

# Beyond the Page: Honk!

Subject: Language Arts, Fine Arts

Running time: 17 minutes

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## Objectives

The student will:

- gain a deeper understanding of the book *Honk*, written by Pamela Duncan Edwards and illustrated by Henry Cole;
- be motivated to read more books and find out more about the author, illustrator, and subject matter; and
- explore the nature of collaboration and teamwork; learn more about ballet.

## Synopsis of the Book

From the moment she glimpses a ballet performance through a window of the Paris Opera House, Mimi the swan is stage struck. Determined to become a prima swanerina, she diligently studies ballet poses and keeps trying to sneak into the opera house—where birds are NOT allowed! Haughty patrons in evening dress look down their noses at poor Mimi. Horrified, the manager shoos the puzzled, dejected swan out into the cold. Finally, Mimi follows a tardy ballerina through the stage door and onstage at the end of a line of dancers costumed for Swan Lake. Behind the footlights at last, Mimi bewitches the audience with her *demi-pliés*, *chassés*, and *en pointe* dancing on the tips of her webbed feet. Mimi the swanerina is such a success that the manager begs her for a return engagement.

## Synopsis of the Video

At the Beyond the Page Café, Today's Special is a book called *Honk!*, written by Pamela Duncan Edwards and illustrated by Henry Cole. As our host Shelley reads the story aloud to the Café's young patrons, we view an animation of Cole's humorous, richly painted illustrations. After the reading, the kids have an online chat with the author and illustrator, who talk about working as a team. Then the kids take a video field trip to see young dancers demonstrate some of the ballet moves Mimi the swan performs onstage. The Café kids learn that studying ballet can be as challenging as the most rigorous athletic training.

## Preview Questions

1. What is a cygnet?
2. Have you ever been to a ballet performance? What did you think about ballet? Have you ever tried to dance ballet?
3. When you work in groups or with a partner, what are some guidelines you should follow to work together successfully?

## Post-Viewing Questions

1. What did Mimi Swan like about ballet dancing?
2. How do you think Mimi felt after her first ballet performance? How would you feel?
3. How did Pamela Duncan Edwards come up the idea for the book? What suggestion did the author and illustrator have about working together?
4. At the Beyond the Page Café, kids use books, the Internet, and videos, to gather information. If you wanted to learn more about the world of dance, what media would you choose? Explain your choices.

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## Related Activities

1. Have students look at the illustrations of Mimi performing various ballet moves. Ask students to draw or paint funny pictures of other animals performing ballet. Suggest that they draw creatures such as spiders, buffaloes, octopuses, and skunks. Have them visit The Ballet Dictionary Website at [www.abt.org/library/dictionary/index.html](http://www.abt.org/library/dictionary/index.html) to find out what different ballet positions and movements look like.
2. Have students recall the online chat with Pamela Duncan Edwards, the author, and Henry Cole, the illustrator of *Honk!* Help students formulate their own questions for the author and illustrator. Encourage them to send their questions and comments to Edwards and Cole at the following address:

**Pamela Duncan Edwards and Henry Cole**  
c/o Hyperion Books for Children  
114 Fifth Avenue  
New York, NY 10011-5690

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## Resources

### Big Books by Sebastian Swan Website

[www.naturegrid.org.uk/infant/bigbook.html](http://www.naturegrid.org.uk/infant/bigbook.html)

Interactive stories about swans that beginning readers can read on their own.

### Disney Educational Productions

[www.Education.Disney.com](http://www.Education.Disney.com)

Additional information, including books, videos, and Web links.

### National Education Technology Standards Project

[www.cnets.iste.org/index2.html](http://www.cnets.iste.org/index2.html)

(Scroll to Search Lessons. Pull down Awesome Authors.)

Crossley-Holland, Kevin, *The Ugly Duckling*; illustrated by Meilo So (Alfred A. Knopf, 2001).

Edwards, Pamela Duncan, *Dinorella: A Prehistoric Fairy Tale*; illustrated by Henry Cole (Hyperion Books for Children, 1999).