



# “The Pancake Heist”

## Teacher Guide



SEASON 4 EPISODE 7

### The Pancake Heist

by a 10 year-old from Pennsylvania named Fiona

### Overview

In the story “The Pancake Heist” by a kid from Pennsylvania named Fiona, Sean the Squirrel and his friends stage an epic heist to try to steal some pancakes that are cooling on a window sill. The couple that made the pancakes has a squirrel-proof bird feeder, squirrel-proof gutters, and a squirrel proof window sill, but it’s no match for the squirrels! Though the story is fiction, a quick internet search on “squirrel proofing” shows that the problem of squirrels stealing food is very real. Clearly, there need to be some better, more creative squirrel-proof inventions to stop those furry bandits from stealing our food. This lesson takes inspiration from the story and challenges students to use their imagination and persuasive skills to create and pitch their own squirrel-proof invention. Students will identify an object that needs to be squirrel-proofed, draw a new invention that will do the job, and then write a short persuasive pitch trying to sell that invention to readers.

### Age Group

Best for 1st through 3rd grade readers and writers.

[storypiratescreatorclub.com](http://storypiratescreatorclub.com)

## Common Core Standards

For simplicity, here are relevant 3rd grade standards; similar ones for 1st and 2nd apply.

1. [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.2](#) Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
2. [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.2.a](#) Introduce a topic and group related information together; include illustrations when useful to aiding comprehension.
3. [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3.4](#) Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace.

## National Science Standards:

The following National Science Standards apply to K-2nd Grade; similar ones for 3rd apply

1. [K-2-ETS1-1](#). Ask questions, make observations, and gather information about a situation people want to change to define a simple problem that can be solved through the development of a new or improved object or tool.
2. [K-2-ETS1-2](#). Develop a simple sketch, drawing, or physical model to illustrate how the shape of an object helps it function as needed to solve a given problem.
3. [K-2-ETS1-3](#). Analyze data from tests of two objects designed to solve the same problem to compare the strengths and weaknesses of how each performs.

## Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify a problem that needs to be solved
- Design an invention to help solve that problem
- Write a short “pitch” to persuade others to buy their product

## Materials

1. Story Pirates Podcast: Season 4 Episode 7 (story at approximately 23:00)
2. Invention Pitch Guide
3. Blank paper and pencils or markers to draw with
4. Writer’s Notebook or other place to write down ideas

## Activity Steps

### 1. Intro:

Introduce the lesson to your students with a short discussion.

- **Do Now/Writer's Notebook:** Ask students to think about and respond to the following question:
  - *What are some ways that humans prevent animals from getting to our food? Can you think of any objects humans have invented to keep certain animals out?*
- **Share:** Have students share some of their responses.
  - They may mention things like trash cans, traps, or even locked front doors
- **Connect:** There are many ways humans use their brains to stay happy and healthy. One of the ways is protecting things we need such as food and water. These things are called resources and we need to protect them in order to survive. But other animals can be pretty smart, too. Today we are going to listen to a story about some pretty smart animals who try to steal a food resource--some pancakes! Then we will use our imaginations to come up with brand new inventions to solve the problem of animals stealing food.

### 2. Play the Story:

“The Pancake Heist” by a kid from Pennsylvania named Fiona. The story is at around the 23:00 mark on the episode.

- **Introduce the story to students:** Let's listen to a story from the Story Pirates Podcast called “The Pancake Heist” by a kid from Pennsylvania named Fiona. A “heist” is a complicated plan to steal something. As you can tell from the title, this story is about some characters trying to steal pancakes. I think you'll be surprised what kind of characters they are!
- **Active Listening:** Encourage active listening by asking students to signal in a way they are familiar with (like silent applause) every time they hear the musical phrase “Pancake Heist” during the story.
- **Play the story:** Play the story for students.

### 3. Check for Understanding:

After listening, you might ask your students some questions.

- **Discuss:** What was the problem the humans had? What were the squirrels trying to do?
  - *Squirrels were trying to get their food. The squirrels were trying to steal the pancakes from their window sill!*
- **Explain:** Part of what makes this story so silly and fun is that the squirrels were so smart, and all of the squirrel-proof things didn't keep them out! Our project for today is to get creative and design a squirrel-proof product that would actually work to keep squirrels away from our food. We are going to draw our brand new invention, and then write a short “pitch” to persuade others to buy our invention!

