1059CH03

3 Two Stories about Flying

I. His First Flight — Liam O' Flaherty

II. Black Aeroplane — Frederick Forsyth

Before You Read

Since the earliest times, humans have dreamt of conquering the skies. Here are two stories about flying.

I. A young seagull is afraid to fly. How does he conquer his fear?

II. A pilot is lost in storm clouds. Does he arrive safe? Who helps him?

I
His First Flight

ledge
a narrow horizontal shelf projecting from a wall or (here) a cliff

The young seagull was alone on his ledge. His two brothers and his sister had already flown away the day before. He had been afraid to fly with them. Somehow when he had taken a little run forward to the brink of the ledge and attempted to flap his wings he became afraid. The great expanse of sea stretched down beneath, and it was such a long way down — miles down. 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. His father and mother had come around

Download More Books PDF: www.prepxpert.in

calling to him shrilly, upbraiding him, threatening to let him starve on his ledge unless he flew away. But for the life of him he could not move.

That was twenty-four hours ago. Since then nobody had come near him. The day before, all day long, he had watched his parents flying about with his brothers and sister, perfecting them in the art of flight, teaching them how to skim the waves and how to dive for fish. He had, in fact, seen his older brother catch his first herring and devour it, standing on a rock, while his parents circled around raising a proud cackle. And all the morning the whole family had walked about on the big plateau midway down the opposite cliff taunting him with his cowardice.

The sun was now ascending the sky, blazing on his ledge that faced the south. He felt the heat because he had not eaten since the previous nightfall.

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,

upbraiding
scolding

(to) skim
to move lightly just above a surface (here, the sea)

herring
a soft-finned sea fish



Download More Books PDF: www.prepxpert.in
Reprint 2026-27

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. How he loved to tear food that way, scrapping his beak now and again to whet it.

preening
making an effort to maintain feathers

(to) whet
to sharpen

"Ga, ga, ga," he cried begging her to bring him some food. "Gaw-col-ah," she screamed back derisively. But he kept calling plaintively, and after a minute or so he uttered a joyful scream. His mother had picked up a piece of the fish and was flying across to him with it. He leaned out

derisively
in a manner showing someone that she/he is stupid



Download More Books PDF: www.prepxpert.in
Reprint 2026-27

eagerly, tapping the rock with his feet, trying to get nearer to her as she flew across. But when she was just opposite to him, she halted, her wings motionless, the piece of fish in her beak almost within reach of his beak. He waited a moment in surprise, wondering why she did not come nearer, and then, maddened by hunger, he dived at the fish. With a loud scream he fell outwards and downwards into space. Then a monstrous terror seized him and his heart stood still. He could hear nothing. But it only lasted a minute. The next moment he felt his wings spread outwards. The wind rushed against his breast feathers, then under his stomach, and against his wings. He could feel the tips of his wings cutting through the air. He was not falling headlong now. He was soaring gradually downwards and outwards. He was no longer afraid. He just felt a bit dizzy. Then he flapped his wings once and he soared upwards. "Ga, ga, ga, Ga, ga, ga, Gaw-col-ah," his mother swooped past him, her wings making a loud noise. He answered her with another scream. Then his father flew over him screaming. He saw his two brothers and his sister flying around him curveting and banking and soaring and diving.

dizzy
an uncomfortable feeling of spinning around and losing one's balance

curveting
leaping like a horse

banking
flying with one wing higher than the other

Then he completely forgot that he had not always been able to fly, and commended himself to dive and soar and curve, shrieking shrilly.

He was near the sea now, flying straight over it, facing straight out over the ocean. He saw a vast green sea beneath him, with little ridges moving over it and he turned his beak sideways and cawed amusedly.

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

Download More Books PDF: www.prepxpert.in
Reprint 2026-27

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.

He had made his first flight.

Thinking about the Text

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?
2. "The sight of the food maddened him." What does this suggest? What compelled the young seagull to finally fly?
3. "They were beckoning to him, calling shrilly." Why did the seagull's father and mother threaten him and cajole him to fly?
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.
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?

Speaking

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

Writing

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.

Download More Books PDF: www.prepxpert.in
Reprint 2026-27

II
The Black Aeroplane

The moon was coming up in the east, behind me, and stars were shining in the clear sky above me. There wasn't a cloud in the sky. I was happy to be alone high up above the sleeping countryside. I was flying my old Dakota aeroplane over France back to England. I was dreaming of my holiday and looking forward to being with my family. I looked at my watch: one thirty in the morning.

'I should call Paris Control soon,' I thought. As I looked down past the nose of the aeroplane, I saw the lights of a big city in front of me. I switched on the radio and said, "Paris Control, Dakota DS 088 here. Can you hear me? I'm on my way to England. Over."

The voice from the radio answered me immediately: "DS 088, I can hear you. You ought to turn twelve degrees west now, DS 088. Over."

I checked the map and the compass, switched over to my second and last fuel tank, and turned the Dakota twelve degrees west towards England.

