



PRINTABLE LESSON

The Vain Peacock

A lesson in what you miss while you are looking at yourself



One complete lesson from The Sing Me a Fable Lesson Book

Ages 4 to 8 . Printable . 26 lessons in the full book

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The Vain Peacock

Fable V from Sing Me a Fable — a lesson in what you miss while you are looking at yourself

AGE	LENGTH	SUBJECT	GROUP
4–7 (Pre-K to Year 2)	30–40 minutes	PSHE · SEL · Speaking	Whole class, then pairs

Learning objective

Children understand that vanity is not about liking how you look, but about the attention it takes away from everyone else, and can notice when somebody has stopped listening.

You will need

The fable, read aloud

A mirror

A sand timer or phone timer

Poster V to colour

The song (optional)

Note before you start. This lesson is not about appearance and must not become one. Nobody is told that liking how they look is wrong. The peacock's problem is what he stops doing, not what he admires.

Before the story

4 minutes

Hold the mirror up in front of your own face, so the class can only see the back of it, and start telling them something — anything — without lowering it.

After a few seconds, ask: “What is annoying about this? I am still talking to you.”

Read the fable

5 minutes

Read fable V aloud. Every time the peacock admires himself, raise the mirror in front of your face and keep reading through it. Lower it when he attends to somebody else.

Children lose the thread of the story while the mirror is up, and complain. That complaint is exactly what the other animals feel.

Talk about it

10 minutes

1. The peacock really is beautiful — the fable says so. So what is he doing wrong?
2. Somebody asked him a question and he did not hear it. What was he doing instead?
3. Is it wrong to like how you look? Where is the line?

Question 3 matters. The answer is not modesty for its own sake — it is that the peacock is looking when somebody needs him to be listening.

Main activity: While you were looking

12 minutes

1. Pairs. One child is the peacock, one is the friend.
2. The friend has something to tell — something real and small, about their weekend.
3. Start the timer. For the first thirty seconds, the peacock must look in the mirror the whole time. They may make listening noises, but not look up.
4. Stop. Ask the peacock to repeat back what they heard. Most cannot.
5. Swap the mirror away and run it again for thirty seconds, looking at each other.
6. Ask the friend, not the peacock, how the two rounds felt different.

Ask the class: “The peacock did not say a single unkind thing. So why did it feel unkind?”

Plenary

4 minutes

“How can you tell when somebody has stopped listening to you? And how do they know when you have?”



Play it together

Put the game on the board. At every choice, stop, let the class vote, then press the card they chose.



Scan to play

OPEN IT

singmeafable.com/arcade/percy-the-vain-peacock

UNLOCK WORDS

WAITING FOR

CHOICES

6, about 2 minutes of play

Level 1 · The Stream Reflection



Strutting Down the Trail

- A Turn your back and admire your tail in the puddle.
- B Fold your tail and join the berry-toss game. ✓



Hours at the Stream

- A Take the twig, step out, and say sorry to Ruby. ✓
- B Shake off the water and preen your feathers again.

Level 2 · The Autumn Shed



The Stripped Feathers

- A Hide behind the bush so nobody sees your bare tail.
- B Step out and look at your small tail honestly. ✓



The Cold Meadow

- A Bow your head and step into the warm arbor. ✓
- B Turn away and ask to be left alone in the cold.



The last level, and what to ask

The tick marks the choice that earns the stars. Keep this page to yourself while the class votes.

Level 3 · The Kind Heart



Learning to Share the Fun

- A Check your reflection in the shiny teacup instead.
- B Set the teacup down and pass the pine needles on. ✓



The Spring Bloom

- A Carry the seed tray and play leap-frog with everyone. ✓
- B Fan your new feather and strut away from your friends.

Ask at every choice

Before pressing: “Which card would you press, and why?”

After it plays out: “What changed because of that choice? What would the other card have done?”

How it joins the lesson

The main activity, **While you were looking**, takes the same lesson off the screen and into the room. Play the game first, so the class has already watched both kinds of choice play out before they make one themselves.

Every choice plays out and nothing is timed, so a wrong vote is something to talk about, not a failure. Stars at the end of each level show how many right choices the class made.



Proud, or vain?

The distinction is the whole lesson. Six pairs to sort.

PROUD — THIS IS FINE	VAIN — THIS COSTS SOMEBODY
"I like my new shoes."	"My shoes are better than yours."
"I worked hard on this drawing."	"Look at mine. Look at mine. Look at mine."
Checking your hair, then turning round.	Checking your hair while somebody is talking.
"I'm fast at running."	"I'm fast. Who's slowest?"
Wanting a photograph of yourself.	Wanting everybody to stop for it.
"Do you like my feathers?"	Not waiting for the answer.

Read both columns aloud and ask what changed between them. It is never the pride. It is always whether somebody else is left waiting.

The line, in one sentence

Liking yourself is fine. Needing everybody else to stop what they are doing and agree is the flaw.

Give the class that sentence at the end, not the beginning. If they arrive at their own version first, use theirs.

Time is the real cost

In the fable, the peacock's preening takes long enough that whoever was waiting gives up and goes. Nothing is said and nobody falls out. They simply stop asking him things.

Adapting for your class

Age 4 · Pre-K. Do the mirror demonstration only. Talk to them from behind the mirror for fifteen seconds and ask how it was. That is enough at four, and they will not forget it.

Ages 5–7 · K to Year 2. Run it as written. Thirty seconds is long enough — do not extend the pairs activity, it stops being uncomfortable and becomes a game.

Watch for this

This lesson can slide into telling children that caring how they look is shallow, which is both untrue and unkind — and lands hardest on the children who are already anxious about it.

Keep returning to the friend who was left talking to a mirror. That is the injury, and it has nothing to do with feathers.

Ages 7–8 · Year 3. Replace the mirror with a phone, face down but glanced at. Seven-year-olds recognise that immediately, usually from adults, and the discussion goes somewhere far more interesting.

Mixed ages: the older child should be the friend, not the peacock. Being the one talked past is the half of it worth having.

What children take away

- **Vanity is measured in other people's time.** Not in mirrors, clothes, or pride.
- **You can be unkind without saying anything.** The peacock never insults anyone and still leaves them feeling small.
- **Being liked and being listened to are different.** The peacock is admired by everyone and asked nothing by anyone.

If you have more time

- **Colour the poster.** Ask who else is in the picture, and what they are waiting for.
- **Sing it.** The fable's song with on-screen words runs about 90 seconds.
- **Play it.** The browser game lets the child choose, twice a level, whether the peacock keeps preening or plays with his friend, and each choice plays out.