

Ch-3 Two stories about flying
Part-I: His First Flight
- (Liam O' Flaherty)

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?

Answer: The young seagull was afraid to fly as it was his first flight. On seeing the great expanse of sea stretched beneath, he became scared that if he takes off, his wings would give away. All birds are afraid to make their first flight. Some birds just take more time and need to be pushed to overcome their fear.

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

Answer: The young seagull had not eaten anything since a long time. His hunger was only intensified when he saw his mother tearing a piece of fish just the way he loved to do. This sight absolutely maddened him and he was ready to do anything to satisfy his hunger. It was this irresistible hunger that compelled the young seagull to fly. His mother had flown towards him with a piece of fish but halted almost within reach of his beak. Maddened by hunger, he leapt at the fish completely forgetting his fear of flying.

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

Answer: In spite of a maddening hunger and seeing his brothers and sisters flying, the young seagull could not gather enough courage to take his first flight. The young seagull's mother and father threatened to starve him because they wanted him to overcome his fear of flying.

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 when I first started learning swimming. My parents forced me through different tactics to overcome my fear of water.

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: Success in swimming is not guaranteed. However, if I had not given it a few shots I could never know if I could do it or not. It is necessary to at least try irrespective of the fear of failure.

6. Moral of the story "His first flight."

Answer: "His first flight" is a parable. The seagull conveys the message of self-confidence, motivation and self-reliance. The mother seagull motivates the young one enough to get him to learn flying. The baby seagull realises the importance of belief and faith. He flaps his wings to learn flying and gain the confidence to be independent. The story conveys the learning- "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime". The parable also stresses the importance of family ties and filial support.