



## Lesson 7

# The Ring-Necked Pheasant: Seize the Day!



# I. The Ring-Necked Pheasant: Seize the Day!

## II. Brief Description of the South Dakota Feature

The wily ring-neck is an icon in our state. It is our state bird and our favorite game for hunting. Opening day is so popular, some schools take the day off, calling it "Pheasant Monday." Only two other states permit their state bird to be hunted, but nobody treasures their state bird like South Dakota does.

Yet, the ring-necked pheasant isn't really a South Dakota native. It's an invasive species released into the wild by any number of people, hoping it would build a reproducing population. Those first pheasants made good by taking advantage of the climate and food resources in our state. They capitalized on their opportunities.

People can do the same. Our students live in one of the most economically prosperous countries in the world, the freest in the world, with a strong educational system, free libraries, and a huge slate of extracurricular and other activities open to all. They, too, can seize the day. The sky's the limit.

## III. Lesson Plan Steps:

### A. Anticipatory Set

"Do you remember when we talked a few weeks back about a subject of South Dakota Sturdy that wasn't a person? Who remembers? (Calls on a student.) Yes, that's right, the Monarch of the Plains, the American bison.

Well, today, we have another animal that typifies one of our South Dakota Sturdy principles, i.e., making the most of your opportunities by going after them. It's the ring-necked pheasant who 'seized the day' when it was introduced into America and, most successfully, South Dakota, more than a century ago."

### B. Objective and Purpose

Objective: 1. The students will be able to define the concept of an invasive species.

2. The students will identify the ring-necked pheasant as an invasive species from Asia, as South Dakota's state bird, and the most popular game for hunters in our state.

3. The students will be able to explain the analogy of the ring-necked pheasant, as an animal that capitalized on opportunity when introduced to South Dakota.

Purpose: Use the analogy of the ring-neck to highlight the importance of seizing the day, of capitalizing on all of the opportunities available to you in order to be successful in life.

Teacher states: "Very good. So, let's turn to the resource document entitled, The Ring-necked Pheasant: Seize the Day!" Have the students read the document on their own or aloud with students taking turn, as the teacher sees fit.

### C. Resources to be Accessed

1. "The Ring-necked Pheasant: Seize the Day!" (see below)
2. The South Dakota State Historical Society has several good documents online about the ring-necked pheasant, including a more in-depth history of how it was introduced in America and South Dakota, originally near Redfield, in Spink County, including a historical marker explaining Redfield's importance to introduction efforts. If you feel your class has a particular affinity for the ring-neck, you may want them to find such sources at the South Dakota State Historical Society website: <https://history.sd.gov/archives/collectionindexes.aspx>. A simple Google search will reach the same articles.

### D. Modeling

1. "One of the really important differences between people is that some of us see opportunities and some of us don't. Another related one is that some people take advantage of opportunities, and some don't."
2. "Let's talk for just a minute about my job. As you know, I am a (teacher or school counselor). But getting this job was not just about applying for it. There were a number of opportunities I had to pursue in order to make that a reality. These include:
  - I had to finish high school with decent grades so that I had the chance to apply for college.
  - I had to take the opportunity to apply for college and be accepted.
  - I had to take the opportunity to attend college and secure my 4-year degree.
  - (If you are a certified school counselor....) I had to apply for graduate school and get my master's degree in order to become fully certified as a school counselor.
  - I had to look for vacancies in my field at schools like this one and then apply for a job.
  - I had to take the opportunity to interview for the job.
  - That is a large number of opportunities, and nobody made me take any of them. I had to step up in each case and go after them. I had to 'seize the day.'"
3. If you are uncomfortable about talking about your own career path or believe the students may not be able to make that connection at their age, select a different path; for example, part-time work done by teenagers in your community only a few years older than your students and explore the various opportunities those job-holders had to seize on in order to make that a reality. Or use a larger, more well-known example. The lessons on Teddy Roosevelt and Laura Ingalls can also be applied here; both sought opportunities and overcame challenges to meet their goals.

### E. Checking for Understanding/Guided Practice

"What I'd like you to think about next is a job or profession that you think you might want to pursue when you are an adult. Think about that for a minute...."

