

His First Flight

Summary: This is a story about the painful process of learning an important lesson in life. The main character of this story is a baby seagull which has to learn to fly. For most of the birds, learning to fly is taken for granted but we seldom think the mental agony which the bird may have to go through while doing so. This short story beautifully depicts the situation. The parents and siblings of the baby seagull apply all the tricks to cajole and force it to fly. Finally, the baby seagull succeeds in overcoming its fear and learns to fly.

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 of falling and hurting itself. Any animal or bird, including humans is afraid to take first steps or first flight.

Actually this is not a simple act of flying or walking. This is about growing independent, about taking a giant leap towards maturity. As the process of learning anything is difficult so we are apprehensive while taking the proverbial first steps in life. You must have observed a kid crying on his first day to school. As the kid is going to face the harsh outside world, there will not be the protective environment of its parents. So, consciously or subconsciously the kid is having fear about challenges which lie ahead.

Once you will graduate from school and will enter the college, you will feel nervousness and anxiety during initial days of college. But tackling that nervousness is worth it as it will give you enough confidence to enter the adult world.

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

Answer: This episode can be an important lesson to develop self dependence. We human beings get the protection of our near and dear ones almost throughout our lives. Even if somebody becomes adult his/her parents remain protective about him/her. It sounds good but more

often than not this possessive behaviour hampers our mental development.

Had seagull's parents continued to feed him, he won't have tried to fly. But the hunger; along with sight of tasty fish; compelled him to fly and reach for the sky.

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: You can compare the situation with the way your parents cajole and sometimes pressurize you to focus on your study. Excess of either love or pressure will not do well for you. You will be spoiled or you can become stubborn.

So a mix of carrot and stick always give the desired results. Probably seagull's parents have learnt this lesson through their experience. That is why they are following the carrot and stick policy.

Question 4: Have you ever had a similar experience, where your parents encouraged you to do something that you were too scared to try?

Answer: There can be variety of examples, like learning to ride a bicycle, or getting goose-bumps on a ferry wheel, or the apprehension while traveling alone for the first time.

You can try recalling how nervous you felt. What suggestions were given to you and how you overcame your fear to succeed in difficult acts which seem simple for you at present.

Extract Based Questions [3 Marks each]

Read the following extracts carefully and answer the questions that follow.

Question 1.

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.

(a) Why was the young seagull afraid?

(b) What did the young seagull feel about his wings?

(c) Pick out the word from the passage that means the same as 'the verge'.

(d) Pick out the word from the passage which means ‘a narrow flat piece of rock that sticks out from a cliff’.

Answer:

- (a) The young seagull was afraid of flying over the sea.
- (b) The young seagull felt that his wings would never support him.
- (c) The word is ‘brink’.
- (d) The word is ‘ledge’.

Question 2.

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 elder 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 for his cowardice.

- (a) The young seagull had been alone for how much time?
- (b) Why was the whole family taunting the young seagull?
- (c) Find the word which can be replaced by ‘consume’ in the passage?
- (d) The word ‘bravery’ is an antonym of

Answer:

- (a) For twenty four years, the young seagull was alone.
- (b) The whole family was taunting the young seagull for his cowardice.
- (c) The word is ‘devour’.
- (d) The word is ‘cowardice’.

Question 3.

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.

- (a) What did the young seagull do out of his ledge?
- (b) What was seagull’s father doing?
- (c) Find out the word in the passage which mean the same as ‘to sharpen’.
- (d) What does plateau mean?

Answer:

- (a) The young seagull pretended to be falling asleep and watched his brothers and

sister lying on the plateau.

(b) The seagull's father was preening the feathers on his white back.

(c) The word is 'preening'.

(d) A plateau is an area of land that is higher than the land around it.

Question 4.

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 curving and banking and soaring and diving. [CBSE 2016]

(a) What did the young seagull feel the next moment?

(b) What did the young seagull's mother do?

(c) Find out the word from the passage that means the same as 'fly high in the air'.

(d) Find out from the passage a word that means 'to grab'.

Answer:

(a) The next moment young seagull felt his wings spread outwards.

(b) The young seagull's mother swooped past him and made a loud noise with her wings.

(c) The word is 'soaring'.

(d) The word is 'seized'.

Question 5.

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) What does the phrase, 'this green flooring' refer to?

