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MEET THE BIRD
Feathers

TERMS TO KNOW
feather..........................structure made of a shaft, vane, barbs, and barbules; designed to help birds fly and keep them warm and dry
contour feathers ......the feathers that form the outer shape of a bird
down feathers ..........soft feathers that are found under contour feathers
bristles......................hair-like feathers found near the eyes and mouths of a bird

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS
1. What sets birds apart from all other creatures?  Birds are the only creatures that possess feathers.
2. What is the purpose of contour feathers?  Contour feathers protect the bird and help it fly.
3. Describe the difference between flight contour feathers and body contour feathers.  Flight contour feathers are longer, with stiff shafts, while body contour feathers are shorter and softer.
4. What kind of feathers fill the space between contour feathers and down feathers?  Semiplumes fill the space.
5. What is the purpose of down feathers?  Down feathers provide insulation for the bird.
7. What are the two ways that birds can get their coloring?  Birds either have naturally colored feathers, or they get their color from their feather structure.
8. Compare true pigment and reflected light.  True pigments, like reds and yellows, occur naturally. Reflected light on prismlike feathers gives the illusion of colors, like greens and blues, even though they do not occur naturally.
9. Describe the difference between recognizing and identifying a bird.  Recognizing a bird is little more than looking at it, while identifying a bird means being able to name it.
10. What are the four basic features of birds to look for when observing?  Look at the bird’s color, shape, size, and behavior.
LABEL THE PARTS OF THE FEATHER

A bird’s feather consists of a shaft, vane, barbs, and barbules.

BIRD FACTS

Common Grackle (Page 48)

Bird Family: Blackbirds
Habitat: swamps and meadows
Call or Song: “kerk”
Distinguishing Characteristic: They have sleek purple heads and long, wedge-shaped tails.

European Starling (Page 49)

Bird Family: Starling
Habitat: everywhere
Call or Song: sounds like humans talking; imitates other birds
Distinguishing Characteristic: They were brought over from Europe. They nest in colonies on or around buildings.