

Thinking About the Text

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 its first flight. It is a well known fact that doing something for the first time is challenging. Therefore, all young birds must be afraid to make their first flights. Similarly, a human baby would also find it a challenge to take its first step.

Question 2:

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

Answer:

The young seagull was very hungry. It was this hunger that ultimately compelled it to fly. Its hunger only intensified when it saw its mother tearing at a piece of fish that lay at her feet. It cried to her, begging her to get some food. When its mother came towards it with food in her beak, it screamed with joy and anticipation. However, she stopped midway. It wondered why she did not come nearer. Not being able to resist or control its hunger any longer, it dived at the food in its mother's beak. At that moment, his hunger overpowered his fear of the great expanse of sea beneath the cliff. Finally, this plunge was followed by the natural reaction of its body, i.e., to fly.

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 was afraid to fly. Even when it saw its brothers and sisters flying, and its parents helping and teaching them, it could not gather enough courage to make that first flight. That is why its father and mother were calling to it shrilly and

scolding it. They threatened to let it starve on its ledge if it did not fly. They did so because they wanted it to leave its fear behind and learn to fly.

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:

No solution available

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:

No solution available

Thinking About the Text

Question 1:

"I'll take the risk." What is the risk? Why does the narrator take it?

Answer:

The risk was to fly through the black storm clouds. The narrator took the risk because his home was beckoning him. He was dreaming of his holiday and looking forward to be with his family. He also wanted to get home in time to enjoy a good English breakfast.

Question 2:

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

Answer:

As he flew into the storm, everything went black. It was impossible to see anything outside the plane. It jumped and twisted in the air. When he looked at his compass, he saw that it was turning round and round. It was dead. Along with it, the other instruments, including the radio, were also dead. Suddenly, he saw another aeroplane. Its pilot waved at him, asking him to follow. He was glad to find a helper. He was using his last fuel tank and there was only enough fuel to fly five or ten minutes. Then, the other pilot started to go down and he followed. He suddenly came out of the clouds and saw the runway, on which he then landed his plane safely.

Question 3:

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

Answer:

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 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.

Question 4:

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

Answer:

The narrator had asked the woman in the control centre about the identity of the other pilot. She looked at him strangely as there was no other plane in the storm. She told him that no other plane was flying that night. His was the only plane she could see on the radar.

Question 5:

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

Answer:

Probably, it was the narrator's own self that helped him through the storm. There was no other plane in the storm as the woman at the control centre could see only his plane on the radar. Also, no other plane was flying that night. In his fear, he might have been hallucinating. He was a good pilot, and it might have been his own self that came to his help.

Thinking About Language

Question 1:

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. The meaning of 'black' in this sentence is that the face and hands are dark with dust and heat.
2. Here, 'black' refers to an angry look.
3. Here, 'blackest' refers to the darkest and cruellest crime against humanity.
4. Here, 'black' refers to dark and gloomy comedy.
5. The meaning of 'black' in this sentence is that the shopkeepers sell the described goods 'at a higher price'.
6. Here, 'black' means that the criminal suffered excessive beating at the hands of the villagers.

Question 2:

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

Answer:

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

Question 3:

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 as follows:

swoop, flit, float, dart, soar, hover, sail skim, glide, flutter