

First Flight

(Class X – NCERT English)

Chapter 3: Two Stories about Flying – Liam O'Flaherty & Frederick Forsyth

Detailed Summary (Expanded, Exam-Oriented)

This chapter contains two stories about flying - "His First Flight" by Liam O'Flaherty and "Black Aeroplane" by Frederick Forsyth. Both deal with fear, courage, and overcoming challenges.

Story 1: His First Flight - A young seagull is afraid to fly. While his brothers and sister have learned to fly, he is too scared to take the plunge from the ledge. His parents try various methods to encourage him - threatening, scolding, and even taunting him. His mother refuses to bring him food, hoping hunger will force him to fly.

The young seagull watches his family flying, diving, and catching fish. He is desperate with hunger but too terrified to attempt flying. Finally, his mother picks up a piece of fish and flies close to him, holding it just out of reach. Maddened by hunger, the young seagull dives for the food.

As he falls, his terror turns to exhilaration as his wings automatically spread and catch the air. He discovers he can fly! His family celebrates around him, and he soars over the ocean, experiencing the joy of flight he had feared for so long.

Story 2: Black Aeroplane - The narrator is flying his old Dakota airplane from Paris to London at night. He is looking forward to his holiday and a good English breakfast. As he flies, he sees storm clouds but decides to risk flying through them to reach home.

Inside the clouds, his compass and radio stop working. He is lost in the storm with no way to navigate. Suddenly, he sees another airplane - a strange black plane without lights - flying next to him. The pilot signals him to follow.

Trusting the mysterious pilot, the narrator follows the black plane. It guides him safely through the storm clouds. When he finally emerges and sees the lights of the airport, he looks around for the black plane to thank the pilot, but it has vanished.

When he asks the control tower about the other plane, they are confused - their radar showed no other aircraft in the sky. The black plane remains a mystery - was it real or a figment of his desperate imagination? The story leaves this question unanswered.

Central Themes

1. Overcoming Fear

Both stories show characters overcoming fear through necessity. The seagull overcomes fear of flying; the pilot overcomes fear in the storm.

2. Instinct and Survival

The young seagull's wings work instinctively once he takes the leap. Natural abilities emerge when we push past fear.

3. Mystery and Faith

The black aeroplane story deals with unexplained help. Sometimes we must trust and follow guidance even when we don't understand it.

4. Learning Through Experience

Both protagonists learn by doing. The seagull learns to fly by flying; the pilot learns to trust by following.

Character Analysis

1. The Young Seagull

Represents anyone facing their first major challenge. He is fearful but ultimately brave when pushed. His transformation shows that courage often comes from necessity.

2. The Seagull Family

They use tough love to teach. The mother's refusal to feed him seems cruel but is necessary for his development.

3. The Pilot (narrator)

Experienced but still faces fear. His willingness to trust the mysterious black plane shows faith and courage under pressure.

Important Vocabulary (With Meanings)

- **Ledge** – narrow horizontal surface projecting from a wall or cliff
- **Preening** – tidying and cleaning feathers with the beak
- **Shrilly** – in a high-pitched and piercing voice
- **Brink** – edge or margin
- **Expanse** – wide continuous area
- **Devoured** – ate hungrily or quickly
- **Muster** – gather or assemble
- **Plunge** – jump or dive quickly
- **Compass** – instrument for finding direction

- **Oblong** – rectangular shape

Exam-Ready Key Points

- First story: Young seagull afraid to fly despite family encouragement
- Family uses hunger to force him to attempt flying
- He dives for food and discovers he can fly naturally
- Second story: Pilot flying Dakota from Paris to London encounters storm
- His instruments fail inside storm clouds - compass and radio dead
- Mysterious black plane without lights appears and guides him to safety
- Black plane vanishes after guiding him through; no record of it on radar
- Both stories deal with overcoming fear and trust in difficult situations
- Themes: fear, courage, instinct, mystery, and learning through experience