

Two Stories About Flying

Part I. His First Flight

Introduction

This story has been written by Liam O' Flaherty. It depicts the journey of a young seagull as he learns to fly.

Summary

This is a story of a young seagull. The time had come when he must learn to fly. His two brothers and his little sister had already learnt how to fly by imitating their parents. They had simply run to the brink of the ledge, flapped off their wings and flown away. But, when the young seagull came to the brink and tried to fly in the air, he became afraid. He felt sure that if he tried to fly, he would fall into the sea below. So, he ran back to his hole under the ledge. His parents came to take him along with them. But he refused to fly. They threatened that he would starve on the ledge. But the young seagull was too afraid to move. His parents then left him. Twenty-four hours had passed since then. The young seagull had not eaten anything. He began to feel very hungry. He slowly came to the brink of the ledge and saw his family on the big plateau midway down the opposite cliff. His brothers and sister were lying on the plateau dozing, his father was preening his feathers and his mother was tearing at a piece of fish and was looking at him. He pleaded his mother to give him some food. His mother looked at him derisively. But the next moment, she picked up a piece of fish and flew towards him. However, when she was just opposite to him, she halted, her wings motionless, the piece of fish in her beak. The young seagull waited for a moment but then he could not bear it any longer. He was desperately hungry. He dived at the fish. He could not reach near to his mother but fell from the ledge downwards into space. He was filled with fear and cried. But this fear lasted only a minute. He spread his wings and flew. He cried with joy and started flying higher and higher. His parents, brothers and sister flew around him. They were all happy. After a while the seagull's parents, brothers and sister landed on the sea. They beckoned him to come there. He tried to stand on the sea, but his legs sank into it and he was frightened. But, his belly touched the water and he did not drown. He began to float on the sea. His family members praised him and gave him pieces of fish to eat. The seagull had made his first flight.

Message

This story conveys the message that to progress in life we have to overcome our fears and one should trust one's abilities because 'the fear of suffering is worse than the suffering itself'.

Extract Based Questions ↘

1. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:

He felt certain that his wings would never support him; so he bent his head and ran away back to the little hole under the ledge where he slept at night. Even when each of his brothers and his little sister, whose wings were far shorter than his own, ran to the brink, flapped their wings and flew away, he failed to muster up courage to take that plunge which appeared to him so desperate.

(a) The wings of his little sister were:

- (i) larger than his wings
- (ii) shorter than his wings
- (iii) same as his wings
- (iv) None of the above

(b) The young seagull felt assured

(c) The seagull's brothers and sister:

- (i) were learning to fly
- (ii) were afraid to fly
- (iii) had already learnt to fly
- (iv) None of the above

(d) What did the young seagull fail to do?

Answers

- (a) (ii) shorter than his wings
 - (b) that his wings would never support him.
 - (c) (iii) had already learnt to fly
 - (d) The young seagull failed to muster up courage to take that plunge which appeared to him so desperate.
2. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:
- He stepped slowly out to the brink of the ledge and standing on one leg with the other leg hidden under his wing, he closed one eye, then the other and pretended to be falling asleep. Still they took no notice of him. He saw his two brothers and his sister lying on the plateau dozing with their heads sunk into their necks. His father was preening the feathers on his white back. Only his mother was looking at him. She was standing on a little high hump on the plateau, her white breast thrust forward. Now and again, she tore at a piece of fish that lay at her feet and then scrapped each side of her beak on the rock. The sight of the food maddened him.

- (a) What was the young seagull's mother doing?
 (b) State whether the given statement is True or False.
 The young seagull's father was scolding his siblings.
 (c) What maddened the young seagull?
 (d) Substitute the word 'brink' with one word similar in meaning in the following sentence:
 He stepped slowly out to the brink of the ledge

Answers

- (a) His mother was tearing a piece of fish.
 (b) False
 (c) The young seagull's mother was tearing a piece of fish that lay at her feet. The young seagull was hungry and the sight of the food maddened the young seagull.
 (d) edge

3. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:

His parents and his brothers and sister had landed on this green flooring ahead of him. They were beckoning to him, calling shrilly. He dropped his legs to stand on the green sea. His legs sank into it. He screamed with fright and attempted to rise again flapping his wings. But he was tired and weak with hunger and he could not rise, exhausted by the strange exercise. His feet sank into the green sea and then his belly touched it and he sank no farther. He was floating on it and around him his family was screaming, praising him and their beaks were offering him scraps of dog-fish.

