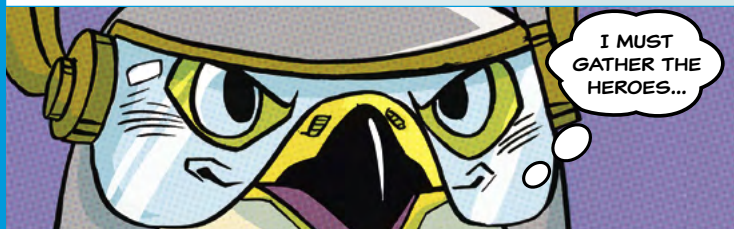


Bravery and Self-Confidence is an important part of Emilio's story. Throughout his journey, there are several birds who doubt his abilities, including himself. However, when Emilio trusts himself and his instincts, he is able to accomplish great things!

Human Impacts factor into the challenges and opportunities the characters face in several key ways. Humans helped several of the Winged Heroes through wildlife rehabilitation, but also negatively impact other birds through light pollution and window strikes. Our actions matter!



A FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE WINGED HEROES, FANTASTIC FELIPE IS DARING AND FAST, BUT THIS FALCON'S CHILDHOOD WASN'T EASY. AFTER HIS PARENTS WENT MISSING, FELIPE WAS RESCUED AND RAISED BY HUMAN WILDLIFE REHABILITATORS. ONCE HE WAS STRONG ENOUGH TO SURVIVE ON HIS OWN, HE WAS RELEASED INTO THE WILDS OF NEW YORK CITY TO FEND FOR HIMSELF.



Strength of Diverse Groups is illustrated throughout the book. The Winged Heroes are successful largely because they have diverse strengths. Although individually they have weaknesses, they are able to function as a strong team when they work together.

BIRDS IN THIS BOOK:

- American Crow
- Canada Goose
- Homing Pigeon
- Common Potoo
- European Starling
- Golden Eagle
- House Sparrow
- Osprey
- Peregrine Falcon
- Rock Pigeon
- Ruby-throated Hummingbird
- Snowy Owl
- Wandering Albatross



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PRE-READING QUESTIONS

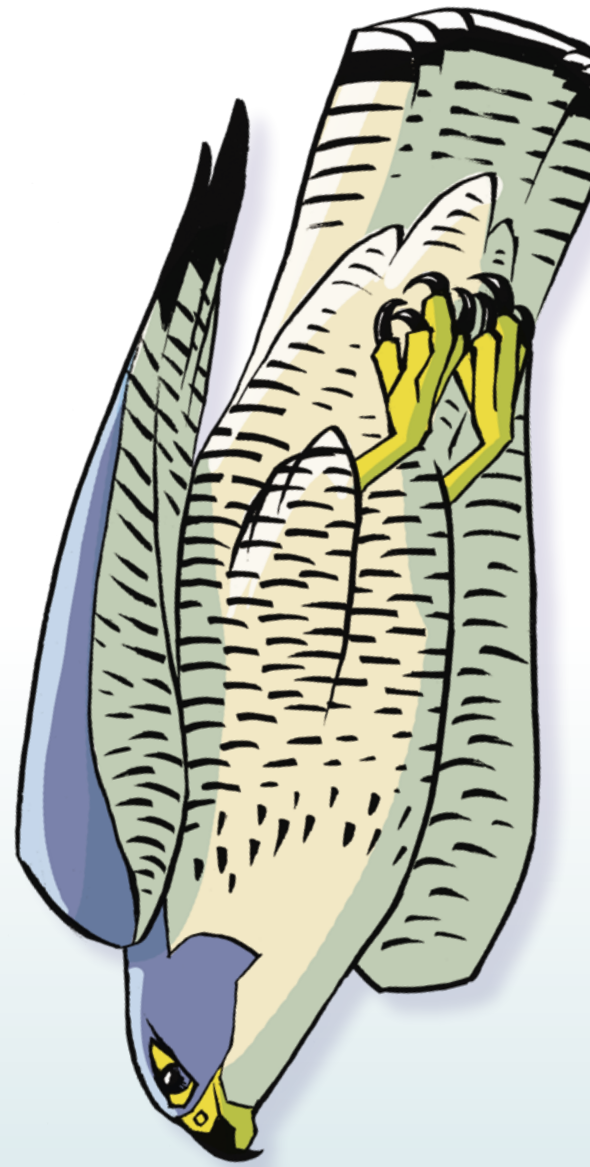
Show the book cover and title, and ask:

- What do you think this book is about? (Brainstorm ideas, then find out if they match up to what happens.)
- What challenges and threats do you think these birds face? (Make a list and see if anything happens in the book that is related.)
- What local birds have you seen? (Brainstorm a list and see if any of these birds show up in the book.)
- Review the list of birds in the book. Do you know any of the birds on this list? What do you know about them?

QUESTIONS FOR WRITING OR DISCUSSION

Note: here is a list of additional questions in the back of the book.

- What are some of the challenges and threats that the birds faced in their adventures?
- What parts of the books accurately describe bird life? Which parts are embellished within the story?
- What is your favorite part or lesson in the story?
- What are Emilio's most defining character traits? How does he change from the beginning to the end of the book?
- Which friends and experiences help Emilio develop his confidence and abilities? What are ways in which you have become more confident as you have grown?
- Based on their superpower, which Winged Hero would you most like to be? How would you use that superpower to help yourself and others?





