

## First Flight :Textbook in English for class X

### F 3 Two Stories About Flying

#### PART 1 : The First Flight By – Liam O’ Flaherty      Module 1/2

- Have you ever flown in an aeroplane? What one can be worried about when one is flying for the first time? One may wonder what if something goes wrong with the aeroplane engine in mid air! Do birds have such worries when they fly? Older birds may not have such worries. But what about a young bird?
- The story ‘ The First Flight I’ by Liam O’ Flaherty tells us how does a young seagull feel when he is going to fly for the first time (slide 2,3 - Image of a seagull).
- This actually makes us remember some of the things that we tried to learn when we were very young (slide 3- Learning at early age). Our parents or siblings helped us to overcome the initial fear and hesitation in our mind while we attempted to learn these things. The writer has also beautifully described the initial hesitation in the mind of the young seagull to fly for fear of falling down in the sea and his subsequent act of overcoming the fear by taking the successful flight with the help of his mother.
- The story in brief:  
The young seagull was waiting on his ledge to make the first flight. It was the day for him to take the first flight. Flying was one of the most essential life skills he required to live. His siblings had already begun to fly and fish on the same day. It wasn’t that he hadn’t given it a try. But it wasn’t more than just flapping of the wings and running till the brink of the ledge. The fear of falling down in the sea and lack of confidence in his own innate ability to fly was holding him back from flying and he had returned to his hole under the ledge(refer slide 4 The poor seagull).Even the shrill calls from his parents and the threats to

abandon him on his ledge to starve unless he flew away, had failed to make him move. He spent the entire day watching his brothers and sister learning to fly, skim the waves and dive for fish successfully. Nobody had returned to him to share the fish he caught (slide 5 -Why seagull couldn't fly at first?).

It was morning again and he had been without food since last nightfall. His parents and siblings could be seen walking midway down the opposite cliff and taunted him for his cowardice to take flight. It was afternoon and hunger was killing him. He pretended to be asleep to attract their attention. However nobody took any notice of him except for his mother. She tried to lure the seagull to take the flight by tearing a piece of the fish that lay at her feet. He begged her for food by giving shrill cry but she did not bring him any food and wanted him to fly off the ledge to the ocean and fish for himself. But his pleadings for food became more pathetic. This is described very beautifully in the text. Here is an extract from the lesson:

*“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.*

The word *‘derisively’* means *‘in a manner showing someone that she/he is stupid’*. The word *‘plaintively’* means *‘in a way that sounds slightly sad’*.

The mother decided to try something different to encourage her chick to take a flight. She picked up a piece of the fish and flew across to him, but stopped a short distance away just opposite to him (refer slide- 6 The mother seagull). He was not able to understand why she was not coming near him. Maddened by hunger he dived at the piece of fish in the beak of his mother. But he had missed the fish and found himself falling outwards and downwards into space. He was terrified for some sometime.

Instinctively he spread his wings and they supported him mid-air. He had overcome his fear of falling down and was already flying (refer slide 7 The first flight). His parents, the brothers and the sister joined him in his flight, cheering and congratulating him for having successfully taken the first flight. He lowered himself over the green sea to follow them on the water. His legs sank in the water the moment he made an attempt to stand on the sea. His belly touched the water and he sank no more and he was floating on the water. He was surrounded by his family members, who were praising him and their beaks were offering him scraps of dog-fish (slide 8). His flight was complete. (slide 9 What made the seagull take the first flight)

- Theme

The main ideas expressed in the story are the importance of independence, self-belief and confidence, and the need for motivation to attain goals. In the context of the story we can say that mother eagle wanted the young seagull to fly so that he need not be dependent on anyone for food. However the seagull lacked confidence in his own flying ability and hesitated to take the flight for fear of falling down. Hunger provided the young seagull a motivation whereas the mother seagull's act of offering the piece of fish acted like an external spark. The result was his successful flight.

- Metaphor

The narrator has used the seagull's flight as a metaphor. But before we proceed to understand the use of this literary device in the story let us know what it exactly means.

'Metaphor (pronounced meh-ta-for) is a common figure of speech that makes a comparison by directly relating one thing to another unrelated thing.'

For example:

*The detective listened to her tales with a wooden face.*

Here the speaker doesn't mean to say that detective's face was made of wood. He only compares lack of expression on the detective's face with wood. Here the detective's face, however, is not directly related to wood.

Lets see one more example:

*The typical teenage boy's room is a disaster area.*

Now having understood metaphor as a literary device let us see how the writer has used in the story. Here the seagull's flight stands for the independence. Once the young seagull takes flight he becomes independent from fear and hunger. He no more needs to wait for his parents or siblings to bring food for him.

- The imagery

The narrator has used vivid imagery to describe sea shore such as ledge, cliff, plateau, seagull, water etc. Let me read the beginning paragraph for your understanding:

*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.*

- Source: The First Flight, NCERT Textbook for class X.