Call on a student. "Can you share with us a job you might like when you are an adult or even when you are a teenager and want to work part-time?" Then explore the various opportunities they will need to pursue in order to make that a reality or at least increase the chances of doing so. These might include courses taken in high school, good grades overall, extracurricular activities (debate team if you want to be a lawyer), internships, CTE coursework, etc.

## F. Independent Practice

“Now, think of someone in your family who has a job. Maybe it’s your mother or your father, an aunt, your grandfather. What opportunities did that person have to jump on in order to get that job? On a piece of paper, jot down that person’s name or relationship to you, the career, and a list of those opportunities.” Provide the students three to four minutes to get a decent start on this process. Circulate around the room to verify student engagement.

## G. Student-Led Closure

“OK, great. Now select a person near to you, and the two of you should alternate answering the following questions. One of you answers the first question, then the other person takes the second.”

- What is an invasive species?
- Other than the ring-necked pheasant, what is an example of an invasive species?
- In what country did the ring-neck pheasant originate?
- Name one thing that is special or interesting about the ring-neck?
- Name another.
- What does “carpe diem!” mean?
- Give an example from the life of someone you know personally when they capitalized on an opportunity.
- Give an example from your own life when you capitalized on an opportunity.
- Can you think of an opportunity in life you didn’t pursue that you wish you had? If so, what did you miss out on?
- If so, what other opportunities didn’t become available to you as a result?

## H. Standards Addressed

SD Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success: K-12 College, Career, and Life-Ready Competencies for Every Student:

- B.LS.4: Self-motivation and self-direction for learning.
- B.LS.7: Long- and short-term academic, career, and social-emotional goals.
- B.LS.10: Participation in enrichment and extracurricular activities.
- B.SMS.5: Perseverance to achieve long- and short-term goals.
- B.SS. 8: Advocacy skills for self and others and ability to assert self, when necessary.

Science:

- MS-LS1-5: Construct a scientific explanation based on evidence for how environmental and genetic factors influence the growth of organisms.
- MS-LS2-2: Construct an explanation that predicts patterns (relationships) of interactions among organisms across multiple ecosystems.

English/Language Arts:

- 5.RF.4 Reading with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension: Read grade-level text with purpose and understanding.
- 6-8 RH.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- 6-8 RST.2 Determine the central ideas or conclusions of a text; provide an accurate summary of the text distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

English/Language Arts-Reading:

- 4.RF.4 Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.
  - a. Read grade-level text with purpose and understanding.
- 5.RF.4 Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.
  - a. Read grade-level text with purpose and understanding.
- 6-8.RH-1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

Social Studies:

- 5.SS.9. H. The student describes the life of pioneers in South Dakota during the 1800s.





# The Ring-Necked Pheasant: Seize the Day!

Are you the kind of person who freaks out when you see a spider? Who yells for your dad to come squash the one that somehow made its way into the bathtub? A lot of people really dislike spiders, even have phobias (intense fears) of them. Well, get ready, because the Joro spider, a colorful arachnid with 4-inch legs that can fly by “ballooning” through its silk threads, is currently invading New York. Soon, no doubt, it will be making its way here. The good news is that these spiders, originally native to Japan, are very skittish around people, and their venom, unless you have an allergy, is very weak.

But then there’s poor Florida and the Burmese python. These imported snakes, native to Africa, were introduced into the state by people who kept them as pets, then released them or had them escape into the wild. In parts of Florida, near and in the Everglades, they have wiped out whole populations of mammals, and they are even taking their toll on alligators.

Animals that make their way out of their native lands, usually by human transport of one form or another, and into another where they quickly spread, are called invasive species. When they destroy or out-compete indigenous animals, they have a negative impact on the environment. That is why most countries now ban or restrict the introduction of non-native species within their borders. But it wasn’t always that way. Some species that we think of as native, and have learned to enjoy or at least tolerate, were intentionally introduced into other countries. The sparrow, that pervasive little bird you probably see flitting around every day in your neighborhood, was an invasive species from England. Some people in Brooklyn brought them over in 1851 to eat Linden Moth



**Joro Spider**

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caterpillars that were destroying basswood trees. A few others did something similar and soon *Passer domesticus* were nesting from sea to shining sea.

European colonists brought dandelions to New England for their medicinal and food properties (who eats dandelions?), and now they are the bane of lawns everywhere. Then again, if they hadn't, we'd all have missed out on the fun of blowing their seeds into the air when we were little!

