

I. His First Flight

Thinking about the Text (Page 36)

Question 1:

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?

Answer:

The young seagull was afraid to fly because it was his first flight, and he feared that he might fall and hurt himself. He thought that his wings would not support him while he attempted to make his first flight.

Yes, it's quite natural and obvious that doing something for the first time can be frightening and a bit challenging. Certainly, all birds must be afraid to make their first flight.

Likewise, a human baby is also afraid and finds it very challenging when it takes its first steps or when it learns to crawl or walk on its own without any support.

Question 2:

"The sight of the food maddened him." What does this suggest? What compelled the young seagull to fly finally?

Answer:

The young seagull failed to muster up the courage to make his first flight. His family constantly upbraided him to take the plunge, but to no avail. They let him stay on the ledge until he was ready to take the plunge. He was left there for more than twenty-four hours and was very hungry by then. Due to this hunger, he was ultimately compelled to fly. Furthermore, his hunger intensified when he saw his mother tearing at a piece of fish that was lying at her feet. He cried desperately, begging her to get some food for him. Seeing this, when his mother came towards him with food in her beak, the little seagull screamed with joy and anticipation. However, she stopped midway, and the young seagull wondered why she did not come closer to him. Maddened by hunger, he dived at the food in his mother's beak. At that moment, he fell outwards and downwards into the great expanse of sea beneath the cliff. He was terrified, and his heart stood still. But soon enough, he felt his wings spread outwards, and he realized that he could fly like others. Therefore, his hunger overpowered his fear, and he finally made his first flight joyfully.

Question 3:

"They were beckoning to him, calling shrilly." Why did the seagull's father and mother threaten him and cajole him to fly?

Answer:

The young seagull's parents were constantly beckoning him and he tried everything to make his first flight. However, he was very reluctant to take the plunge due to his fear of falling down from the cliff. He looked at his brothers and sister, who flew away, but he was hesitant to make any effort. Due to this reason, his whole family had left him alone on his ledge and threatened and persuaded him to fly, but all efforts went in vain.

Question 4:

Have you ever had a similar experience, where your parents encouraged you to do something that you were too scared to try? Discuss this in pairs or groups.

Answer:

Yes, I had a similar experience while trying to learn how to ride a bicycle when I was in the fourth standard. Initially, I found it difficult to balance myself and fell down often, which developed a fear of cycling in me. Unable to overcome the fear, I gave up cycling, but my parents would always cajole me to try and practise cycling whenever I get time. My father would hold the bicycle from behind to help me balance myself, but whenever he took off his hand, I would lose balance and fall down. Gradually as I practised every day, my cycling skills improved, and I could ride it without my father's support from behind. This also developed my confidence to a great extent. Thus, I overcame my fear of cycling and started riding the cycle confidently when I practised it daily. Now, I use a cycle while going to and coming from school every day.

(**Note:** Students can write this answer as per their personal experience.)

Question 5:

In the case of a bird flying, it seems a natural act, and a foregone conclusion that it should succeed. In the examples you have given in answer to the previous question, was your success guaranteed, or was it important for you to try, regardless of a possibility of failure?

Answer:

It is natural for everyone to face some problems initially while trying to learn or pick up a new skill. Many a time, due to the fear of failure, we are reluctant to perform a particular task or attempt something new. In the case of the seagull, his parents constantly cajoled him into flying. Similarly, when I was learning to ride a cycle for the first time, my father always persuaded me to learn to cycle. Hence, at that stage, it was important for me to overcome my fear and learn cycling for my own good.

Yes, my success was assured because if one is focused and determined to achieve something, then success is guaranteed. Moreover, we are all aware of the famous adage, "Practice makes a man perfect".

Speaking (Page 36)

Question:

We have just read about the first flight of a young seagull. Your teacher will now divide the class into groups. Each group will work on one of the following topics. Prepare a presentation with your group members and then present it to the entire class.

- Progression of Models of Airplanes
- Progression of Models of Motorcars
- Birds and Their Wing Span
- Migratory Birds — Tracing Their Flights

Answer:

Activity to be done by yourself.

Writing (Page 36)

Question:

Write a short composition on your initial attempts at learning a skill. You could describe the challenges of learning to ride a bicycle or learning to swim. Make it as humorous as possible.

