

My Duck Beat the Flock!

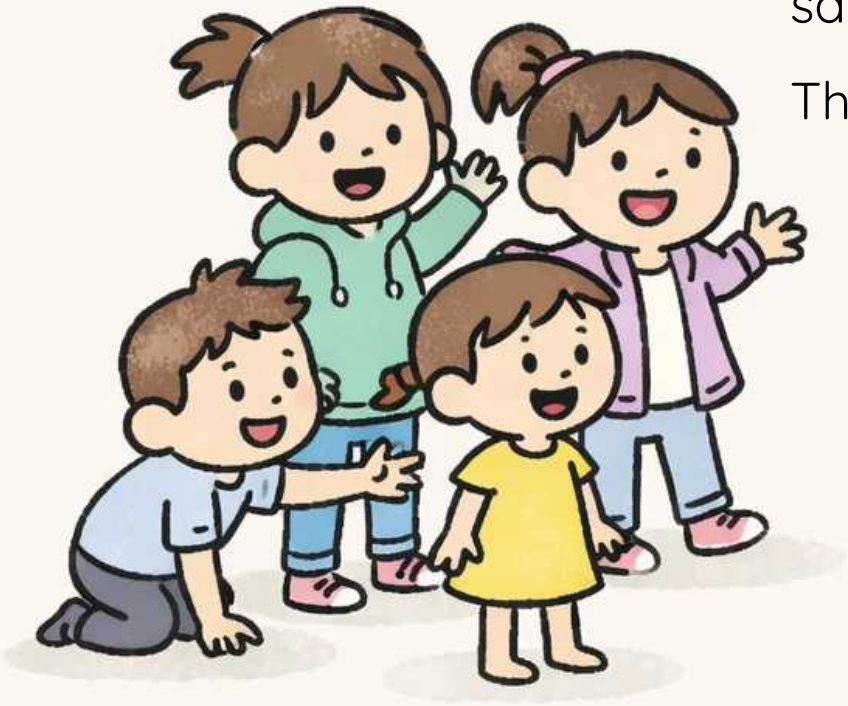


'This,' said Jen, holding up her duck, 'is the fastest duck in town.' Duck spread its wings and puffed out its chest, proud as can be. Meg leaned in for a closer look. Ben bent down and squinted hard. Liv tilted her head sideways. 'That duck?' said Ben. 'It shows no **sign** of being fast at all.'



'Just watch this,' said Jen. Duck flapped. Duck kicked hard. Duck wiggled and wobbled and lifted one whole foot off the ground. Then the other foot too. Then it hung in the air like a fluffy balloon that someone had let go of.

Liv's mouth fell open so wide a **gnat** could fly right in. Ben pointed. Even Meg bit her lip. 'See?' said Jen. 'Flying!' 'That,' said Ben, 'is not flying. That is falling. Very slowly.'





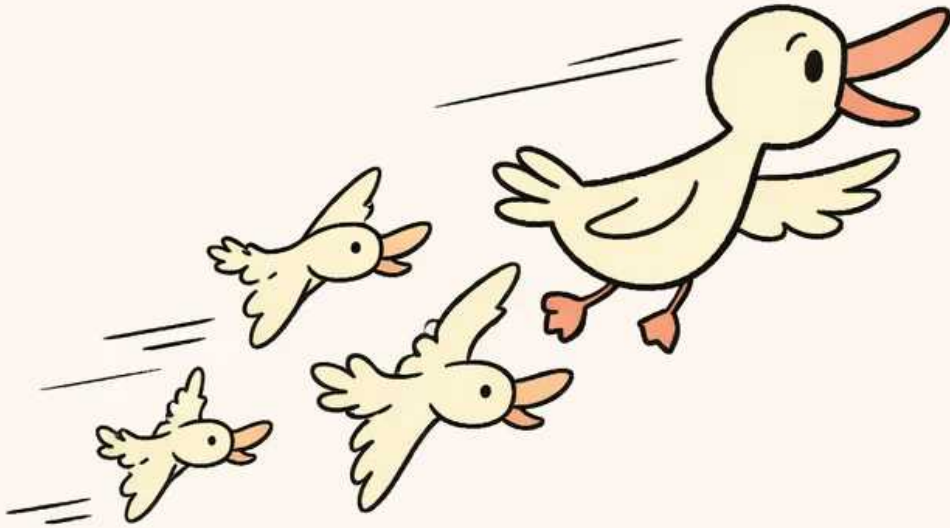
But Jen didn't listen to Ben. Every single morning, she and Duck ran the hills together. Jen sprinted hard. Duck sprinted harder, wings out, beak open, honking like a tiny feathery trumpet.