(b) What made the young seagull tired?

(c) Find out the word that means the same as 'inviting'.

(d) The word means a small piece/amount of something.

Answer:

- (a) 'The green flooring' refers to the green surface of the sea.
- (b) The young seagull was tired because he was weak with hunger and he made a successful attempt for his first flight.
- (c) Beckoning.
- (d) Scrap.

Question 6.

With a loud scream he fell outwards and downward 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. (1×4=4)

- (a) How did the young seagull learn to fly ?
- (b) How long did the young seagull's fear last ?
- (c) Find the word from the passage which means the same as 'terrible'.
- (d) Who fell outwards and downward into space ?

Answer:

- (a) The young seagull tried to dive at the fish and fell outwards and downwards into the space. His wings spread and the wind helped him in flying.
- (b) The young seagull's fear lasted for a short while—just after a minute the seagull's mother wanted him to follow her.
- (c) 'Monstrous' means the same as 'terrible'.
- (d) The young seagull.

Question 7.

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. (1×4=4)

- (a) Who is 'they' in the above lines ?
- (b) What was the seagull afraid of ?
- (c) Trace a word from the passage which means 'the edge of land before a steep slope'.
- (d) What did the seagull pretended.

Answer:

- (a) 'They' refer to the seagull's parents.
- (b) The seagull was afraid of flying.
- (c) 'Brink' means the 'edge of land before a steep slope'.
- (d) The young seagull pretended be falling asleep.

Question 8.

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. He had made his first flight. (1×4=4)

- (a) What was the 'green flooring' on which his brothers and sister had landed ?
- (b) How was the young seagull's first experience of the sea ?
- (c) Which word in the passage means the same as 'summoning or luring by silent signal' ?
- (d) Why was the seagull exhausted ?

Answer:

- (a) The green flooring on which the young seagull's brothers and sisters had landed was the sea.
- (b) He thought the sea was hard like land. He tried to stand on it but his legs sunk into it.
- (c) The word 'beckoning' means the same as 'summoning or luring by silent signal'.
- (d) Due to the strange exercise.

Question 9.

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 further. He was floating on it, and around him his family was screaming, praising him and their beaks were offering him scraps of dog fish. (1×4=4)

- (a) Why could 'he' not rise ?
- (b) Why was his family praising him ?
- (c) Find out a word from the passage which means the same as 'tired out'.
- (d) What was his family offering him ?

Answer:

- (a) He couldn't rise as he was tired and weak with hunger.
- (b) His family was praising him because he had made a successful flight and conquered his fear.
- (c) 'Exhausted' means the same as 'tired out'.
- (d) Scraps of dogfish

Question 10.

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. (1×4=4)

- (a) Who waited in surprise for whom ?
- (b) What did he think she would offer to him ?
- (c) Which word in the passage means the same as ‘cry as of fear’ ?
- (d) Who is referred as ‘He’ in the passage ?

Answer:

- (a) The young seagull waited in surprise for his mother.
- (b) He thought that she would offer him a fish to eat.
- (c) ‘Scream’ means the same as ‘cry as of fear’.
- (d) The young seagull.

Question 11.

His father and mother had come around 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. (1×4=4)

- (a) Why were his parents reproaching him ?
- (b) Why could the young seagull not move from the ledge ?
- (c) Find a word from the extract that means ‘to eat’.
- (d) What did the parents do in pride ?

Answer:

- (a) His parents were reproaching him because he was not ready to fly.
- (b) The seagull could not move from the ledge because he was afraid of losing his life.
- (c) ‘Devour’ means to eat.
- (d) They were raising a proud cackle.

Short Answer Type Questions [2 Marks each]

Question 1. Why did the young seagull not go with the rest of his family?

Answer: The young seagull did not go with the rest of his family because he was afraid to fly.

Question 2. How did seagull's parents try to make him fly?

Answer: Seagull's parents tried everything to make him fly. They screamed, scolded and threatened to let him starve on the ledge unless he flew away.

Question 3. What had the young seagull watched his parents doing the day before?

Answer: The day before the young seagull had watched his parents flying about with his brothers and sister, perfecting in the art of flying and teaching them how to skim the waves and how to dive for fish.

Question 4. What was the young seagull's mother doing before him?