Answer:

Activity to be done by yourself.

II. The Black Aeroplane

Thinking about the Text (Page 40)

Question 1:

“I’ll take the risk.” What is the risk? Why does the narrator take it?

Answer:

The pilot of Dakota DS 088 plane was keen to reach home in England to spend a holiday with his family. On the way, his plane was engulfed in a huge storm of black clouds. So, he decided to fly straight into the storm as he did not want to miss the opportunity to meet his family for a good English breakfast. Thus, he took the risk of flying through the storm even when the visibility was almost nil.

Question 2:

Describe the narrator’s experience as he flew the aeroplane into the storm.

Answer:

As the pilot (author) entered the big storm of clouds, his plane started to jump and twirl in the air. He could not see anything outside the plane as it was engulfed by completely black storm clouds. When he looked at the compass and other instruments, they had stopped functioning due to the turbulent weather. It was a fearsome and frightening experience for the pilot. The fuel tank of his plane was also almost empty and he could not fly more than ten minutes in it. Suddenly out of nowhere, he saw another black aeroplane with no lights on its wings appear by his side, and the pilot of that plane beckoned him to follow. The narrator obediently followed the other black plane that had no light. He followed the strange black aeroplane without any choice through the storm and soon landed on the runway safely.

Question 3:

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

Answer:

The pilot was delighted to land safely after being caught in a dense storm of dark clouds and was not sorry to walk away from the old Dakota. He was filled with gratitude for the pilot in the other black aeroplane and desperately wanted to thank him for helping him in such a fearsome situation. He felt sorry that he could not thank his benefactor enough for helping him land on the runway safely.

Question 4:

What made the woman in the control centre look at the narrator strangely?

Answer:

The woman in the control centre looked at the narrator strangely when the narrator mentioned the black aeroplane that helped him land safely on the runway. She gave him a surprised look and told him that nothing except the narrator’s plane was in the sky during the storm. The radar showed the narrator’s plane as the only one in the night sky.

Question 5:

Who do you think helped the narrator to reach safely? Discuss this among yourselves and give reasons for your answer.

Answer:

There is no definite explanation for the appearance of the unknown pilot who helped the narrator. We can assume that it was probably the narrator himself who overcame his fear in the midst of a storm as no other plane was visible in the radar except the narrator's Dakota DS 088. In that frightening situation, the pilot might have fantasized that someone had come to his help. However, he was a good pilot, brave enough to fly through a dense and turbulent storm and land on the runway safely.

Thinking about Language (Page 40-41)

Question I:

Study the sentences given below.

- (a) They looked like black mountains.
- (b) Inside the clouds, everything was suddenly black.
- (c) In the black clouds near me, I saw another aeroplane.
- (d) The strange black aeroplane was there.

The word 'black' in sentences (a) and (c) refers to the very darkest colour. But in (b) and (d) (here) it means without light/with no light.

'Black' has a variety of meanings in different contexts. For example:

- (a) 'I prefer black tea' means 'I prefer tea without milk'.
- (b) 'With increasing pollution the future of the world is black' means

'With increasing pollution the future of the world is very depressing/ without hope'.

Now, try to guess the meanings of the word 'black' in the sentences given below. Check the meanings in the dictionary and find out whether you have guessed right.

1. Go and have a bath; your hands and face are absolutely black. _____
2. The taxi-driver gave Ratan a black look as he crossed the road when the traffic light was green.

3. The bombardment of Hiroshima is one of the blackest crimes against humanity. _____
4. Very few people enjoy Harold Pinter's black comedy. _____
5. Sometimes shopkeepers store essential goods to create false scarcity and then sell these in black.

