

WHY DOES THAT CRANE LOOK SILLY?

The following activity is based on the African folktale, “Arap Sang and the Cranes,” which describes why the crowned cranes have a crown of golden feathers on the tops of their heads. The story is divided into eight sections with matching illustrations. After reading the story aloud to your class, ask the students to match the correct illustration with the corresponding text. For students who are learning how to read, you might ask them to choose the correct picture as you read the story aloud. You may either photocopy the cards and have students color and cut them out, or laminate the cards so they may be reused.

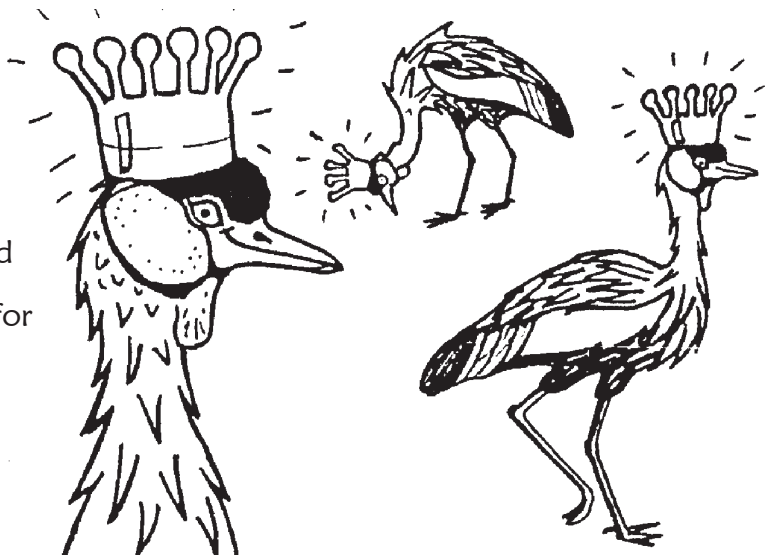
WHY DO CROWNED CRANES HAVE A CROWN?

Both the African grey crowned and black crowned cranes are known for their distinctive feather “crowns.”

The crowns are made of special feathers, which are twisted in the shape of a corkscrew. Many re-

searchers have speculated on why the crowned cranes have this beautiful plumage.

Some researchers believe that the crown may be used in display and courtship, while others have speculated that the feather crowns may help shade the birds from the hot African sun. Another hypothesis is that the golden feathers help camouflage the crowned cranes in their grassland habitat. It also may be possible that the feather crowns do not have a direct purpose.



HOW THE CROWNED CRANE GOT ITS GOLDEN CROWN OF FEATHERS[©]

A great king was lost in the desert. He had been walking for days in the hot sun with no water.

The king was tired, thirsty, and hungry. He thought that he was going to die.

A flock of cranes saw the king below them as they flew across the desert.

They felt sorry for the king and carried him back to his kingdom on their backs.

The cranes had saved the king's life! To thank them, the king gave each crane a beautiful crown of gold.

People saw the beautiful golden crowns. They began to kill the cranes and take the crowns for themselves.

The king was very sad and angry when he saw that people were killing his friends, the cranes, for their crowns.

The king waved his hand. Magically, the crowns of heavy gold changed into light, golden feathers. And that is how the crowned crane got its name!

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Activity 1:

Read the African story, "How the Crowned Crane Got its Golden Crown of Feathers," aloud in class. Divide the class into groups of two or three, and give each group a set of the text and matching illustrations from the story. Have each group match the correct illustration with the corresponding text.

After reading the story, ask your students why they think the crowned crane has a crown? Describe the grassland habitat where the cranes live, and ask your class how they think the feather crowns may help the cranes survive in this habitat?

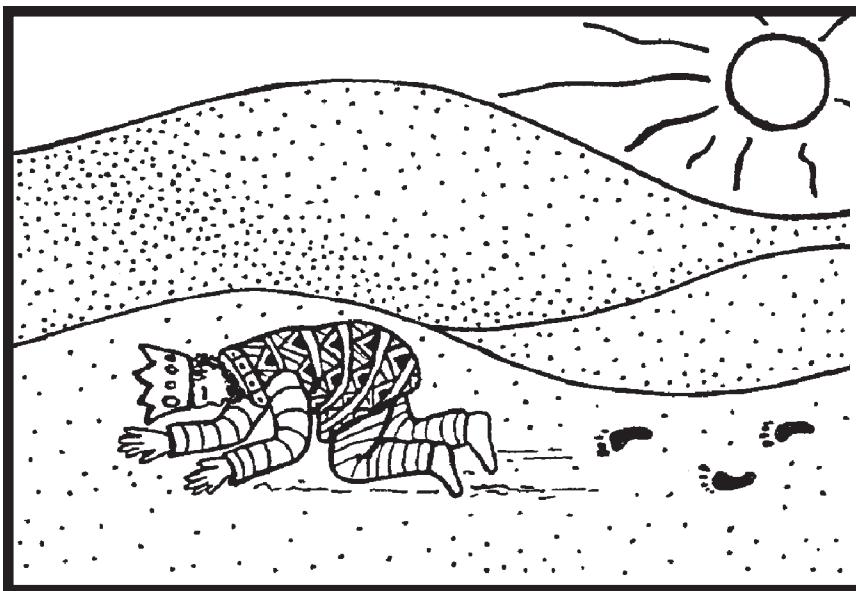
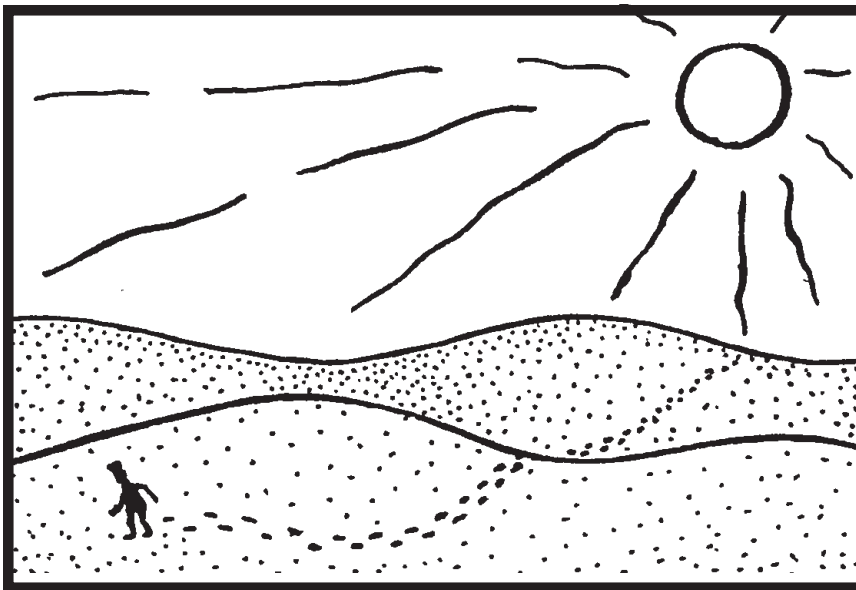
Activity 2:

