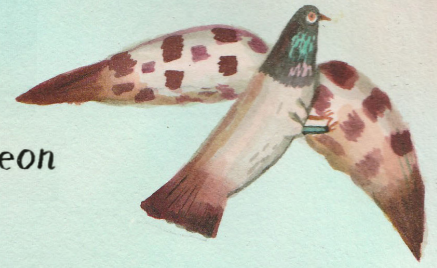


Cher Ami

Based on the WWI Legend of the Fearless Pigeon

Written by Melisande Potter
Illustrated by Giselle Potter



TEACHING TIPS

PIGEON TIMELINE

There is evidence that pigeons were used to deliver messages dating back thousands of years. Make a class timeline that shows the history of pigeons as messengers. Some dates to consider including:

- Mesopotamia: 2000 BCE
- Julius Caesar: 58 to 51 BCE
- Olympic Games: 776 BCE
- World War I: 1914-1918
- Last known "pigeon post"- India, 2008

FACT VS. FICTION

The author's note discusses how some of the ideas are from the author's imagination and some are true facts. Have a conversation with students about the difference between facts and fiction. Read the author's note and look back in the book for examples that are likely true and some that are likely created by the author. Make a chart of the examples. Then, discuss why the author might have used a blend of truth and her own ideas to create this story.

PICTURES OF COURAGE

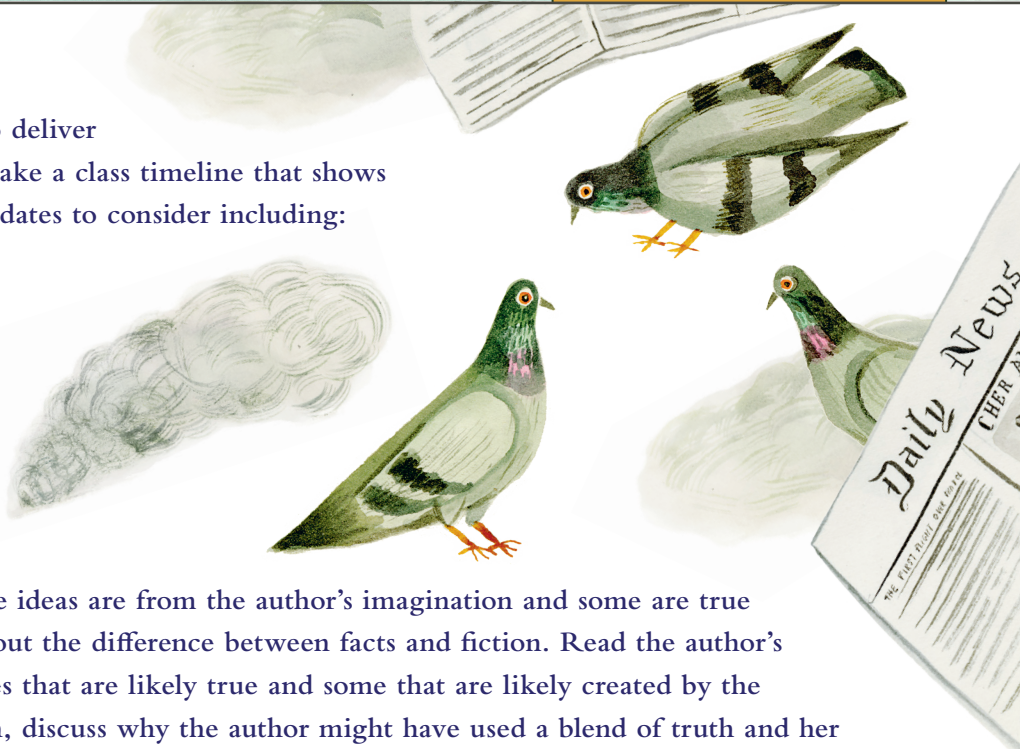
In the story, there is a moment when Cher Ami is injured and struggling to take flight. Even though she wanted to give up, she continued on her mission. Read biographies of famous people and share examples of times when they faced difficulties, but didn't give up. Then, ask students to illustrate those examples from history. As a follow-up activity, ask students to think about a time when they were facing something difficult, but didn't give up.

PIGEON TRAINING

Pigeons were used as messengers because they have the unique ability to find their way home. Students may be interested to learn more about the process of training pigeons. There are still pigeon clubs that have races and other events. As a class, compose a letter (or email) to a pigeon trainer. Students can brainstorm ideas and questions they really want to ask. If contacting a pigeon club is not possible, then there are also videos on the Internet that explain the process for training pigeons.

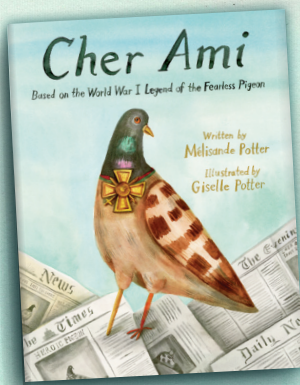
THE SCIENCE OF PIGEON NAVIGATION

In addition to learning how pigeons are trained, students may also be interested in



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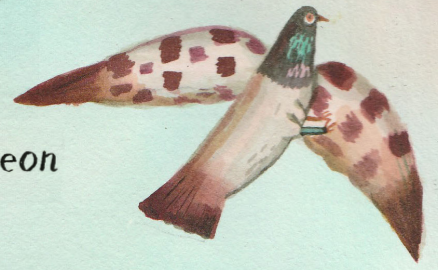




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learning more about the science behind why pigeons are so good at navigating. There are two main theories. Encourage students to learn about the different ways pigeons navigate and then give their opinion about which one they think is right. They should make a claim and then support it with evidence and reasoning.

WORLD WAR I

Students may be unfamiliar with World War I and where it was fought. Use a map to show Europe. Be sure to point out England and France, so students have an understanding of where the story took place. Depending on the age of students, it may be helpful to have a brief discussion about some of the events leading up to World War I.



PIGEON POST, PONY EXPRESS, SNAIL MAIL, OR EMAIL?

Ask students to consider four different ways messages have been delivered. Research the average length of time it took to deliver a message by pigeon (consider average distance too), Pony Express (Missouri to California took ten days), regular post (snail mail), and email. Compare the information and discuss it together. Then, create a poll and ask other classrooms or adults in the school to guess how long it would take for a message to be delivered using each method. The class can compare answers to their research and then name the winner—the classroom or person who was closest with their guess!

MESSAGE WRITING

Ask students to pretend they have their own trained messenger pigeons and have important news to share. You can choose a current event or local activity to “report on” and have students write a short message telling about the event. Discuss as a class, what would they have to consider if they were going to write a message that would be attached to a pigeon? You may want to compare it to the way people today write very short messages because of character limits on social media platforms. Have students write their messages and share as a class.



These Teaching Tips were prepared by Jennifer McMahon.



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