- (a) His parents landed him.
 (i) behind (ii) beside
 (iii) ahead of (iv) beneath
 (b) Why did the young seagull cannot rise?
 (c) sank into the sea.
 (i) Young seagull
 (ii) His sister
 (iii) Young seagull's neck
 (iv) Young seagull's legs
 (d) Who were beckoning him?

Answers

- (a) (iii) ahead of
 (b) The young seagull tried hard and attempted to rise again flapping his wings, but he was tired and weak with hunger and he could not rise, exhausted by the strange exercise.
 (c) (iv) Young seagull's legs
 (d) His parents and his brothers and sister all were beckoning him.

Short Answer Type Questions

Q 1. Why was the young seagull afraid to fly?
 (CBSE 2019)

OR

Validate the given statement with reference to baby seagull's fear.

"Fear doesn't exist anywhere else other than one's mind".
 (CBSE SQP 2022-23)

Ans. Fear doesn't exist anywhere else other than in one's mind. This statement fits with condition of baby seagull who was capable of flying but feared that his wings will not support his body weight. It was mere his fear because when out of hunger he dared to leave his ledge, he succeeded to fly.

Q 2. Why was the young seagull afraid to fly? Do you think all young birds are afraid to make their first flight, or are some birds more timid than others? Do you think a human baby also finds it a challenge to take its first steps?

Ans. The young seagull was afraid to fly because he felt that his wings would not support him and he would fall in the vast sea below. I think there are some birds more timid than others but more or less almost all the young birds are afraid of making their first flight. I think a human baby also finds it a challenge to take its first steps.

Q 3. 'They were beckoning to him, calling shrilly.' Why did the seagull's father and mother threaten him and cajole him to fly?
 (CBSE 2020)

Ans. His father and mother were threatening and cajoling him to fly because they knew that the art of flying was important for the very existence of a bird. They knew that if the young seagull was not able to learn to fly then he would not be able to survive.

Q 4. While alone on ledge, how did the little seagull try to draw the attention of his family?

Ans. To draw the attention of his family, the little seagull stepped slowly out to the brink of the ledge and standing on one leg with the other leg hidden under his wing, he closed one eye, then the other and pretended to fall asleep.

Q 5. Why did the young seagull utter a joyful scream on seeing his mother?
 (CBSE 2016)

Ans. The young seagull had not eaten anything for the last twenty-four hours and he was extremely hungry. When he saw his mother tearing at a piece of fish, he cried out to her, begging her to bring him some food. Initially, his mother was derisive but he kept calling plaintively and was joyful when he saw his mother picking up a piece of fish and coming towards him.

Q 6. "Family played" a vital role in the first flight of the young seagull. Give examples to substantiate the above statement.
 (CBSE 2023)

Ans. To train the young seagull in the art of flying, the entire family helped out. His sister and brothers encouraged him to muster up courage and try to fly. His parents called out in a shrill voice, along with cajoling and scolding him in turn. Then, they threatened to let him starve. In an attempt to take food from his mother, he fell from the ledge; this fall compelled him to fly.

Q 7. Describe the young seagull's first flight. (CBSE 2023)

Ans. The young seagull was very hungry. So, he dived at the fish that was in his mother's beak. But he fell into space and became terribly afraid. His heart stood still. He could hear nothing. But it only lasted for a minute. The next moment he felt his wings spread outwards. He began to fly and was no longer afraid.

Q 8. In what way did the young seagull land on the green sea?

Ans. The young seagull's family had landed on the green floor of the sea. They were beckoning him to join them. He dropped his legs to stand on the green sea. His legs sank into it. He cried with fear and tried to rise up. But he was tired and hungry and hence couldn't rise. His belly touched the sea and he sank no further. He was floating on the sea.

Q 9. How did the young seagull's family celebrate his first flight? (CBSE 2018)

Ans. The family celebrated his first flight by screaming and praising him, and offering scraps of dog-fish to him. They were all very happy at his accomplishment.

Long Answer Type Questions

Q 1. How did the mother 'trick' the young seagull into flying?

OR

How did seagull's parents try to make him fly?

(CBSE 2019)

Ans. The young seagull had not eaten anything for the last twenty-four hours and he was extremely hungry. When he saw his mother tearing at a piece of fish, he cried out to her, begging her to bring him some food. Initially, his mother was derisive but he kept calling plaintively and was joyful when he saw his mother picking up a piece of fish and coming towards him. He leaned out eagerly, trying to get nearer to her as she flew across. But when his mother was just opposite to him, she halted. The young seagull waited for a while but when she did not come nearer, he dived at the fish. His mother pulled back and with a loud scream the seagull fell outwards and downwards into space. He was terrorised. But within a moment, he felt his wings open outwards and he was flying. In this way, he was tricked into flying by his mother.