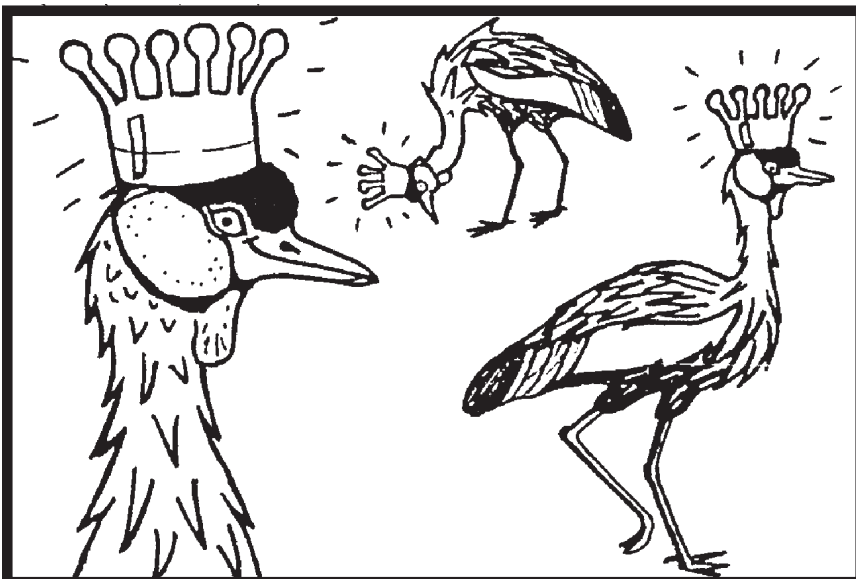
After completing the first activity, have your students write their own short story explaining why something that they are familiar with in nature looks the way it does. For example, why does the crane have a long neck, a buck have antlers, or a raccoon wear a mask?

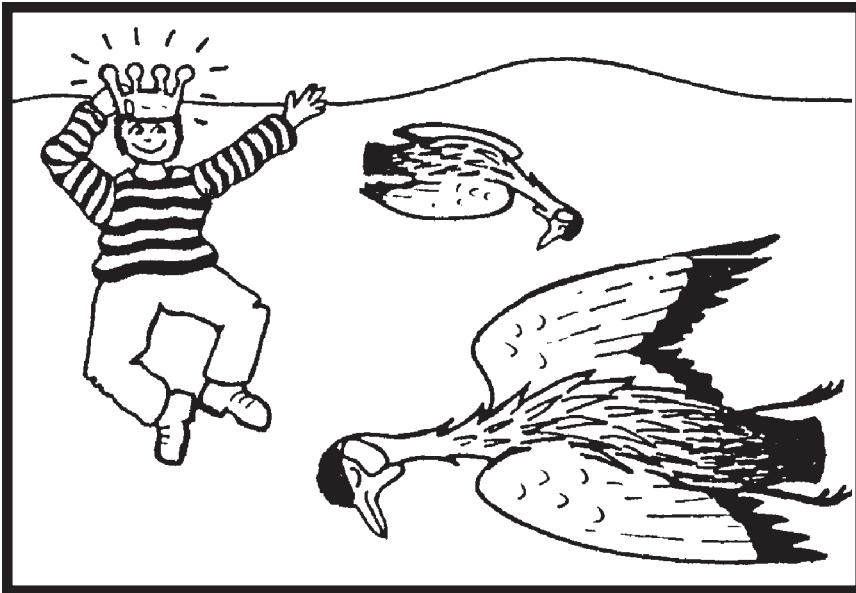


Do you know why I'm called
a crowned crane?

Color and cut out the pictures and text
from the story "HOW THE CROWNED
CRANE GOT ITS GOLDEN CROWN OF
FEATHERS." After your teacher reads the
story aloud in class, match each picture with
the correct text from the story.







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