The Ugly Duckling

About the Tale

Hans Christian Andersen was born in the small Danish town of Odense, in 1805. Like the ugly duckling, he was awkward and special. With nothing to sustain him but sheer determination, Hans headed for Copenhagen. There, he went to college and later wrote an assortment of plays, novels, articles, and his beloved children’s tales. He penned “The Ugly Duckling” in 1844. This lovely story of a homely bird that “blooms” into a gorgeous swan has been translated into dozens of languages—English among them. It remains one of Anderson’s most celebrated works.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do the other birds make fun of the ugly duckling?
2. Why is the ugly duckling afraid to show his face to the swans?
3. At the end of the story, the ugly duckling decides “to be kind to all living things, from peacocks to potato bugs.” Why?

Notable Retellings

☆ The Ugly Duckling by Hans Christian Anderson (Mineditions, 1995). This faithful translation of Anderson’s fluid tale is a bit melancholy, but oh-so beautiful.


☆ The Ugly Duckling by Jerry Pinkney (HarperCollins, 1999). Kids are sure to respond to the wonderful art of this Caldecott-Honor book.

Companion Reproducible

Focus Skills: Following Directions, Vocabulary Development, Writing

Distribute copies of the reproducible of page 74. Then invite each child to fill in the blanks to write their own customized Animal Tale inspired by “The Ugly Duckling.”
Once upon a time, a little ______________________ went
for a walk. He met some mean ______________________s.
"You are ugly! Go away." They said.

Next, he met some mean ______________________s.
"You are ugly. Go away," they said.

Finally, he met some nice ______________________s.
"Don’t look at me. I am ugly," he said.

"You are not ugly. You are just different. Let’s be
friends!" they said.

Then, they all went out for ______________________
flavor of ice cream
ice cream and lived happily ever after!

THE END
That made the ugly duckling curious. He looked into the shiny water.

Out popped five little ducklings. Four were fluffy and cute. One was gray and ugly.

From that day on, the once ugly duckling lived happily ever after. And he was always kind to all living things, from peacocks to potato bugs.
Once upon a time, five eggs began to hatch. Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

Wow! He had grown into a beautiful swan, just like them!

The cute ducks were mean to their ugly brother. They pecked at him. They said, “You are ugly. Go away!”

The swan laughed, “Have you looked in a mirror lately?”
When the swans swam near, the ugly duckling hid his face and cried. He did not want them to see how ugly he was.

One day, a swan swam over and spoke to him. "Why are you so shy?" he asked. "Because I am ugly," said the ugly duckling.

One day, the ugly duckling did go away. He swam and swam. After a while, he met some geese.

When the swans swam near, the ugly duckling hid his face and cried. He did not want them to see how ugly he was.

Once again, the ugly duckling did go away. He swam and swam. After a while, he met some herons.
But the geese were just as mean as the ducks. They pecked at him. They said, “You are ugly. Go away!”

Life went on like this for many months. The ugly duckling stayed by himself. He also grew and grew.

But the herons were just as mean as the geese. They pecked at him. They said, “You are ugly. Go away!”

Once again, the ugly duckling did go away. He swam and swam. After a while, he came upon some swans. They were the most beautiful birds he had ever seen.
1. Make double-sided copies of the mini-book pages. (You should have two double-sided copies for each one.)

2. Cut the pages in half along the dashed line.

3. Position the pages so that the lettered spreads (A, B, C, D) are face up. Place the B spread on top of the A spread. Then, place the C and D spreads on top of those in sequence.

4. Fold the pages in half along the solid line. Make sure all the pages are in the proper order. Staple them together along the book’s spine.

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**Book Badge Reproducibles**

Let me read __________________________ to you!

Let’s read __________________________ together!