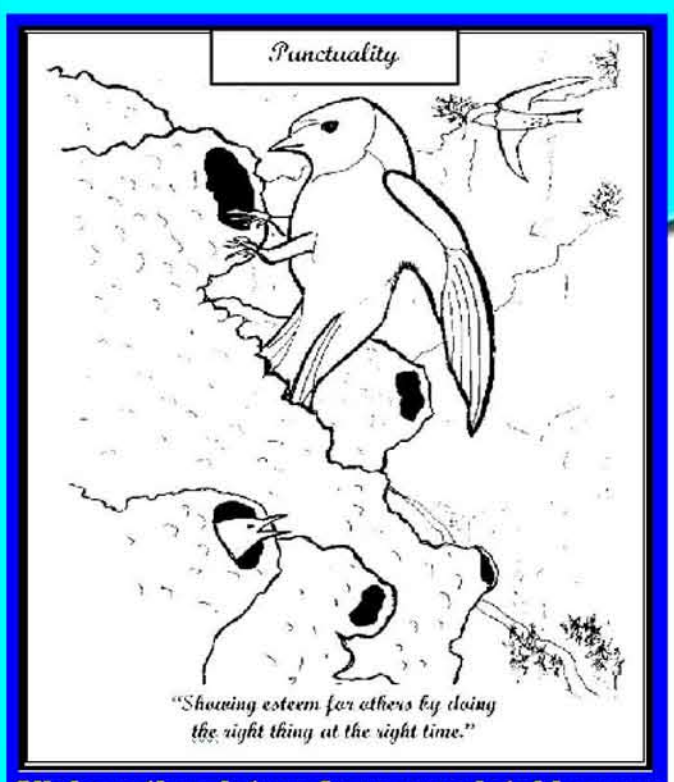
Just for Kids!



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Craft - Make a Cliff Swallow Nest

You will need:
-a 6-egg cardboard egg carton (or cut a 12-egg one in half)
-yellow construction paper
-contrast color construction paper
-glue and scissors

1. cut the ends off the egg containers so that the hole is about 1 inch across (get a parent to help!)
2. Cut 12 triangles 1 inch by 1 ¼ inch and fold each, matching the long sides. Fit and glue two together at the wide end to make bird beaks.
3. Glue the beaks so that they face outward from the egg cups.
4. Glue the 'nest' onto the contrast color paper and write above it: "I will be on time."

Punctuality in Nature

The calendar hung in the kitchen near the phone. One day in particular stood out because of the red circle around it indicating its significance. Each time the calendar caught her eye, a smile would emerge and a twinkle would come into her eyes. As the day approached, she would search through the gift section in stores hoping to find something that would best express the importance of that day. Before long, the gift was purchased and lovingly wrapped with a beautiful card containing her special message.

In a different part of the country, the same date, March 19th was circled on another calendar. Both people were anticipating the same day, but for very different reasons. This other calendar hung in the City Hall of a southern California town. The mayor smiled as he leaned back in his chair and imagined the excitement that would fill his community when March 19th arrived.

Plans were underway as local officials and blue ribbon committees met to organize and make plans for the celebrations. Banners were hung across the main streets and posters decorated storefronts announcing the festivities planned for the 19th.

With confidence, the young lady looked forward to the return of her loved-one and the happiness they would share as March 19th approached, not knowing that this date marked two very important arrivals.

The residents of the small western town were also confident that their guests would arrive on time.

However, one small detail remained. None of the expected guests possessed a calendar to remind them that they were expected somewhere on March 19th.

The first guest was a young man, who, after being away on a business trip for several weeks, was looking forward to being reunited to his wife. They had never been apart for more than a few days before. March 19th was their 5th wedding anniversary. During the last weeks, the young man had been busy with meetings and had accidentally left his calendar behind. Not being sure where he had last seen his calendar, he quickly made a list of all the upcoming appointments and meetings to be attended during his trip. All of his important meetings except the one on the 19th.

He and his wife stayed in touch each day, but he never mentioned their upcoming anniversary or any special plans. Feeling embarrassed to remind him, his wife kept this concern to herself.

The other guests were cliff swallows. This flock of birds had no calendar to remind them of all the people making plans for a special reunion. They were, however, very busy– busy catching freshly hatched mosquitoes and other juicy insects. One swallow could devour 1,000 insects in just one day!

Moving from their winter territory in South America, each day the swallows would gradually move farther north, skillfully catching more insects. For many, this marked their first migration. The swallows did not concern themselves with where they were going or why.

As the hungry swallows ate, the insects would dwindle and the swallows would be forced to move farther north through Central America, then Mexico, and then across the border into the United States. Not a single bird in the flock was aware of the significance of March 19th.

Finally the day had come! Enthusiastically, thousands of people gathered in San Juan Capistrano, California. Many carried binoculars and cameras hoping to get a glimpse of these famous guests. Waiting with anticipation, all eyes studied the skies.

Suddenly shouts rang out. All eyes strained upward waiting for the first sighting of these distinguished guests who had arrived on the very day they were expected. The punctual cliff swallows had arrived "on time!" The cliff swallows have been arriving in this place long before it was known as San Juan Capistrano. They come to build nests each year, always arriving within 24 hours of March 19th.

At the same time each year the seasons change due to the tilt of the earth's axis. The swallows follow the predictable hatching of insects brought about by the change of seasons without the aid of a calendar or clock to remind them. These hatchings, triggered by rising temperatures, cause the swallows to arrive "on time" each year.

March 19th also arrived for the loving wife. All day long she anticipated the sound of the car pulling into the driveway marking the return of her devoted husband. At last, the headlights of the car swept across the front of the house as he pulled in. Without hesitating, she ran to meet him in the driveway. Throwing her arms around him they embraced each other. March 19th had finally arrived!

Hand in hand they walked into the kitchen. He noticed the calendar hanging near the phone with the big red circle around one day in particular. Looking into her eyes, he inquired, "What day is today?" Upon hearing the question, her hand fell from his and she met his gaze. Had he forgotten? Had he been too busy to remember their wedding anniversary?

She smiled boldly and pulled the carefully wrapped gift from her pocket. With a slight delay, he too pulled out a red velvet box. He had remembered! Long before losing his calendar, he had prepared for this day. She was not let down after all.

Be punctual. Be prompt, on time, prepared for unexpected delays. Remember the cliff swallow. And above all, don't forget a birthday or anniversary!