'I'll be in time for breakfast,' I thought. A good big English breakfast! Everything was going well — it was an easy flight.

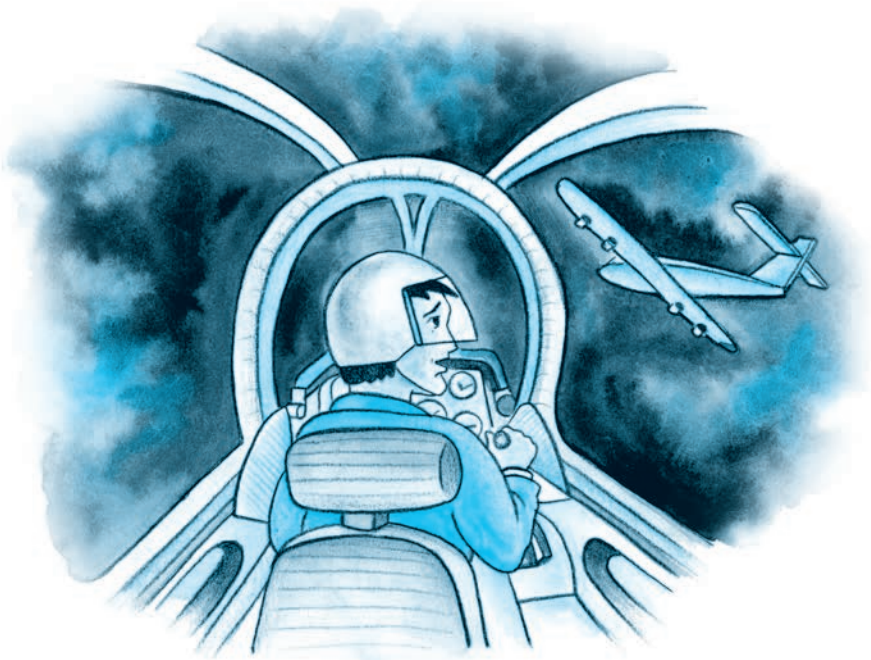
Paris was about 150 kilometres behind me when I saw the clouds. Storm clouds. They were huge. They looked like black mountains standing in front of me across the sky. I knew I could not fly up and over them, and I did not have enough fuel to fly around them to the north or south.

"I ought to go back to Paris," I thought, but I wanted to get home. I wanted that breakfast.

'I'll take the risk,' I thought, and flew that old Dakota straight into the storm.

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

Download More Books PDF: www.prepxpert.in
Reprint 2026-27



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. Then, in the black clouds quite near me, I saw another aeroplane. It had no lights on its wings, but I could see it flying next to me through the storm. I could see the pilot's face — turned towards me. I was very glad to see another person. He lifted one hand and waved.

"Follow me," he was saying. "Follow me."

'He knows that I am lost,' I thought. 'He's trying to help me.'

He turned his aeroplane slowly to the north, in front of my Dakota, so that it would be easier for me to follow him. I was very happy to go behind the strange aeroplane like an obedient child.

After half an hour the strange black aeroplane was still there in front of me in the clouds. Now

Download More Books PDF: www.prepxpert.in
Reprint 2026-27



there was only enough fuel in the old Dakota's last tank to fly for five or ten minutes more. I was starting to feel frightened again. But then he started to go down and I followed through the storm.

Suddenly I came out of the clouds and saw two long straight lines of lights in front of me. It was a runway! An airport! I was safe! I turned to look for my friend in the black aeroplane, but the sky was empty. There was nothing there. The black aeroplane was gone. I could not see it anywhere.

I landed and was not sorry to walk away from the old Dakota near the control tower. I went and asked a woman in the control centre where I was and who the other pilot was. I wanted to say 'Thank you'.

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?

Download More Books PDF: www.prepxpert.in
Reprint 2026-27

Thinking about the Text

1. "I'll take the risk." What is the risk? Why does the narrator take it?
2. Describe the narrator's experience as he flew the aeroplane into the storm.
3. Why does the narrator say, "I landed and was not sorry to walk away from the old Dakota..."?
4. What made the woman in the control centre look at the narrator strangely?
5. Who do you think helped the narrator to reach safely? Discuss this among yourselves and give reasons for your answer.

Thinking about Language

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 *black*est 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. _____

Download More Books PDF: www.prepxpert.in
Reprint 2026-27

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

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

Writing

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

In This Lesson

What We Have Done

Provided two stories about flying — one about a bird, another about a human being in a plane.

What You Can Do

- As they read the story of the seagull, students can be asked to imagine how a baby learns to walk, and compare and contrast the two situations.

Download More Books PDF: www.prepxpert.in

Reprint 2026-27

- After they read the second story students should be asked for their ideas about the phantom plane: Was it really there or did the pilot imagine it? If the students feel it was really there, who could have been piloting it?
- Ask students to narrate their own stories about flying. It could be about flying in an airplane, or flying a kite, or about watching a bird flying — in short, anything to do with flight. Give students ten minutes to think quietly about the topic — during this time, they can make notes about what they want to say. Then ask for volunteer speakers.