6. Villagers had beaten the criminal black and blue. _____

Answer:

1. Go and have a bath; your hands and face are absolutely black. – **The 'black' in this sentence denotes that the face and hands are dark due to dust and dirt.**
2. The taxi-driver gave Ratan a black look as he crossed the road when the traffic light was green. – **The 'black' in this sentence refers to an angry or annoyed look.**
3. The bombardment of Hiroshima is one of the blackest crimes against humanity. – **The 'black' in this sentence denotes a dark and brutal incident against humanity.**
4. Very few people enjoy Harold Pinter's black comedy. – **The 'black' in this sentence denotes dark or distressing comedy.**

5. Sometimes shopkeepers store essential goods to create false scarcity and then sell these in black. – *The 'black' in this sentence refers to the hoarding of goods by shopkeepers to sell those goods at a higher price later.*

6. Villagers had beaten the criminal black and blue. – *The 'black' in this sentence denotes that the criminal was beaten and badly bruised by the villagers.*

Question II:

Look at these sentences taken from the lesson you have just read:

- (a) I was flying my old Dakota aeroplane.
- (b) The young seagull had been afraid to fly with them.

In the first sentence the author was controlling an aircraft in the air. Another example is: Children are flying kites. In the second sentence the seagull was afraid to move through the air, using its wings.

Match the phrases given under Column A with their meanings given under Column B:

A	B
1. Fly a flag	– Move quickly/suddenly
2. Fly into rage	– Be successful
3. Fly along	– Display a flag on a long pole
4. Fly high	– Escape from a place
5. Fly the coop	– Become suddenly very angry

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Question III:

We know that the word 'fly' (of birds/insects) means to move through air using wings. Tick the words which have the same or nearly the same meaning.

swoop	flit	paddle	flutter
ascend	float	ride	skim
sink	dart	hover	glide
descend	soar	shoot	spring
stay	fall	sail	flap

Answer:

The words which have the same or nearly the same meaning as 'fly' are listed below:

- Swoop
- Flit
- Flutter
- Float
- Skim
- Hover
- Glide
- Soar
- Sail

Writing (Page 41)**Question:**

Have you ever been alone or away from home during a thunderstorm? Narrate your experience in a paragraph.

Answer:

Activity to be done by yourself.

(**Note:** Students can write their personal experiences here.)

How to Tell Wild Animals

Thinking about the Poem (Page 45)

Question 1:

Does 'dyin' really rhyme with 'lion'? Can you say it in such a way that it does?

Answer:

No, 'dyin' does not rhyme with 'lion'. If we pronounce the word 'lion' as 'lying', then probably it would rhyme with the word 'dyin'.

Question 2:

How does the poet suggest that you identify the lion and the tiger? When can you do so, according to him?

Answer:

The poet suggests that if a large and tawny beast roams in the jungle in the east and roars towards us, then it is the Asian Lion. On the contrary, if a noble wild beast with black stripes on a yellow coat roams about the jungle freely, it must be the Bengal Tiger. Besides, the poet also mentions that a lion usually roars loudly when it attacks its prey, while a tiger attacks its prey silently.

Question 3:

Do you think the words 'lept' and 'lep' in the third stanza are spelt correctly? Why does the poet spell them like this?

Answer:

The words 'lept' and 'lep' are spelt incorrectly in the poem. The poet has spelt them in such a way to maintain the rhythm of the poem. The correct spelling of the words, 'lept' is leapt and 'lep' is leap. The poet has deliberately spelt them incorrectly to create an element of humour therefore, emphasizing the word 'leopard' in every line.

Question 4:

Do you know what a 'bearhug' is? It's a friendly and strong hug — such as bears are thought to give, as they attack you! Again, hyenas are thought to laugh, and crocodiles to weep ('crocodile tears') as they swallow their victims. Are there similar expressions and popular ideas about wild animals in your own language(s)?

Answer:

A 'bearhug' refers to a bear's close and tight embrace with both hands as it attacks its victims. Other animals also have similar expressions such as a hyena never laughs but its face looks like that, crocodiles never weep but they burst into tears when they swallow their prey or victims.

Question 5:

Look at the line "A novice might nonplus". How would you write this 'correctly'? Why is the poet's 'incorrect' line better in the poem?

Answer:

The line "A novice might nonplus" can be correctly written as "A novice might be nonplussed". However, the usage of incorrect line is in sync with the poem as it helps in maintaining the rhyme scheme of the poem. By using the incorrect word 'nonplus', it rhymes with 'thus'.

Question 6:

Can you find other examples of poets taking liberties with language, either in English or in your own language(s)? Can you find examples of humorous poems in your own language(s)?