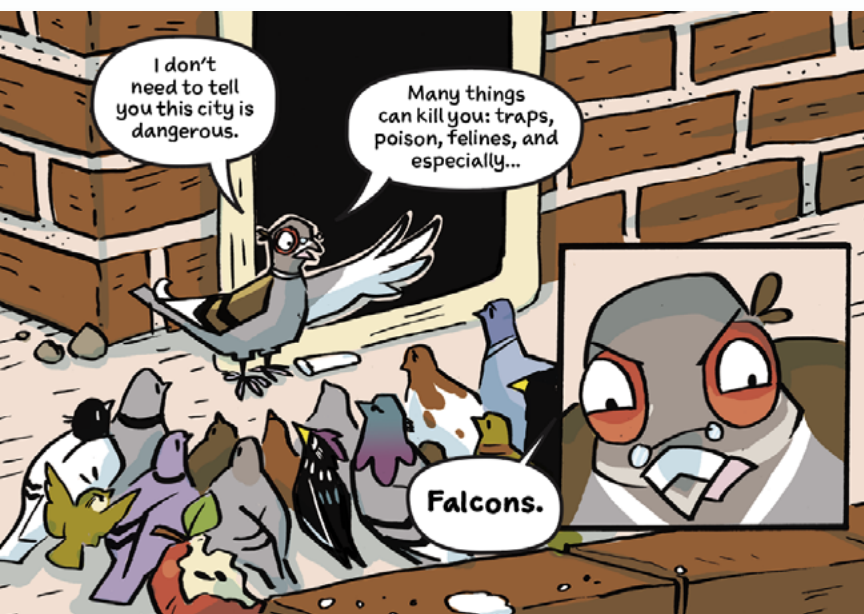
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PROJECT IDEAS INSPIRED BY THIS BOOK

1. EVERY BIRD MATTERS (SCI, ELA)

In small groups, ask students to reflect on when a human treats Emilio poorly for being “just a pigeon.” Invite them to research why birds matter (evaluating what birds do for the environment) before making up a skit to convince the average person why pigeons and other birds who are not so flashy are still important.



2. A SUPER BIRD STORY (ELA, ART)

Have each student or team create a fictional story about a bird that interests them by writing, drawing, or dictating. Afterwards, have students read or explain the events in order to the class, emphasizing various transition words (for example, first, then, next, lastly). If time allows, invite small groups to collaboratively act out the stories.



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3. CREATE A SUPERBIRD (ART, SCI)

Invite students to use the book and to inspire them to create their own imaginary “superbird.” To go further, students can design a habitat for their superbird, and describe which physiological, behavioral, and structural adaptations help their bird survive in this habitat.

4. CONSERVATION HEROES (SCI)

The Winged Heroes save a flock of songbirds who are confused by bright city lights and are in danger of crashing into buildings or becoming exhausted. Unfortunately, in the real world, there is no superhero bird team called the Winged Heroes to help. Explore the Lights Out, Seven Simple Actions, and other bird conservation projects to discover how humans can be heroes too! Brainstorm practical ways your students might be empowered to help mitigate the challenges birds face.

5. CONSERVATION OF PEREGRINE FALCONS (SCI, ELA)

The first Winged Hero we learn about is Fantastic Felipe—The Fearless. Felipe was raised by wildlife rehabilitators before being released into the wild. The recovery of the Peregrine Falcon is one of conservation’s most dramatic success stories. Have students research the history of Peregrine Falcons and create a report on this falcon’s decline in the 1940’s-1960’s, and the species’ more recent recovery.



6. FANTASY VERSUS REALITY (SCI)

Have students reflect on and make a list of bird behaviors they have seen in their own experience or have learned about elsewhere. Try to find examples of these same behaviors in the book. Which ones are true-to-life? Which ones are embellished, and how? *(For example, pigeons coo, eat a variety of foods, and scatter when startled. These behaviors happen in the book, but with a dramatic flair. Likewise, falcons do deep dives, called stoops, and they are fearsome predators of birds like pigeons. We see Felipe dive and scatter prey, but in reality, Peregrine Falcons do not “protect” smaller birds.)*



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7. PRACTICE YOUR FLIGHT (SCI)

We learn about birds that have a wide range of flying abilities. Have students describe what they noticed about bird flight. For example, the hummingbird and albatross have completely different flight styles. Invite students to try flapping their “wings,” matching the beat and pattern of some real-life birds. Videos of these birds can be found on the website. Some examples:

- Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (Aerial) flap their tiny wings incredibly quickly (53 beats per second) and are very maneuverable.
- Golden Eagles (Raptora) flap their wings slowly in flight (5 beats per second), but also soar without flapping for some time.
- House Sparrows (Winslow) consistently need to flap their wings in flight (about 15 beats per second).

8. PREDATORS AND PREY (SCI, ELA)

Throughout Winged Heroes, there are several occasions where birds that are prey species interact with predator species. Have your students try and find examples in the book. Do students notice any common behaviors? (For example, they call an alarm to alert their friends and small birds form flocks in part to help them stay safe from predators.) Discuss how these behaviors help birds survive, and research various methods prey animals use to try to avoid becoming prey.





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9. AMAZING ADAPTATIONS (SCI)

On “The Real Peregrine Falcon” page, students learn about the functions of the Peregrine Falcons’ hooked beak, sharp eyes, talons, and pointed wings. These are adaptations that make Peregrine Falcons a fearsome predator. Divide students into pairs or groups and ask them to select two or more Winged Heroes to focus on. Use the images and stories in the book, the “The Real Bird” pages, and additional research to compare and contrast the birds and their adaptations.

10. HOW BIG IS THAT BIRD? (SCI, MATH)

Invite students to compare the sizes of some or all of the Winged Heroes characters by looking up their measurements under “ID info” on the All About Birds website. Have students create a scaled bar or picture graph comparing their lengths, weights, and wingspans. Challenge students to order the birds (from lightest to heaviest, from largest to smallest) and find patterns in the data (for example, how are the birds’ lengths and weights related? Do larger birds always have longer wingspans?).