Compound Words Whose Parts Mean Just the Opposite or Something Else

- Quicksand works slowly
- There in no egg in eggplant nor ham in hamburger; neither apple nor pine in pineapple.
- Boxing rings are square



Download More Books PDF: www.prepxpert.in
Reprint 2026-27

How to Tell Wild Animals

This humorous poem suggests some dangerous ways to identify (or 'tell') wild animals! Read it aloud, keeping to a strong and regular rhythm.

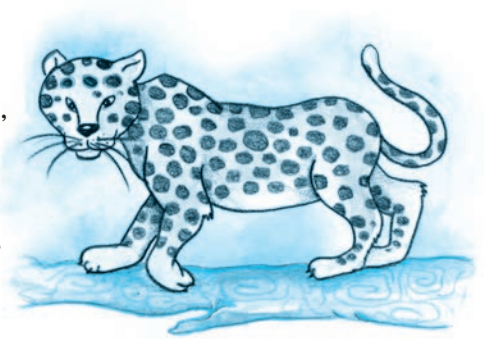
If ever you should go by chance
To jungles in the east;
And if there should to you advance
A large and tawny beast,
If he roars at you as you're dyin'
You'll know it is the Asian Lion...





Or if some time when roaming round,
A noble wild beast greets you,
With black stripes on a yellow ground,
Just notice if he eats you.
This simple rule may help you learn
The Bengal Tiger to discern.

If strolling forth, a beast you view,
Whose hide with spots is peppered,
As soon as he has lept on you,
You'll know it is the Leopard.
'Twill do no good to roar with pain,
He'll only lep and lep again.



Download More Books PDF: www.prepxpert.in



If when you're walking round your yard
You meet a creature there,
Who hugs you very, very hard,
Be sure it is a Bear.
If you have any doubts, I guess
He'll give you just one more caress.



Though to distinguish beasts of prey
A novice might nonplus,
The Crocodile you always may
Tell from the Hyena thus:
Hyenas come with merry smiles;
But if they weep they're Crocodiles.



The true Chameleon is small,
A lizard sort of thing;
He hasn't any ears at all,
And not a single wing.
If there is nothing on the tree,
'Tis the chameleon you see.



CAROLYN WELLS

Glossary

ground: background
discern: make out; identify
hide: animal skin
peppered: here, covered with spots
caress: a gentle, loving touch
novice: someone new to a job
(be) nonplus (sed) (usually only in the passive): (be) puzzle(d), confuse(d), surprise(d)

Download More Books PDF: www.prepxpert.in
Reprint 2026-27

Thinking about the Poem

1. Does 'dyin' really rhyme with 'lion'? Can you say it in such a way that it does?
2. How does the poet suggest that you identify the lion and the tiger? When can you do so, according to him?
3. Do you think the words 'lept' and 'lep' in the third stanza are spelt correctly? Why does the poet spell them like this?
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)?
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?
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)?
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.

English is funny, because...

We have noses that run and feet that smell

Download More Books PDF: www.prepxpert.in

Reprint 2026-27

The Ball Poem

A boy loses a ball. He is very upset. A ball doesn't cost much, nor is it difficult to buy another ball. Why then is the boy so upset? Read the poem to see what the poet thinks has been lost, and what the boy has to learn from the experience of losing something.

What is the boy now, who has lost his ball,
What, what is he to do? I saw it go
Merrily bouncing, down the street, and then
Merrily over — there it is in the water!
No use to say 'O there are other balls':
An ultimate shaking grief fixes the boy
As he stands rigid, trembling, staring down
All his young days into the harbour where
His ball went. I would not intrude on him;
A dime, another ball, is worthless. Now
He senses first responsibility
In a world of possessions. People will take
Balls, balls will be lost always, little boy.
And no one buys a ball back. Money is external.
He is learning, well behind his desperate eyes,
The epistemology of loss, how to stand up
Knowing what every man must one day know
And most know many days, how to stand up.

JOHN BERRYMAN

Glossary

O there are other balls: The words suggest that the loss is not important enough to worry about

shaking grief: sadness which greatly affects the boy

rigid: stiff

Download More Books PDF: www.prepxpert.in

(to) intrude on: here, to enter a situation where one is not welcome

a dime: ten cents (U.S.)

desperate: hopeless

epistemology of loss: understanding the nature of loss — what it means to lose something

epistemology: The Greek word *episteme* means 'knowledge' (it comes from a word meaning 'to understand, to know'). Epistemology is the study of the nature of knowledge itself.

Thinking about the Poem

In pairs, attempt the following questions.

1. Why does the poet say, "I would not intrude on him"? Why doesn't he offer him money to buy another ball?
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?
3. What does "in the world of possessions" mean?
4. Do you think the boy has lost anything earlier? Pick out the words that suggest the answer.
5. What does the poet say the boy is learning from the loss of the ball? Try to explain this in your own words.
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.

Download More Books PDF: www.prepxpert.in
Reprint 2026-27