



"Fledging" Lesson Plan

Where reading feels like fun — a poetry-story lesson for elementary classrooms

Grades K–3

30–40 minutes

ELA · SEL · Science

Overview

"Fledging" follows a girl who finds an injured-looking baby blue jay in her yard, worries over it for a full day, and wakes up to find it gone — only to spot it thriving in a tree above her. It's a gentle story about noticing, caring, and the bittersweet feeling of watching something you love grow independent enough to leave. This lesson uses the poem as a launchpad for reading comprehension, science (bird life cycles), and social-emotional learning (letting go with joy instead of sadness).

Learning Objectives

- Students will identify the sequence of events in a narrative poem.
- Students will make inferences about a character's feelings using text evidence.
- Students will connect the concept of "fledging" to real bird development.
- Students will reflect on an experience of caring for something and then letting it go.

What's Inside This Packet

- **Page 2:** Before-reading warm-up & vocabulary
- **Page 3:** Read-aloud guide with discussion questions
- **Page 4:** Sequencing activity sheet
- **Page 5:** "How I'd Feel" SEL reflection sheet
- **Page 6:** Bird life cycle mini-lesson & diagram activity
- **Page 7:** Creative writing extension + bulletin board idea
- **Page 8:** Assessment checklist & standards alignment

Materials Needed

- Copy of *Good Tidings* (or the "Fledging" poem printed/projected)
- Printed activity sheets (pages 4–7 of this packet)
- Pencils, crayons or colored pencils
- Optional: chart paper for a class KWL chart on birds

Step 1: Before You Read

Warm-up & vocabulary preview

Warm-Up Discussion (5 minutes)

Gather students and ask:

- "Have you ever found an animal that looked hurt or lost? What did you do?"
- "What does the word *fledging* make you think of? Let's guess together before we read."

Chart a few predictions on the board. Let students know they'll check their guesses after the story.

Vocabulary Preview

fledging — a young bird that has grown enough feathers to leave the nest and try to fly

squawked — made a loud, harsh sound

askew — not straight; crooked or off to one side

swooped — flew down quickly and suddenly

Teacher Tip

Blue jays are one of the loudest, most protective birds in the yard — they'll dive-bomb anything that gets near a fledgling. If students seem surprised the "attack" in the poem is actually the parent birds protecting their baby, that's a great teachable moment: sometimes loud or scary behavior is really love in disguise.

Set a Purpose for Reading

Tell students: "As I read, listen for how the girl's feelings change from the beginning of the poem to the end. Give me a thumbs up every time you notice her feelings shift."

Step 2: Read & Discuss

Read-aloud guide with built-in discussion stops

Read-Aloud Guide

Stop after stanza 2 ("...something seemed a bit askew.")

- "Why does the girl think the bird looks hurt? What clues in the poem tell us that?"

Stop after stanza 4 (the blue jays swoop in)

- "What do you think is really happening here? Why might grown-up blue jays be so loud and diving around the girl?"

Stop after "The morning came... just quiet grass and open ground."

- "How do you think the girl feels in this moment? What would you feel?"

Stop at the final line.

- "Why does the girl call goodbye 'with cheer' instead of feeling sad? What changed her feelings?"

Whole-Group Discussion Questions

- How did the girl's feelings change from the start of the poem to the end? What caused that change?
- Why do you think the poem is called "Fledging" instead of something like "The Lost Bird"?
- Was the girl right to worry about the bird? Why might grown-ups (or bird parents!) sometimes let something struggle a little in order to help it grow?
- Have you ever felt worried about someone or something, and it turned out okay in the end?

Activity Sheet: What Happened First?

Sequencing practice — name: _____

Cut out the boxes below (or number them 1–5) to put the story of "Fledging" in the correct order.

NUMBER: ____

A girl finds a baby bird in the yard that can't fly.

NUMBER: ____

More blue jays swoop in, screeching and diving.

NUMBER: ____

The girl watches over the bird all day and tucks herself into bed, hoping it flies.

