

Igor and the Cranes' Journey



Teacher Resource Package Prepared By:
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Synopsis:

Country of Origin: Israel, Germany and Poland

Runtime: 90 minutes

Themes: environment, family relationships, migration and re-settlement

In the aftermath of his parents' divorce, 11-year-old Igor relishes visits with his father, Peter— an ornithologist in the Russian countryside. After Igor witnesses the birth of a baby crane, who he names 'Karl', his world is turned upside down when his mother, Tanya, announces they are moving to Israel to start a new life. Struggling to adjust to his new Israeli school, Igor finds solace in tracking the migration of a flock of cranes — including Karl — from Eastern Europe to Africa using his father's website. When Igor discovers that Karl has become separated from the flock, he joins forces with Peter to find the young bird, an experience that finally brings the estranged father and son closer together.

A touching fable, *Igor & The Cranes' Journey* addresses the plight of children in divorced families, the struggles faced by migrants and, ultimately, our adaptability to change.

Curriculum Links:

Igor and the Crane's Journey can be used to meet the English and Media Studies component of the English curriculum from Grades 6 through 9. It can also be applied to the Themes of Geographic Inquiry and Patterns of Physical Geography strands of the Grade 7 Geography curriculum.

Before Watching the Film

Igor and the Cranes' Journey is set in Russia and Israel. Locate these countries on a map. What do you already know about these countries? Divide the class into groups to research both countries, reporting back on the landscape, climate, flora and fauna in Russia and Israel.

Context: Cranes and Crane Migration

Igor and the Crane's Journey begins with the birth of Karl in the Archangelsk Oblast in Russia and ends with his arrival in Israel. From there, the birds will fly to Africa. Students should explore the life cycle and migration patterns of cranes and report their findings back to the class. Divide the class into three groups to research the habitat, ecosystems and migration patterns of cranes.

Habitat

What kind of crane is Karl? Describe the habitat in which Karl is born. What type of habitat do cranes prefer? What is the life cycle of a crane? Create a chart outlining their stages of growth and development. What are their feeding habits? What is the role of the parent birds? What are the major threats to their survival (e.g. environmental, predators, etc.)?

Ecosystems

An ecosystem includes all of the living things (plants, animals and organisms) in a given area, interacting with each other, and also with their non-living environments (weather, earth, sun, soil, climate, atmosphere). When one part of the habitat is altered, the other living organisms need to adapt to that change or else they will die. Both nature and human intervention impact bird migration. Students should outline for the class the ways in which the cranes in the film are affected by their natural environment and the actions of humans. What are the environmental threats in the film that cause the deaths of John and Yoko? What other environmental conditions might endanger the birds on their flight to Africa? What are some of the human threats to the cranes depicted in the film? What other human actions might pose a risk to the cranes' survival? What are the ways in which humans in the film protect the birds and facilitate their safe migration?

Migration

Karl is born in Northwest Russia and will eventually migrate to Africa. Students should create a map that outlines the route that the cranes take to get to their final destination. What are the stops that are depicted in the film? What will the birds' route be after they leave the Hula Valley? What are the ecosystems in each of the places and what challenges will the cranes encounter in each place?

There are many websites that can help students with their research. Listed below are a few to get them started:

International Crane Foundation

<http://www.savingcranes.org/>

Siberian Crane Wetland Project

<http://www.scwp.info/aboutscwp.shtml>

Hula Bird Sanctuary: The Crane Project

<http://www.agamon-hula.co.il/node/37>

Teachers may also want to consult the following websites to find resources and lesson plans related to bird migration:

National Geographic: Oil and Bird Population Activity

http://education.nationalgeographic.com/education/activity/oil-and-bird-populations/?ar_a=1

National Geographic: To the Ends of the Earth

http://education.nationalgeographic.com/education/news/ends-earth/?ar_a=1

World Wildlife Foundation Teacher Resource Page

http://wwf.panda.org/about_our_earth/teacher_resources/

Related Activities:

Canadian Bird Migration

Canada is home to millions of migrating birds. Students can choose a specific species of bird and research its habitat, ecosystem and migration patterns using some of these websites to help their research:

Bird Studies Canada

<http://www.bsc-eoc.org/volunteer/cmmn/index.jsp?lang=EN&targetpg=index>

Simply Wild Canada

http://www.simplywildcanada.com/Bird_Migration.html

Bird Canada

<http://www.birdcanada.com/birds-of-canada/bird-migration/>

Backyard Nature

<http://www.backyardnature.net/birdmgt.htm>

Ducks Unlimited Canada

<http://www.ducks.ca/learn-about-wetlands/wildlife/migration-station/>

Survival Plan

There are currently 31 types of birds that are at risk of disappearing from Ontario.

The list of birds can be found at

http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/Species/2ColumnSubPage/MNR_SAR_BIRDS_A_T_RISK_EN.html.

Students should divide into groups, with each one choosing a different kind of bird at risk. Develop a survival plan for each species and present it to the class, using the following questions as a guide:

1. What are the biggest environmental factors affecting the birds' survival?
2. What challenges posed to the birds' survival are caused by human intervention?
3. How can the birds' natural habitat be preserved or how can a new habitat be created?
4. How can the birds be protected against predators?
5. Are there breeding programs available to help boost numbers?
6. Are there any laws that can be put into place to protect the birds from further harm?

Extension Activity

As a class, attract native birds to your school by building a mini-sanctuary by providing them with a protected environment as well as a food source.