Q 2. Have you ever experienced fear when your parents encouraged you to do something that you were too scared to try? (CBSE 2016)

Ans. Yes, I had a similar experience when my father took me to the swimming pool. He had brought me a swimming costume and asked me to at least try it. I had to change to please him. Then, he started swimming. He invited me to sit at

the edge and watch him. I liked and appreciated the way he was swimming. I wanted to swim like that but could not muster up enough courage. I thought my limbs were too weak for the purpose.

I smiled when my father looked at me. He came near. All of a sudden, he pulled me into the pool. I shouted and felt like drowning. My father asked me to keep my head above water and use my limbs as he was using while swimming. He held my hand to support me.

After a while, I was no more afraid of water. I liked swimming. I swam for half an hour and felt lighter. When I came out, my father patted me. I was happy at my achievement.

Q 3. Discuss the differences in the behaviour of the young seagull in the very beginning and at the end of the story.

Ans. We find a big difference in the behaviour of the young seagull in the very beginning and at the end of the story. In the beginning, the young seagull was afraid of flying. He did not have confidence. He thought that his wings would not support him at all and he would fall down in the sea below. His family made fun of his cowardice but then also he refused to fly. His brothers, sister and parents flew away from the ledge, even then he could not gather courage for flying. After this, his mother tricked him and he started flying. Initially, he thought that he would fall but then he felt his wings opening up and it dawned on him that he was actually flying. He screamed with joy. He was feeling it as a victory over his fear. He completely forgot that he had not always been able to fly and commended himself to dive and soar and curve. So, while in the beginning of the story he was afraid of flying, at the end of the story he was actually enjoying flying. His family was no longer making fun of him. Instead they were applauding him.

Q 4. 'His First Flight' represents a basic moral value of reaching one's goal and how to fight fear and hesitation. It also confirms the saying that God helps those, who help themselves. Write a paragraph on the necessity of these basic values to make life successful.

Ans. 'His First Flight' represents a basic moral value of how to achieve the goals of life. It also refers indirectly to the saying that, 'God helps those, who help themselves'. It is a fact that no one helps others unless they help themselves. The young seagull is terribly afraid of flying. Finally, his mother plays a trick and he flies. This leads us to the conclusion that fear and hesitation are great impediments towards success in life. If we hesitate or are fearful, then we

would never be successful in life. To succeed we have to overcome our fear and hesitation and take the first step. Only then God will help us to reach our goal. If we keep on procrastinating things out of fear or hesitation, then we can never reap the fruits of success.

Q 5. You have been asked to present an evaluation of the approaches of the mothers of both, the baby seagull and Amanda, towards helping their children. Write this presentation draft including your insights comparing the approaches of both parents.

You may begin this way:

One acknowledges that both parents, Amanda's mother and the baby seagull's mother both... however,...

(CBSE SQP 2023-24)

Ans. One acknowledges that both parents, Amanda's mother and the baby seagull's mother both want to help their children in their well-being however, their methods are different.

The baby seagull's mother believed that her son is capable of flying but afraid. She pushes him out of his comfort zone tries to motivate him to fly. To better her child's life, she even tricks him to fly and also offers him scraps of fish to reward him. On the other hand, Amanda's mother is a strict and critical figure who is presented as always correcting Amanda's behaviour, from her posture and habits to her academic performance and personal hygiene.

Here we see that the seagull's mother seems to be attuned to her child's needs and abilities and helps him to achieve his full potential. However, she does not take into account his fears and anxieties, which can be just as important to his well-being as his ability to fly. In contrast, Amanda's mother seems to be too focused on correcting her daughter's flaws and may not be paying enough attention to her strengths and abilities.

Even though both mothers have good intentions and want to better their children's lives, their methods, in part, may be misguided or ineffective.

Part II. Black Aeroplane

Introduction

This story has been written by Frederick Forsyth. It recounts the experience of a pilot who's plane is caught in a storm.

