

My uncle told me that long ago people used carrier pigeons to take messages to other people. He has some carrier pigeons, and he is proud of them. They live in a coop on the roof of his apartment building. They aren't everyday pigeons. They have been trained, and it's remarkable. I don't know how they do it, but they know where to take a message when he sends them out, and they never fail to return.

My uncle had carrier pigeons when he was a child, and he says that today he probably is one of just a few people who still have them. He grew up and went into the army, and he no longer had pigeons. Then he got a position working at a store, and he sent messages by computer. We imagined that he had forgotten about the carrier pigeons, since it was decades ago that he had them as a child.

He still has a computer--now he has it at home--but he always loved those carrier pigeons, and he wanted to have them again. So when he retired after working for four decades, he bought some pigeons and trained them himself.

Every day, my uncle writes a note to his sister and sends it by carrier pigeon. His sister lives on the south side, while my uncle resides on the west side. He tells his sister about his day in his notes. He says it's not urgent to tell her the news; he just likes using the carrier pigeons.

His sister thought this was silly. When the pigeon comes, she takes the note and reads it, but she does not send anything back. She says, "I don't want to touch those dirty birds. I don't know why you still want to keep them." Then the bird comes back to my uncle's coop without a return message.

One day there was a sudden rainstorm after the pigeon left my uncle's coop. It rained so hard and so long that everything was flooded. The pigeon did not come right back. My uncle was concerned about the pigeon, and he also worried about his sister. But then the pigeon came back, and it was very wet. It had a note in a plastic bag. The note said, "I am ok. I guess your pigeon is practical after all."

Later that summer, there was another problem. There was a power outage that lasted for two days. We did not have any telephone service. My uncle said, "See, pigeons can work all the time. They don't need electricity." He wrote that in a note, too. He tied that note to the pigeon. Then he sent that note to his sister.

About an hour later, the pigeon came back. It had another note on it. "You're right," it said. "I have learned that you can count on pigeons. But I still want my telephone back, and my air conditioner, too."

The phone lines were back the next day, but we were not worried about more power failures. We had insurance because we knew we could count on our pigeon express.

Identify/Classify Sequence – Fiction

Questions developed by Center for Urban Education for use by Chicago Public Schools 2008-2007.

Choose the best answer for each question.

1. What is the first thing that happens in the story?

- a. The uncle grows up.
- b. The uncle buys pigeons.
- c. The uncle sends notes.
- d. The aunt gets the message.

3. What happened when the power failed?

- a. They used candles.
- b. The phones did not work.
- c. The pigeon got lost.
- d. The storm came back.

2. What happens after the big storm?

- a. The pigeon does not come back.
- b. There are no phones.
- c. There is a flood.
- d. There is a fire.

4. What happened at the end of the story?

- a. The aunt got pigeons.
- b. The aunt learned about pigeons.
- c. The aunt moved.
- d. The aunt used the telephone.

5. *Write your own answer to this question. What happened while the pigeon was flying in the storm?*

TEACHER NOTES: Develop Students' Skills: Exercise Thinking

These questions have not been validated, so decisions about student's achievement should not be made based on their responses. They are intended to exercise skills. Recommended activities include: students work in pairs to choose the best response; give students the questions without the responses so they generate their own answers; students make up additional questions; students make up questions like these for another passage.

Answers: *You can remove this answer key and then give it to students and ask them to figure out the basis for the correct response.*

Item	1	2	3	4
Answer	a	c	b	b

Question 5 is open-ended. Here is a suggested response.
It got wet. It brought back the message.