NUMBER: ____

In the morning, the bird is gone — just quiet grass.

NUMBER: ____

She spots a blue jay dancing in a tree and cheerfully says goodbye.

Draw your favorite moment from the story here! 🐦

Activity Sheet: How I'd Feel

A social-emotional reflection — name: _____

The girl in "Fledging" felt worried, then hopeful, then a little sad, and finally happy — all in one short story! Think about a time you cared for someone or something (a pet, a plant, a friend, a little sibling) and then had to let them go do something on their own.

1. What did you care for or worry about?

2. How did you feel while you were worried?



WORRIED



HOPEFUL



PROUD

3. How did it turn out?

4. Draw the moment you felt proudest.

Step 3: Science Connection

What does "fledging" really mean?

Mini-Lesson (10 minutes)

Explain to students that "fledging" is a real word bird scientists use! A **fledgling** is a baby bird that has just grown enough feathers to leave the nest, even though it's still learning to fly well. It often hops, flutters, and looks clumsy at first — just like the bird in our poem.

Fledglings usually stay on the ground or on low branches for a few days while their parents keep feeding and protecting them. That's exactly why the blue jays swooped around the girl — they were guarding their baby, not attacking her!

Discuss: The Bird Life Cycle

1. EGG

Laid safely in a nest

2. HATCHLING

No feathers, can't leave nest

3. NESTLING

Growing feathers, still in nest

4. FLEDGLING

Leaves nest, learning to fly

5. ADULT

Flies well, may raise its own babies

Number the stages 1–5!

If You Find a Fledgling (Real-World Tip!)

Share with students: if they ever find a fledgling bird like the girl in the story, the kindest thing to do is exactly what she did — watch from a distance and leave it alone. The parents are almost always nearby watching, too!

Step 4: Extend the Learning

Creative writing & classroom display ideas

Creative Writing Extension

WRITING

"Dear Little Bird" Letter

Students write a short letter from the girl to the fledgling, telling it goodbye and wishing it well. Encourage them to use at least one feeling word and one detail from the poem.

WRITING

Write the Next Poem

Invite students to imagine the blue jay's first flight and write a 4-line rhyming poem (just like the ones in *Good Tidings!*) about what it might see from up in the sky.

Classroom Display Idea

BULLETIN BOARD

"Our Class is Fledging!"

Create a bulletin board with a large tree and empty nest. As students master a new skill (reading a new book level, tying their shoes, a math fact), add a paper bird with their name to a branch — "flying" a little further from the nest each time. A sweet visual reminder that growing up happens one small brave step at a time.

Partner/Small Group Option

Pair students up to act out the poem: one plays the girl, the other plays the fledgling (and can "squawk" and hop!). Ham it up — kids love performing dialogue, and it reinforces sequence and feelings without a worksheet in sight.

Assessment & Standards

Quick checklist for informal assessment

Informal Assessment Checklist

- ☐ Student can retell the events of "Fledging" in order.
- ☐ Student can identify at least one way the girl's feelings changed and why.
- ☐ Student can explain what a "fledgling" is in their own words.
- ☐ Student participates in discussion or writing extension with a relevant personal connection.

Standards Alignment (General — adapt to your state)

- **Reading Literature:** Describe characters and how their feelings contribute to events; retell stories including key details.
- **Speaking & Listening:** Participate in collaborative discussions about grade-level texts.
- **Writing:** Write short narrative or opinion pieces using details from a text.
- **Science (Life Science):** Describe patterns of behavior of parents and offspring that help offspring survive.

A Note from Kikipd

Thank you for bringing "Fledging" into your classroom! I hope it sparks a little wonder about the birds outside your window — and maybe a conversation or two about how growing up (and letting go) can be scary and wonderful all at once. Find more free printables and poem-based lessons at goodtidingsbooks.com.

*"Goodbye, small friend," she called with cheer.
"You found your wings and flew from here."*