

The Black Aeroplane ----- By Frederick Forsyth

Introduction

The lesson “Black Aeroplane” by Frederick Forsyth reflects on how one’s judgement gets distorted due to fantasizing and how it creates problems. In this chapter, the narrator is a pilot who is so eager to meet his family and have a good breakfast that he takes the wrong decision of facing the storm instead of doing the right thing. Miraculously, he somehow manages to escape with the help of a mysterious aeroplane.

Summary

The story “Black Aeroplane” is about a pilot who feels happy and contented to fly over a city that is sleeping (at the night time). He is flying from Paris to London. While taking his flight, he dreams about the long holiday with his family. He also fantasizes about the scrumptious breakfast he would have upon landing.

As soon as he crosses Paris, he gets a look of the dark clouds that were a sign of the upcoming storm. The right decision would have been to turn back to Paris for the sake of safety. But he being overshadowed by his dreams and not wanting to delay them, risks the life of his passengers and heads straight into the storm. Everything gets dark, he is unable to see, all his direction instruments stopped functioning and he lost control of the plane.

When all hope was lost, he saw another plane whose pilot was more than willing to rescue them. The author was panicking as there was very less amount of fuel left. The anonymous pilot guided them out of the storm and disappeared as soon as they saw light.

Upon landing, when he asks the lady in the control room about the other pilot, he is left in shock when she says that his was the only plane in the sky.

Questions and Answers

Q1. “I’ll take the risk.” What is the risk? Why does the narrator take it?

A. The “risk” here refers to not doing the right thing, which is flying back to Paris when he came to know about the storm. Despite being aware of the bad weather, the pilot headed straight into the storm and risked his life. The pilot’s decision making was clouded by his wish to meet his family. He so desperately wanted to be with his family and have that English breakfast he had been dreaming of all day, that he took the risk of not going back.

Q2. Describe the narrator's experience as he flew the aeroplane into the storm.

A. The narrator was frightened as he lost control of the plane. He felt helpless as the compass and other instruments had stopped working. Nothing outside the aeroplane was visible when suddenly in the midst of nowhere, an unknown plane was visible and the pilot was eager to help him. The narrator was panicking because there was very less fuel left but somehow, he managed to escape the storm with the help of the strange pilot who he could not thank.

Q3. Why does the narrator say, "I landed and was not sorry to walk away from the old Dakota..."?

A. After landing, the narrator was not sorry to walk away from the old Dakota because he had a horrific and scary experience flying that plane. He had been caught in a storm with his compass, radio and other instruments all dead. He was happy that he had landed the plane safely. That is why he was not sorry to walk away. Instead, he wanted to know where he was and who the other pilot was.

Q4. What made the woman in the control centre look at the narrator strangely?

A. The woman in the control centre looked at the narrator strangely when he asked about the other pilot that helped him escape the storm. This is because there was no other plane in the sky during such bad weather.

Q5. Who do you think helped the narrator to reach safely? Discuss this among yourselves and give reasons for your answer.

A. Probably, it was the pilot's own conscience which helped him out of the storm. There was no other plane out on that stormy night. In his fear he might have been hallucinating. It might have been his own capability as a pilot which led him out of that black cloud.

EXTRA QUESTIONS

Question 6. 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 7. 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.