Summary

The author was flying his old Dakota aeroplane over France back to England. It was one-thirty in the morning. The moon was rising in the east behind him. The stars were shining in the clear sky. He was happy and was looking forward to being with his family. He called Paris Control and told them that he was on his way to England. The control room advised him to turn 12° west. He checked the map and the compass, switched over to his second and last fuel tank and turned the Dakota accordingly towards England. He thought that he would reach England by breakfast time. Paris was about 150 kilometres behind him. Suddenly, he saw black stormy clouds. They were huge. They looked like black mountains standing in front of him across the sky. He knew that he could not fly up and over them and he also knew that he did not have enough fuel to fly around them to the north or south. He thought that he should go back to Paris. But then he decided to take the risk because he did not want to miss his breakfast. He flew his old Dakota straight into the storm. It was dark outside the aeroplane. The old aeroplane jumped and twisted in the air. Its compass and radio went dead. He called Paris Control but in vain. He could not see where he was. He was lost in the storm. Then out of nowhere, he saw another aeroplane near him in the black clouds. It had no lights on its wings. But he could see the pilot's face who turned to him. He lifted one hand and waved. He motioned the author to follow him. He was trying to help the author. The author followed the strange Black Aeroplane. They flew half an hour in the clouds. Then, the strange aeroplane started to go down and the author followed him. Suddenly, the author came out of the clouds. He saw two long straight lines of lights in front of him. It was a runway! An airport! He was safe! The author turned to look for his friend in the Black Aeroplane, but there was no other aeroplane in the sky. The Black Aeroplane had gone. The author landed. He walked away from the old Dakota near the control tower. He went and asked a woman in the control centre about that other aeroplane. He wanted to thank him. She looked at him very strangely and then laughed and said, 'Another aeroplane? Up there in this storm? No other aeroplanes were flying tonight. Yours was the only one I could see on the radar.' The author had a number of unanswered questions.

Message

The story ends by creating suspense in the mind of the readers about the identity of the pilot of the strange Black Aeroplane. The author wants to convey the message that the manifestations of human mind can be quite powerful and can guide us through troubled times.

Extract Based Questions

1. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:

Inside the clouds, everything was suddenly black. It was impossible to see anything outside the aeroplane. The old aeroplane jumped and twisted in the air. I looked at the compass. I couldn't believe my eyes: the compass was turning round and round and round. It was dead. It would not work. The other instruments were suddenly dead, too. I tried the radio. "Paris Control? Paris Control? Can you hear me?" There was no answer. The radio was dead too. I had no radio, no compass, and I could not see where I was. I was lost in the storm. (CBSE 2023)

- (a) As soon as the pilot was inside the cloud
- (i) his ears got blocked
 - (ii) he choked with fear
 - (iii) his vision was obstructed
 - (iv) he was jumping up and down
- (b) The devices in the aeroplane were
- (i) malfunctioning
 - (ii) broken completely
 - (iii) giving wrong readings
 - (iv) stopped responding completely
- (c) The Paris air control did not reply to the pilot's call because
- (d) Select the option that correctly captures the application of the word 'twisted' as used in the extract.
- (i) Ragini **twisted** Raghav's wrist.
 - (ii) Ragini **twisted** the story to suit the occasion
 - (iii) Ragini did not appreciate Raghav's **twisted** bent of mind.
 - (iv) Ragini matched the swimmer as he **twisted** twice in the air before diving into the water.
- (e) Fill in the blank with one word only:
- The narrator's comes through clearly when he sees the compass turning round and round.

Answers

- (a) (iii) his vision was obstructed
- (b) (iv) stopped responding completely
- (c) the radio was dead and he had lost the connection.
- (d) (iv) Ragini matched the swimmer as he twisted twice in the air before diving into the water.
- (e) astonishment

2. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:

She looked at me very strangely and then laughed. "Another aeroplane? Up there in this storm? No other aeroplanes were flying tonight. Yours was the only one I could see on the radar."

So who helped me to arrive there safely without a compass or a radio and without any more fuel in my tanks? Who was the pilot on the strange Black Aeroplane, flying in the storm, without lights?

- (a) Which plane was visible on the radar?
- (b) Why did the woman laugh?
- (c) Complete the analogy with a word from the text:
strangely : unusually :: securely :
- (d) State whether the given statement is True or False.
The woman looked at the pilot cheerfully.

Answers

- (a) The Dakota
- (b) It was storm outside and no other plane was flying outside except the Dakota. So, the woman laughed at the strange question of the pilot.
- (c) safely
- (d) False

Short Answer Type Questions

Q 1. "I'll take the risk." What is the risk? Why does the narrator take it? (CBSE 2023, 17)

Ans. The narrator took the risk of flying through the black clouds because he wanted to reach his home and meet his family. The desire to meet his family made him take the risk of flying in the dark stormy clouds.

