The Peacock and the Crane

By Brenda B. Covert

The peacock often strutted through the park, admiring its reflection in the ornate park fountains and displaying its fine feathers for all to see. Its tail was a colorful fan in shades of gold, blue, and green. The peacock was very proud of its tail and often fanned it out to show off the intriguing eye markings at the tips of each feather.

"I am the most beautiful of birds," the peacock said importantly. "In fact, I think it's fair to say that I am the most beautiful creature that ever lived!"

Remarks like that hurt the feelings of some park animals. The peacock's bragging made them feel second-rate. Other animals just felt that the boastful bird was a nuisance to be ignored.

The crane was one bird that always ignored the peacock. It went about its business as if the peacock were not in the area. This annoyed the peacock. The crane had no right to treat him with such disrespect!

The peacock decided to confront the crane to set things right. The bird waited behind a clump of bushes. As soon as the crane came along, the peacock stepped out to block its path and fanned its tail feathers.

Looking down its beak, the peacock said, "Look at me, crane! I am dressed in royal colors fit for a king! You are just the pale gray color of ashes. You should bow to me, you inferior being."

"How ridiculous," replied the crane. "Your feathers may be wonderful to see, but what good is beauty if you don't have the manners to go with it? While you strut around like a rooster and puff out your chest and gloat about your feathers, they hold you to the ground. My feathers carry me to the skies and allow me to sing to the stars. I would not change places with you for one minute."

Fine feathers don't make fine birds.

Questions

1. Which word best describes the peacock?
   A. proud
   B. compassionate
   C. humble
   D. curious

2. Which word best describes the crane?
   A. proud
   B. morbid
   C. stranded
   D. candid

3. The animals that were hurt by the peacock's remarks may have had ______.
   A. long lifespans
   B. brown fur
   C. low self-esteem
   D. self-confidence

4. Why did the crane compare the peacock to a rooster?
   A. Both strut while neither can fly very far.
   B. They are both colorful barnyard birds.
   C. The peacock's tail is much longer than a rooster's.
   D. Both admire themselves in pools of water.
5. Which of these did the peacock want for itself but never gave others?
A. royal robes
B. answers
C. respect
D. money

6. What were the crane's feathers compared to?
A. ashes
B. soot
C. overcast skies
D. cold steel

7. What is more important to the crane than beauty?
A. ability
B. wealth
C. power
D. friendship

8. What lesson did Aesop want to teach with this story?
A. Peacocks should give humility a chance.
B. Looks are everything.
C. How one behaves is more important than how one looks.
D. Birds experience feelings of jealousy.

Write an essay about the saying "Fine feathers don't make fine birds." State whether you agree or disagree with this statement, and follow with three examples to support your opinion.
Using as your title the saying "Fine feathers don't make fine birds," write a poem of 8-12 lines. Your poem may be serious or humorous.