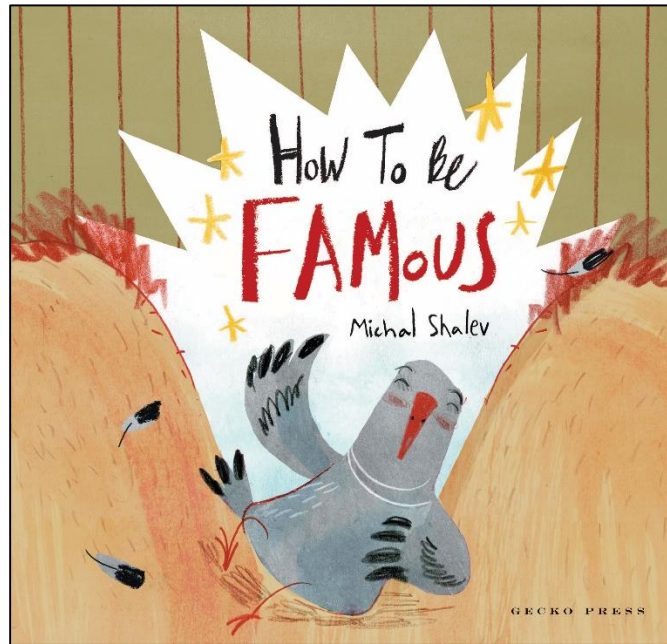


Teaching Notes
How to Be Famous
by Michal Shalev



Synopsis

Come take a trip through a zoo with an irrepressible pigeon whose one-eyed take on the world and constant posing and preening, not only bewilder fellow zoo animals but also annoy zoo visitors, and eventually lead to an unfortunate and hilarious ending.

The Author/Illustrator

Michal Shalev has studied illustration, animation and graphic design in Israel and the UK, recently graduating with an MA in children's book illustration from the Cambridge School of Art. She lives in Israel.

Themes

This cheeky, funny and layered picture book has several themes.

The first themes illustrated are those of egotism and delusions of grandeur. Throughout the book the pigeon delights in bragging about its impeccable pigeon pedigree, model physique and amazing talents, oblivious to the reality of the negative reactions, particularly from visitors to the zoo.

Another theme is that of bewildered tolerance. This is seen by the other animal inhabitants of the zoo who seem to put up with the pigeon's at times endearing, and often infuriating, personality and behaviour.

Further themes are those of satire and deadpan black humour. The pigeon's narcissistic behaviour can be viewed as a satirical take on today's celebrity obsessed and 'selfie' driven culture, which in turn leads to an unfortunate but hilariously dark ending.



Activities

1. Before reading the book, look at the cover image and title. Discuss what you think this story might be about?
2. In pairs, or with an adult to help, take turns to read the story aloud to one another. Discuss which is your favourite page and why. Do you agree with your partner's choice? Why/why not?
3. Anthropomorphism is when gods, animals or things are depicted with human attributes and behaviours. Find three examples of this from the book. Find other books where animals are depicted in this way, for example, *Wolf and Dog* (Gecko, 2013) or *I Don't Want to Go to School* (Gecko, 2015).
4. Do you like the pigeon as a character? Why/why not? Write a character study on the pigeon. You could include, for example, the moments when the pigeon misconstrues a situation and/or the other characters' reactions.
5. Examine the illustrations in the book. Do you like the style? What colours are used? What kinds of lines and textures are used? Choose your favourite illustration from the book and create your own artistic interpretation of it, for example, a painting, drawing, photograph, model, poem, etc. Or, design your own illustrations for the cover and/or one page of text.
6. Choose two illustrations from the book. Carefully study the pigeon and the other animals and their expressions. What range of emotions is evident? How has Michal Shalev achieved these feelings in the illustrations? (Think about colour, size, composition, etc). Draw your own picture that expresses another emotion, such as sadness, happiness, anger or hope.
7. The book is written in short first person sentences. Imagine you have been commissioned to write some third person narrative text to accompany five pages. Write one to five sentences of text for each.
8. Many animals are featured in the book. Describe three using only three statements for each animal. In pairs, try and guess which animals your partner has described.
9. Choose one of the other zoo animals from the book. Write a personal description about living in the zoo with the pigeon. Think about how they would describe the physical surroundings, as well as their feelings about the pigeon and what is happening around them.
10. Imagine you are a journalist and write either a celebrity magazine article, or an obituary for the pigeon (following its encounter with the lion). Present it in a newspaper format, including a 'photo' of the pigeon, and quotes from the pigeon and other animals whom you may have chosen to interview.
11. Look at the pigeon's ancestors mentioned in the book. Choose one and write a short children's story based on your choice. Then illustrate, bind and publish as an illustrated children's book.



12. Gecko Press publisher, Julia Marshall states, that she never tires of the ending which she still find hilarious every time. Do you like the ending of the book? Why/why not? In pairs, discuss what you think are the most humorous elements in this book and how they succeed in being funny and entertaining.

13. In groups, adapt the book for a performance in your classroom. Devise a script, create scenery, choose music and make costumes or puppets to represent each character. Act your adaptation out for your class. If you have access to a video camera, film it.

14. Review the book for your favourite magazine, website or blog. What do you like about it? Why? What did you dislike about it? Why? Give it a rating, such as stars, or a number out of ten.