Answer: The young seagull's mother was standing on the plateau, her white breast thrust forward. She tore a piece of fish that lay at her feet, then she scrapped each side of her beak on the rock.

Question 5. When did the seagull get over his fear of flying over the sea?

Answer: The seagull was afraid of flying over the sea because he thought that he would drown. His family decided to teach him a lesson. They left him unattended. The mother tore at a piece of fish that lay at her feet now and then in his front. Since the seagull was hungry too much, he was . compelled to attempt his first flight in order to get food. He was successful. This is when he got over his fear flying over the sea.

Question 6. Describe the young seagull's expression when he saw his mother with food.

Answer: The young seagull uttered a joyful scream because he thought that his mother was bringing food for him. He tried to come nearer to her as she flew across.

Question 7. Why did the young seagull feel very miserable on the ledge?

Answer: The young seagull felt very miserable on the ledge as he was alone and his family had already flown away. He was feeling very hungry and had nothing to eat. His condition was worsening because he could not even dive for fish.

Question 8. How did the young seagull and his family celebrate his first flight?

Answer: When the young seagull started flying and got over his fear, his family screamed around him out of joy. They praised him and offered him scraps of dog-fish out of delight as he made a successful attempt

Question 9. Describe the first flight of the young seagull.

Answer: The young seagull dived at the fish due to hunger and fell outwards and downwards into space. He thought of getting drowned but his wings spread outwards automatically. He moved downwards and outwards and landed safely on the sea and floated on it without any fear.

Question 10. What happened when the young seagull dived at the fish picked up by his mother ?

Answer: When the young sea gull dived at the fish, he fell outwards and downwards with a scream. His monstrous terror siezed him and his heart stood

still. Soon his wings spread outwards and he could feel the tips of his wings cutting through the air.

Question 11. How did the seagull feel when his belly touched the green sea ?

Answer: When the seagull's belly touched the green sea, he was scared that he would sink. He tried to fly but could not. He was exhausted and weak due to hunger.

Question 12. Why was the young seagull afraid ?

Answer: The seagull was afraid as he was unable to fly. He felt that his legs were not strong enough.

Question 13. What did the young seagull do to attract his mother's attention ?

Answer:

In order to attract his mother's attention, the young seagull stood on one leg and pretended to be falling asleep on the brink of the ledge.

Question 14. The young seagull was afraid of flying. Why ?

Answer: The young seagull was afraid of flying as it was a steep fall to the sea, the sea expanse was vast and he thought that his wings would not support him

Long Answer Type Questions [8 Marks each]

Question 1. How did the mother make the young seagull come out of his fear and teach him the art of flying?

Answer: The young seagull was afraid of flying because he thought that his wings won't support him and he would drown. When his family left him alone on the ledge, he felt alone and was very hungry. They tried hard to make him fly but he never showed the courage to try. His mother knowingly tore a piece of fish near him and flew across to him with it. She came close to him but did not go nearer. Already mad by hunger, he dived at the fish but fell into space. After sometime his wings spread outwards and he began to fly. His family landed on the sea ahead of him. They beckoned him so he landed on the sea and began to sink into water but when his belly touched the water, he floated without any fear and difficulty.

Question 2. Do you think that the seagull's family loved him? Justify their attitude towards him?

Answer: The young seagull had two brothers and a sister. His parents flew with them to leave him alone on the ledge as he could not muster up the courage to fly with them. His parents could have fed him.

But, they refused to give him any food. They wanted him to fly and dive for his food. They threatened to let him starve. They did so because they loved him.

The parents were right in what they did because they wanted to teach him the importance of confidence and self-reliance. One can't depend on their parents all his life to be fed. Thus, it was important for him to learn to fly, dive and search his

own food. So, the attitude the seagull family showed to him was actually their love, care and concern for him.

Question 3. Why was the young seagull pretending to be asleep? What did he actually observe while doing so?

Answer: The young seagull came to the brink of the ledge. He stood there on one leg with the other leg hidden under his wing. He closed his one eye, then the other, and pretended to be falling asleep. He did so because he wanted to know whether they were interested in him or not but he observed that his family was not noticing him. He saw his brothers and sister lying on the plateau. They were dozing. His father was preening the feathers on his white back. Only his mother was looking at him. Now and then, she tore at a piece of fish that lay at her feet. Then she scrapped each side of the back on the rock.

