

TEXT	'SAVING THE BIRDS' from <i>FIFTY FAMOUS PEOPLE; A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES</i> (1912)
AUTHOR	James Baldwin
THEMES	Culture – USA, animals (unit 20)
VOCABULARY	Animals, countryside, personality adjectives
WRITING	Students write questions about famous people.
SPEAKING	A twenty-questions quiz about famous people

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

James Baldwin (1841–1925) was an American writer and editor. Largely self-educated, he began teaching at the age of twenty-four. His books for students display a pedagogical understanding of the importance of engaging students' interest and imagination in subjects that were often taught by rote. At one time, it was estimated that half of all the school books in use in the United States had been written or edited by him. Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865, see portrait on Worksheet) was an American lawyer who served as the 16th President of the United States. He led the USA through the American Civil War and the abolition of slavery. He was assassinated in April 1865.

WARMER

Find some pictures of young animals – puppies, kittens, foals, chicks, lambs, etc. It's not important to focus on vocabulary but students might be curious about what they are called in English. Ask them where you might see these animals. Suggest some possibilities: in the town/country? In someone's house? On a farm? In a park? Elicit students' own experiences about seeing any of the animals in the pictures.

ABOUT YOU

Use the questions to get students thinking further about animals. For the first question, students might suggest giving them food, homes, making them safe, etc. For the last question, elicit suggestions such as: from people, from other animals, from the weather, if they don't have food or places to live, etc.

Go through the introduction. You might want to add some more information about Lincoln (see Background information) or show students some other pictures of him.

- 1 This is a good text to read aloud. Students can listen the first time without referring to the text, then read the text for themselves and talk about their ideas.

Suggested answers

They are in danger. / They will die.
He is very kind.
He likes animals.

2

Suggested answers

- 1 They probably don't think the birds are important and they don't want to stop their ride and conversation.
- 2 Because of the rain
- 3 Firstly, the noise (of the little birds and the mother bird) and secondly when they see Lincoln is not with them.
- 4 Probably because they feel he was helping, not hurting them
- 5 Kind, nice, good, etc.

VOCABULARY

3

Answers

- 1 nest 2 climb 3 robin 4 lawyer

4

Answers

- 1 saves 2 matter 3 gently 4 lawyer

WRITING

- 5 Make it clear that the questions must require a *Yes/No* answer by comparing *How old are you?* and *Are you young?* Look at the examples 1–4 to establish what kind of questions provide useful information. Monitor the writing and check for accuracy, particularly word order.

MIXED ABILITY

Stronger students can do the activity in reverse – they choose a famous person and give the group bits of information about that person until the group guesses their identity. For example: *he's not very old / he's on TV a lot / he's a singer / he's from Canada, etc.*

SPEAKING

- 6 Explain the activity and get groups to pool their questions from Activity 5 when they question the 'famous person'. You might want to specify that the famous person is someone living, so that students are using present tenses. Another useful instruction is to limit the number of questions, to twenty, for example. It could be a good idea to teach the expressions: *give us a clue* and *we give up*, but specify that the former should only be used after asking quite a lot of questions.