

The Girl and the Peacock



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Maya lived in a small house with a red roof at the edge of town. Every morning, she pulled on her yellow rain boots and blue overalls. She grabbed her green satchel and tucked a red pencil behind her ear. Then she ran to the garden to see her friend, Raja the peacock. Raja had a bright blue neck and a fan-shaped crest. Maya thought he was the most wonderful bird in the world.



Raja was a proud peacock with a long train of shimmering green and gold feathers. Each feather had a blue eyespot that looked like a tiny eye. Maya sat very still on a flat rock and opened her notebook. She wrote down everything Raja did. She drew his crest and his white eye patches. 'You are so beautiful,' she whispered. Raja shook his feathers, and the colors seemed to dance.



One sunny morning, Raja spread his feathers into a giant fan. The fan was wider than Maya's arms could reach. He shook his train, and the shiny colors flickered like sunlight on water. Maya gasped. 'Why do you do that?' she asked. Raja did not answer, but he shook his feathers again. Maya wrote in her notebook: 'Raja makes a fan and shakes it.'



Day after day, Maya watched Raja. She noticed he spread his fan most often when other peacocks were near. She saw him shake his feathers and turn his head from side to side. 'Are you talking to them?' she wondered. She drew a picture of Raja with his fan wide open. Under it, she wrote: 'Why does Raja show off?'



Maya decided to find out. She watched Raja every morning and every afternoon. She wrote down what he ate and where he walked. She counted how many times he shook his feathers. She drew his eyespots in blue and green and gold. Her notebook filled with notes and pictures. 'One day, I will know your secret,' she told Raja.



Maya's teacher, Ms. Carter, noticed her notebook. Ms. Carter had short silver-streaked hair and round glasses. She wore a teal cardigan and a wooden bead necklace. 'You have been working hard,' Ms. Carter said. 'Would you like to share your findings with the class?' Maya's eyes grew wide. 'A science presentation?' she asked. Ms. Carter nodded and smiled.



Maya was excited and a little nervous. She read books about peacocks and asked questions. She learned that peacocks are male birds called peafowl. The females are called peahens. She read that a peacock's fan is made of long feathers called a train. 'So that's why his feathers are so long,' she said. She wrote everything down in her notebook.



Maya learned that Raja's beautiful fan is a way to show off. He spreads his feathers to look big and strong. He shakes them to make the colors shine. This tells other peacocks, 'Here I am!' It is his way of talking without words. Maya drew a big fan and wrote: 'Raja shows off to say hello.' She could not wait to share.



Maya practiced her presentation in front of her mirror. She held up her drawings and spoke in a clear voice. 'Raja is a peacock,' she said. 'He spreads his feathers to show off. This is how he talks to other peacocks.' She added, 'Animal behavior has fascinating purposes.' Her little brother clapped. Maya felt proud of her work.



The night before the presentation, Maya could not sleep. She worried that her classmates might not like her talk. She looked out her window and saw Raja sleeping on his perch. His long train hung down like a shiny curtain. 'You are brave,' she whispered. 'I can be brave too.' She hugged her notebook and fell asleep.



The next morning, Maya wore her blue overalls and her yellow boots. She carried her notebook and a big poster board covered with her drawings. Ms. Carter helped her set up the board at the front of the classroom. 'You are ready,' Ms. Carter said. Maya took a deep breath and smiled her gap-toothed smile. She held her red pencil like a pointer.



Maya began to speak. 'This is Raja,' she said, pointing to her first drawing. 'He is a peacock. I watched him every day.' She showed a picture of Raja's fan and explained how he shakes his feathers. 'The shiny colors dance,' she said. 'He does this to show off and talk to other peacocks.' Her classmates leaned forward, listening.



Maya showed her notes and drawings of Raja's eyespots. 'Each feather has a blue eye,' she said. 'When he shakes, the colors catch the light.' She explained that the fan tells other peacocks he is strong and healthy. 'Animal behavior has fascinating purposes,' she said. 'Even a peacock's dance is a kind of science.' The class cheered and clapped.



Ms. Carter gave Maya a big hug. 'You did a wonderful job,' she said. Maya's cheeks turned pink with happiness. Her classmates asked questions, and Maya answered them all. She felt like a real scientist. 'I want to watch other animals now,' she said. Ms. Carter laughed. 'That is the spirit of science,' she said.



After school, Maya ran home to see Raja. He was spreading his fan again, and the colors danced in the sun. 'You helped me learn,' she told him. 'Your dance has a purpose.' Raja shook his feathers as if to say, 'You're welcome.' Maya sat on her flat rock and opened her notebook. She drew Raja one more time, with his fan wide and bright.



Maya learned that even the showiest animals have reasons for what they do. A peacock's dance is not just pretty—it is how he talks to other peacocks. She learned that watching closely and asking questions can lead to wonderful discoveries. And she learned that sharing what you learn can make your whole class cheer. Maya smiled and wrote in her notebook: 'Every animal has a story.'