Question 4. How did the young seagull get over his fear of sea water and what was his family's reaction on it?

Answer: The young seagull had made his maiden flight successfully. When he was near the sea, he was flying straight over it. He observed a vast green sea all around him. He turned his beak sideways and cawed amusedly. His family was very happy and landed ahead of him. They beckoned to him.

When he landed on the sea, he began to sink but he tried in despair and his belly touched the water and he sank no further. He was floating on water. This way he got over his fear of seawater and his family praised him a lot and offered him the dog-fish as a reward.

Question 5. Fear and lack of confidence stop one from learning new things. Do you agree? How did these two traits of the young seagull make him coward? How did he overcome these short comings?

Answer: Yes, It is true that fear and lack of confidence stop one from learning new things as in the story, the young seagull lacked the value of courage and confidence in his character. He was too scared of flying. His family tried hard to make him fly but he refused to do so because of his fear of sinking in the seawater. They even scolded him for his cowardice. They tried to tempt him with food but he was not willing to learn flying. Once he dived, his fear disappeared and he enjoyed his first flight.

It is a fact that unless we try for something and overcome our fear, we can't learn anything. Confidence and motivation are two most important traits that make any learning possible.

.Question 6. A young seagull is too afraid to fly. His father and mother threaten him and cajole him to fly. Don't you think that such type of strategy is followed by almost all parents to make their children learn ? Substantiate your answer with examples. (80-100 words).

Answer: The young seagull is scared to fly. He is afraid of the vast exposure of the

sea beneath him. His parents cajole him to fly but he is too scared to fly. At the same time, he is desperate with hunger. He expects his parents to feed him. But he is left alone without food. They threaten him that he'll die of hunger if he doesn't fly. Then the mother tempts him with a fish within his reach, but not closer to him. He ultimately falls to temptation and dives into the sea and finally succeeds. All the parents should follow such type of strategy to make their children learn. They should not pamper their children by spoon feeding. They should make them independent. Parents strictness in making a child learn a skill shouldn't be taken as a threat. It is in favour of child as without threat, the seagull won't have learnt to fly; he would be starved to death.

Question 7. What role was played by the family of the seagull to train him in the art of flying ?

Answer: 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. The parents called out in a shrill voice, along with cajoling and scolding him in turn. Then they threatened to let him starve. When all this proved unsuccessful, his mother tempted him by flying close to his ledge with a piece of fish in its mouth. Maddened by hunger, he dived forward to get that piece and fell into space. To save himself he spread his wings and found that he was able to fly. Thus, the entire family helped him in learning the art of flying.

Question 8. Imagine you are the seagull's mother. You wanted him to fly and your plan worked. Write a page in your diary to describe how he ventured into his flight.

Answer:

Monday : 25th June, 20xx 10:30 p.m.

Dear Diary

Today I am feeling very happy. Finally, all my children are able to fly. Coaxing the youngest one was a real ordeal. He just refused to get off the ledge. We tried every method but failed. After nearly 24 hours, I could see that he was feeling really hungry, so I decided to play-trick with him. I took a piece of fish in my mouth and flew close to the ledge. Maddened by hunger, he stepped forward to get the fish, lost his balance and fell outwards. Instinctively, he spread his wings and found that he could fly. It was the proud moment of my life. I shall never forget it.

Good night Diary.

Question 9. Do you think hunger was a good motivation for the young seagull in his first flight ?

Answer: Yes, in this case, hunger was a great motivation for the young seagull. He was coward, full of fear. All the efforts of his parents had failed to coax him into flight. For 24 hours, no one went near him and he was almost faint with hunger. Finally, the mother flew near him with a scrap of food in her beak. Unable to resist,

he plunged into the air to catch it and fell out. To save himself, he opened his wings, wind rushed to them and he found that he could fly.

Question 10. All parental acts are for the betterment of the children. Justify this statement by taking points from the lesson, 'The First Flight'.

Answer: The young seagull's family tried every possible method to encourage him to fly. They cajoled him and even scolded him but to no avail. Finally, they decided to leave him hungry on the ledge for some time. Finally, his mother took a bold but seemingly cruel step. She flew close to the ledge with a scrap of fish in her beak. That made the young seagull fall from the ledge while trying to get the fish. In fright, he opened his wings and then found that he was able to fly. Thus, the purpose was served.