#### 4. MiniLesson: Problem and Product

- **Explain:** One way humans adapt and respond to our environments is by making things to protect us and our food from other animals. Sometimes these things are simple, like a garbage can, but sometimes they can be more complicated. Today we have Permission to Get Weird, and we can design inventions using our imaginations.
- **Define an invention:** an invention is something that a human makes to solve a problem. In this case, we are coming up with inventions that solve the problem of squirrels stealing food.
- **Invention Process:** To create a good invention, you need to follow a few steps:
  - *Pick a Problem:* The first step to coming up with a great invention is to think of a problem to be solved. Our problem is squirrels stealing food, but we need to decide where the food is located, so we can think of an invention to protect it.
  - *Think of how to solve the problem, and draw your solution:* Once we have a clear idea of the problem, we can start to draw an invention that we think will help to solve the problem. As we draw, we will label our invention, including the different parts and what they do, so that it is clear to the reader how it works.
  - *Name your invention!:* A good invention needs a snappy name, so that will be our next step.
  - *Pitch your invention:* Finally, once we have thought of the invention, we will write a short pitch that will present our invention to the class and persuade them that it will work!

#### 5. Group Practice: “We Do”: Making a class example invention

As a class, use the steps outlined above to create a group example invention.

- **Step 1:** Pick a Problem:
  - Ask students for a squirrel-related problem. If you would like, you can use the example from the story: squirrels are trying to steal pancakes from the windowsill. You could also use the classic problem of squirrels stealing produce from a garden, or bird food from a bird feeder. Or, you could think of something even weirder!
- **Step 2:** Think of how to solve the problem, and draw your solution.
  - Once you have come up with the problem, draw the thing you want to protect from the squirrels on a sheet of paper or up on the board.
    - For example, you could draw a plate of pancakes sitting on a windowsill
  - Then, ask students: How are we going to protect this food?
    - STEM Integration: If you and your students have studied simple machines, this could be a great opportunity to incorporate some of those objects into the invention. Pulleys, levers, and wheels could definitely be useful in the fight against squirrels! See note at the end of the lesson for more ideas.
  - As you get ideas from students, begin to draw the parts of the invention around the food, and label your drawing as you go.

- At every step, ask students what the invention part is and how it helps solve the problem.
- **Step 3:** Name your invention.
  - Ask students for a name for your invention! Feel free to get creative and make up words. You may even want to get a few ideas from students and then vote on your favorite.
- **Step 4:** Pitch your invention!
  - You can use the Invention Pitch Guide format and fill in the relevant details to create a persuasive pitch for your invention.
    - The Invention Pitch Guide provides a framework for the details you have already come up with. Students can fill it in with their ideas to create a ready-made sales pitch.

## 6. Independent Practice: “You Do”

Have students follow steps 1-4 above to create an invention and prepare their pitch.

## 7. Sharing: Pitch your invention!

- **Pitch to the class:** Have students pitch their inventions to the class by showing their drawings and reading their pitches from their Invention Pitch Guides.
- **Persuasive Presentation:** Encourage students to embrace performance elements:
  - *Voice:* Use a strong, confident voice to sell your invention!
  - *Details:* Point out details on your drawing so others can see your ideas
  - *Explanation:* Be sure to explain how your invention solves the problem

## STEM integration: Simple Machines

- You can integrate science content into this lesson by accompanying your brainstorm with a review of simple machines:
  - Lever
  - Screw
  - Inclined Plane
  - Wedge
  - Pulley
  - Wheel and Axle
- **Group Example:** when making a group example, see how many simple machines you can incorporate into your invention.
- **Student Challenge:** Label the simple machines 1-6 and have students roll a die to select a simple machine to incorporate into their invention. Have them add an explanation of how the machine helped to make their invention work as part of their pitch.

## **Extension Activity: Squirrel Videos**

- You can do an internet search for “perfect squirrel proof bird feeder” or “squirrel obstacle course” to see video examples of the elaborate constructions engineers have made to do humane battle with squirrels in their yards
  - Watch the videos and have students explain how the different parts of the inventions worked
  - Have students explain anything they would change about the inventions. You could also ask them to think creatively and imagine what the invention would have too look like if the food were in a different place (i.e. inside a house) or if it were a different kind of food!

# Invention Pitch Guide:

Use this guide to help you write the pitch for your invention.

## 1. Explain what problem your invention solves:

“Do you struggle with \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_?”

## 2. Say the name of your invention:

“Introducing the \_\_\_\_\_!”

## 3. Explain how it solves the problem. Be sure to describe and point out any parts you labeled on your drawing.

“It works by \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ . Buy it today!”