Answer:

Yes, there are several instances where poets take liberties with the language to create proper rhyming of the poem. This is often referred to as 'poetic license'. For example in the poem 'Tale of Custard the Dragon' by Ogden Nash, the spellings have been changed to create a rhythmic effect – realio, trulio instead of really and truly. The lines are given below:

Belinda lived in a little white house,
With a little black kitten and a little grey mouse,
And a little yellow dog and a little red wagon,
And a realio, trulio, little pet dragon.

Question 7:

Much of the humour in the poem arises from the way language is used, although the ideas are funny as well. If there are particular lines in the poem that you especially like, share these with the class, speaking briefly about what it is about the ideas or the language that you like or find funny.

Answer:

The poet has kept the language of the poem very simple and humorous. Some of the lines that appear funny in the poem are "A noble wild beast greets you". Although the sentence appears that the wild beast might greet you, but it is quite funny and unlikely that a ferocious animal like a tiger would do that. In another context, the line, "He'll only lep and lep again" is also very humorous. The word 'lep' is used to maintain the rhyme scheme of the word 'leopard' and is used to create humour in the poem.

The Ball Poem

Thinking about the Poem (Page 47)

In pairs, attempt the following questions.

Question 1:

Why does the poet say, “I would not intrude on him”? Why doesn't he offer him money to buy another ball?

Answer:

The poet says, “I would not intrude on him” because he wants the boy to learn from the experience of loss. This will teach the boy that loss is also an important part of life. Hence the poet does not intervene in the boy's natural process of learning. He also doesn't offer the boy money to buy another ball because the lesson of loss learnt from this experience would become worthless and wouldn't teach the little one to learn the lesson of responsibility from this situation.

Question 2:

“... staring down/All his young days into the harbour where/His ball went ...” Do you think the boy has had the ball for a long time? Is it linked to the memories of days when he played with it?

Answer:

Yes, it appears that the boy has had the ball for a long time. When it bounced and fell into the water, all his childhood memories of wonderful days flashed in front of his eyes. He realised that those moments would never come back, just as the ball. He felt that he could buy new balls, and those would create new memories or moments for him, but those that were gone with the ball into the water would never ever return.

Question 3:

What does “in the world of possessions” mean?

Answer:

“In the world of possessions” refers to the world consisting of materialistic things. Different people possess different things, such as land, property, money, or any other valuable thing. In the poem, the poet indicates that loss of the ball may be a very small thing, but this would give the boy a realization of the sense of loss and the experience of losing memories associated with it.

Question 4:

Do you think the boy lost anything earlier? Pick out the words that suggest the answer.

Answer:

No, it seems that the boy did not lose anything earlier. It is evident from the words ‘He senses first responsibility in a world of possessions’. This line suggests that the sense of loss gave him an experience of understanding how several precious moments are lost with the loss of a particular object.

Question 5:

What does the poet say the boy is learning from the loss of the ball? Try to explain this in your own words.

Answer:

The poet tries to convey through his poem that the boy has learnt an important lesson to cope with the loss of his ball. He is experiencing grief and sadness while he grows up in this world full of possessions. He learns that there are several important things in life that are lost and cannot be brought back. He also

senses his first sense of responsibility as he loses the ball. The boy learns to stand up and leave the loss behind as he moves ahead in his life and understands the true meaning and nature of loss.

Question 6:

Have you ever lost something you liked very much? Write a paragraph describing how you felt then, and saying whether — and how — you got over your loss.

Answer:

Yes, I had lost my pet dog in a road accident when he was just five years old. One day I was playing with my puppy with a ball in my garden. I threw the ball in the air while playing with him, my dog jumped to catch it, but it bounced back and rolled to the street nearby. As my dog went to fetch the ball, a speeding car ran over my puppy and I could hear it crying in pain. I rushed to the spot and found my pup covered in blood. I rushed him to the hospital immediately but it was too late and he was bleeding profusely and succumbed to injuries. I was very upset and grief-stricken by this incident. In due course of time, I recovered from my loss, but that incident is fresh in my memories and I still love my dog and miss him dearly.

(**Note:** Students can write this answer as per their personal experiences.)