They raced up the slopes. They raced down the slopes. They raced until Jen's legs burned and Duck's little feet were a blur. There were no **signs** of slowing down. 'Faster!' Jen panted. 'The Big Flock Race is on Saturday!'

Saturday came at last. Jen rubbed Duck gently on the neck, the way she always did before something big. Duck closed its eyes and stood perfectly still. 'You can do this,' Jen whispered. 'You're faster than you look. Way faster than you look.' She had **signed** Duck up to race the whole flock, and now the moment was here.

Behind them, Ben waved his arms in the air. 'Hey, everyone! Jen thinks her wobbly duck is going to beat the whole flock!' Meg and Liv giggled.

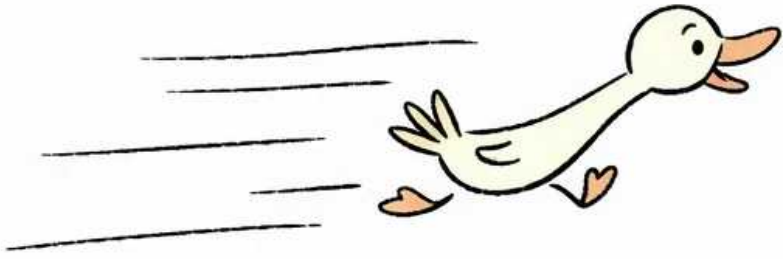




The starting horn blew loud and sharp. A flock of sleek racing ducks **aligned** in the sky and shot off like arrows. But Duck didn't stay behind the pack. Wings pumping, beak pointing forward, Duck blasted out ahead of them all.



'Go, Duck, go!' Jen screamed, her arms stretched wide open. The other children screamed right along with her. Because something very strange was happening. Something nobody in the crowd had expected at all. Duck was in the lead.



Duck didn't just catch the flock. Duck passed the flock. One duck. Two ducks. Five ducks. Ten whole ducks. Duck zipped past them all like they were standing still in the air.

'No. Way.' Ben's jaw dropped open. Jen punched the air and pointed up at the sky. 'That's my duck!' The whole crowd was on their feet now, cheering, pointing, screaming. The wobblest duck in town **reigned** over the sky.



Duck crossed the finish line so far ahead, the other birds weren't even close. Jen jumped so high she nearly flew herself. The whole crowd went wild with joy.

Bright **signs** and banners waved everywhere you looked. Someone honked a loud horn. Kids she had never even met were chanting her duck's name, 'Duck! Duck! Duck!' Ben just stood there, blinking and shaking his head. 'But... but it could barely get off the ground,' he whispered to himself.





Jen scooped Duck into the biggest hug of its life. Meg rushed over, laughing, reaching out to pat the champion. Liv cheered with her hand high in the air. Ben pumped his fist and grinned the biggest grin of all.

'Okay,' he said at last. 'Okay. That duck is fast.' He had **resigned** himself to being completely wrong about the whole thing. Jen squeezed Duck tight and whispered, 'Told you so, buddy.' And Duck burped.



My Duck Beat the Flock!

Jen says her wobbly duck is the fastest in town - but can a duck that barely lifts off the ground really beat a whole flock of sleek racers? When the Big Flock Race begins and the starting horn blows, will Jen's feathery friend flap into glory or flop in front of the giggling crowd? This decodable reader practices the gn phonogram in words like 'sign,' 'gnat,' 'reigned,' and 'resigned.'

Reading Skills: <gn>

aligned, gnat, reigned, resigned, sign, signed, signs

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