Q 2. Why did the pilot think of going back to Paris? (CBSE 2019)

Ans. The pilot encountered huge black storm clouds standing in front of him across the sky. He did not have enough fuel to fly around the clouds. Therefore, he thought of going back to Paris.

Q 3. Describe the narrator's experience as he flew the aeroplane into the storm. (CBSE 2016)

Ans. As the narrator flew his aeroplane into the storm, he found everything black. His old Dakota rolled and jumped in the air. The compass and other instruments stopped working. He was lost.

Q 4. Explain the statement: 'I was very happy to go behind the strange aeroplane like an obedient child.'

Ans. The statement means that the author followed the strange aeroplane like an obedient child, without asking any questions.

Q 5. Why is the Black Aeroplane called 'strange'?

Ans. The Black Aeroplane is called 'strange' because of many reasons. It suddenly appeared before the pilot of Dakota DS 088 aeroplane in the dark mysterious clouds. It had no lights on its wings. Then, it disappeared and there was no trace of it anywhere. The woman at the Control Centre also said that no other plane was visible on the radar during the storm.

Q 6. Why does the narrator say, 'I landed and was not sorry to walk away from the old Dakota...?'

Ans. The narrator has had a terrible experience flying his old Dakota across stormy clouds. It was only a miracle that he was able to land his plane safely on the runway. He felt relieved after making a safe landing. Therefore, he says that he was not sorry to walk away from the old Dakota.

Q 7. What did the narrator do after landing safely?

Ans. After landing on the runway safely, the narrator looked for his friend who saved his life, i.e., the pilot of the other aeroplane. But he could not find any one there. He wanted to thank the pilot. So, he went to the Control Centre and asked a lady there about the other aeroplane. But she told him there was no other aeroplane flying that night.

Q 8. What made the woman in the Control Centre look at the narrator strangely?

Ans. When the narrator asked the woman in the Control Centre who the other pilot was, she looked at the narrator strangely. She found the question to be absurd because she could only see narrator's aeroplane on the radar. She did not have any information about any other plane flying through that turbulent weather.

Long Answer Type Questions ↘

Q 1. What was the first thought of the narrator when he saw black clouds in the sky? What did he decide to do then?

Ans. One night, the narrator was on his way to England in his old Dakota aeroplane. He was very happy to think that he would soon meet his family. He then contacted the Paris control and they instructed him to turn twelve degrees west. He switched over to his second and last fuel tank and did as instructed. Suddenly, he saw huge black clouds in the sky. They looked like black mountains standing in front of him. He knew he could not fly up and over them and also he did not have enough fuel to fly around them to the north or the south. He did not want to go back to Paris. He was desperate to meet his family. So, he decided to take the risk to fly straight through the black stormy clouds.

Q 2. The pilot was lost in the storm clouds. How did he land safely? Explain in detail. (CBSE 2018)

OR

How did the pilot of Dakota save his life in the storm clouds?

Ans. The pilot of the old Dakota was lost in the black storm clouds. It was impossible to see anything in those clouds and his aeroplane jumped and twisted in the air. His radio and compass were also dead and he also could not connect to the control tower. Suddenly, he spotted another plane which had no light on its wings. The pilot of that black plane signalled the Dakota pilot to follow him. The Black Aeroplane turned towards the north and the Dakota pilot followed it. After about half an hour, when the Dakota pilot was left with fuel for just about ten minutes, the Black Aeroplane started moving down. The Dakota pilot followed it and finally came out of the clouds. Just ahead of him, he saw the lights of the runway. He landed his plane safely on the runway.

Q 3. Motivation plays an important role in taking risks in life and in succeeding. Do you agree? Discuss with reference to the pilot of the old Dakota and the young seagull. (CBSE 2023)

Ans. Yes, motivation plays an important role in taking risks in life and in succeeding. In the story, 'His First Flight', we see that the young seagull was afraid of flying. He was watching his family flying and playing around and eating. He was also hungry but nobody gave him any food. So because of his irresistible hunger when his mother was bringing him food but stopped near him, he jumped to grab that food and fell, and suddenly he realised that he was flying. It was his irresistible hunger that motivated the young seagull to have his first flight.

In the story 'Black Aeroplane', we see that the pilot wanted to have dinner and spend time with his family. So, when he saw dark clouds ahead, he didn't stop and risked his life. Because of his motivation, he saw an illusion of a black aeroplane which directed him towards his destination. Thus, here we see that he was motivated because he wanted to spend time with his family and he wanted that so badly that he didn't think about what can happen if he risks his life. So, yes, motivation plays an important role. ●