So, invasive species of plants and animals are kind of par for the course throughout history. But who would have thought that an invasive species would become South Dakota's state bird? That's right, the ring-necked pheasant didn't start out on the plains of South Dakota. Instead, it came from China.

A United States consul general—sort of an ambassador but in a city in a foreign country, not the capital—named Owen Nickerson Denny brought pheasants from Shanghai, China, in 1881 and released them around Portland, Oregon, his hometown. When they seemed to disappear without a trace, he did it again in 1882 and 1884. Soon, this group of immigrants had a growing population.





Some South Dakotans, fond of the birds, their telltale cackle, and their regal appearance, released some in South Dakota in 1891 but without any luck. In 1908, a group of Redfield, S.D., farmers let three pair go in a place called Hagmann's

Grove, a bit north of town. They flourished, and the state game department bought around 50 pheasants and released them near Redfield as well. Soon, South Dakota had ring-necked fever and during World War I, more than 7,000 were added to the local populations in Spink County, in the James River Valley. That was all it took. Soon, ring-necks were everywhere, and the year after the war, South Dakota held a one-day pheasant season, 200 of them finding their way into cooking pots. The pheasant became so popular that the South Dakota Legislature declared it the state bird in 1943. Today, there are estimated to be about 6 million ring-necked pheasants in our state, depending on the year.

But what does any of this have to do with being sturdy? Well, the ring-necked pheasant is an object lesson for us, a lesson in what you can accomplish when you take advantage of the opportunities before us. It can be summed in an old, popular, Latin adage: *Carpe diem*, which means, *Seize the Day!* It means to be bold, take action, don't let life conquer you. Instead, conquer it.

Now, to be clear, the ring-necked pheasant didn't set out to populate the Great Plains of America. None of those early nesting pairs had any idea that they had been removed from Asia and brought over to a new continent and then, by sheer force of will, became a huge population of birds. Animals don't have that kind of perspective or foresight.

But people do. The ring-necked pheasant did take advantage of an entirely new environment in North America because their genetic heritage and their behavior allowed them to do so. People have an extra factor—we can



South Dakota State Historical Society, Archives



see what's possible, we can look at an opportunity and decide to capitalize on it. We can seize the day.

Think about the incredible opportunities in your life. You live in the most powerful, free society in the world. You have technology in your hands—a school computer or iPad—that your grandparents couldn't even have imagined when they were your age. You have medical care that prevents you from getting most childhood diseases and cures you when you do get sick. Your needs are probably pretty much provided for. Your school offers an academic program that will prepare you for life—math and reading and science and history. Do you have a favorite subject? Think about that. Perhaps this will become your academic passion, a field of study that will consume your interests for the rest of your life, something you can truly be great at.

And what about all the athletics and activities your school offers? Do you love basketball or football or volleyball? What about track? These are also opportunities. If you don't try some of them, you'll never know if you are good at that or not. You'll never know just how much you enjoy them. Your school library and the public library in your town are stocked with great books—classics of literature identified by generations of people as worth reading; new books



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on scientific discoveries and new social problems and trends; biographies on people who saw opportunities (Elon Musk and Caitlin Clark to name a couple) and tackled them and had insane success. America's greatest writer, Mark Twain, once said of reading, "The man who does not read has no advantage over the man who cannot read." What Twain meant was that books are an opportunity, but you have to seize the page.

The ring-necked pheasant found its way to America. It had its opportunity to spread out over the land and, in South Dakota, boy did it make good! They are so wildly successful, we've been hunting them now for more than a century. People come from all over the world to engage in the South Dakota pheasant hunt. More than 120,000 South Dakotans and non-South Dakotans do so every year – harvesting, some years, almost a million birds.

That kind of success isn't limited to birds. We, too, can enjoy it. We just need to watch out for opportunities, train for them, and, you guessed it, *seize the day*.



South Dakota Public Broadcasting

## Want to learn more?

As long as you're reflecting on the bird that made the most of his opportunities in America, think about other ways to "experience" the wily ring-neck. Huron sports the largest statue of our pheasant in the world. Visit him sometime as he watches over Highway 14. Or head out for opening day with hunting companions from your family. You'll have a great walk in the fields of South Dakota, see amazing marksmen take down a bird or two, maybe take a shot yourself, and even tuck into a delicious pheasant supper!