

## Introduction

**Alice Malsenior Walker** (1944-) is an African American novelist, short story writer, poet, essayist and activist. Her most famous novel, *The Color Purple*, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award. Walker's creative vision is rooted in the economic hardship, racial terror and folk wisdom of African American life and culture.

**Calling All Grand Mothers** features in the collection *Hard Times Require Furious Dancing*. Grand Mothers are symbolic of all the women in the world and have an enormous task to accomplish. Read on to know about it.

We have to live  
differently  
or we  
will die  
in the same  
old ways.

Therefore  
I call on all Grand Mothers  
everywhere  
on the planet  
to rise  
and take your place  
in the leadership  
of the world

Come out  
of the kitchen  
out of the  
fields  
out of the  
beauty parlors  
out of the  
television  
Step forward  
& assume  
the role  
for which  
you were  
created:  
To lead humanity

to health, happiness  
& sanity.  
I call on  
all the  
Grand Mothers  
of Earth  
& every person  
who possesses  
the Grand Mother  
spirit  
of respect for  
life  
&  
protection of  
the young  
to rise  
& lead.  
The life of  
our species  
depends  
on it.  
& I call on all men  
of Earth  
to gracefully  
and  
gratefully  
stand aside  
& let them  
(let us)  
do so.

**sanity** (n) (here) rationality **spirit** (n) (here) essence

**Activity**

**Read the poem carefully.**

**A. Choose the correct option and rewrite the complete sentence.**

1. What role should be assumed by the Grand Mothers?  
(a) Entrepreneurs (b) Leaders  
(c) Managers (d) Politicians
2. Alice Walker wants the Grand Mothers to come out of the \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) campus (b) fields  
(c) offices (d) shops
3. Grand Mothers have the power to lead humanity to \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) development (b) enhancement  
(c) growth (d) sanity
4. \_\_\_\_\_ is the major theme of the poem.  
(a) Women Discrimination (b) Women Education  
(c) Women Empowerment (d) Women Health
5. 'We have to live/differently/or we/will die/in the same/old ways.' Identify the figure of speech in this line.  
(a) Alliteration (b) Anastrophe  
(c) Anti-climax (d) Antithesis

**B. Answer the following questions in brief.**

1. Why is it necessary for the Grand Mothers to live differently?
2. Where, according to the poet, are the Grand Mothers usually occupied?
3. In what ways can the Grand Mothers contribute to the development of humanity?
4. Who does the poet refer to as 'our species' in the poem? How could they be protected?
5. What are the men expected to do gratefully and gracefully? Why?



**Introduction**

**Rabindranath Tagore** (1861 – 1941), also known as Gurudev, was India’s first Nobel Laureate. Author of *Gitanjali* and its “profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse”, he is generally regarded as an outstanding creative artist of the Indian subcontinent. Artist, writer of various genres of literature, he was also the founder of Shantiniketan.

**The Journey** depicts the poet’s experiences with nature.

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The morning sea of silence broke into ripples of bird songs;  
and the flowers were all merry by the roadside;  
and the wealth of gold was scattered through the rift of the clouds  
while we busily went on our way and paid no heed.  
We sang no glad songs nor played;  
we went not to the village for barter;  
we spoke not a word nor smiled;  
we lingered not on the way.  
We quickened our pace more and more as the time sped by.  
The sun rose to the mid sky and doves cooed in the shade.  
Withered leaves danced and whirled in the hot air of noon.  
The shepherd boy drowsed and dreamed in the shadow of the banyan tree,  
and I laid myself down by the water  
and stretched my tired limbs on the grass.  
My companions laughed at me in scorn;  
they held their heads high and hurried on;  
they never looked back nor rested;  
they vanished in the distant blue haze.

They crossed many meadows and hills,  
and passed through strange, far-away countries.  
All honor to you, heroic host of the interminable path!  
Mockery and reproach pricked me to rise,  
but found no response in me.  
I gave myself up for lost  
in the depth of a glad humiliation  
—in the shadow of a dim delight.

The repose of the sun-embroidered green gloom  
 slowly spread over my heart.  
 I forgot for what I had traveled,  
 and I surrendered my mind without struggle  
 to the maze of shadows and songs.  
 At last, when I woke from my slumber and opened my eyes,  
 I saw thee standing by me, flooding my sleep with thy smile.  
 How I had feared that the path was long and wearisome,  
 and the struggle to reach thee was hard!

### Glossary

**ripples** (n) series of waves on the surface of water **rift of the clouds** distance between the clouds **interminable** (adj.) unending **reproach** (v) expression of disapproval or disappointment **repose** (n) rest

### Activity

**Read the poem carefully.**

#### A. Choose the correct option and rewrite the complete sentence.

- What does the poet mean by the wealth of gold being scattered?
 

(a) Gold scattered on earth	(b) Golden glow
(c) Sun's glow on the earth	(d) Wealth of nature
- Who according to the poet is hosting the interminable path?
 

(a) Fellow travellers	(b) God
(c) Poet's father	(d) Poet himself
- 'In the depth of a glad humiliation' indicates that \_\_\_\_\_.
 

(a) he feels lost	(b) he is humiliated
(c) his father got lost	(d) his fellowtravellers were humiliated
- The purpose of the travel seems to be forgotten by the poet because \_\_\_\_\_.
 

(a) he allows his inner self to reach the destination	(b) he enjoys his rest
(c) he gets engaged in other work	(d) he was feeling lazy
- 'The morning sea of silence broke into ripples.' Identify the figure of speech.
 

(a) Litotes	(b) Metaphor
(c) Simile	(d) Synecdoche

#### B. Answer the following questions in brief.

- To what did the travellers pay no heed?
- What did the travellers do till noon?
- How did the poet react on seeing the shepherd boy? How did his companions respond?
- What does the poet mean by 'sun-embroidered'?
- What does the poet realize at the end of his journey?





## Introduction

**Sir Walter Raleigh** (1554 – 1618) was an English statesman, writer, poet, soldier, politician, courtier, spy and explorer. Some of his well-known works are *The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd*, *What is Our Life* and *The Lie* and *The Advice*.

**Song of Myself** is a humorous attempt of a poet trying to describe himself. Read on...

I was a Poet!  
 But I did not know it,  
 Neither did my Mother,  
 Nor my Sister nor my Brother.  
 The Rich were not aware of it;  
 The Poor took no care of it.  
 The Reverend Mr. Drewitt  
 Never knew it.  
 The High did not suspect it;  
 The Low could not detect it.  
 Aunt Sue  
 Said it was obviously untrue.  
 Uncle Ned  
 Said I was off my head:  
 (This from a Colonial  
 Was really a good testimonial.)  
 Still everybody seemed to think  
 That genius owes a good deal to drink.  
 So that is how  
 I am not a poet now,  
 And why

My inspiration has run dry.  
 It is no sort of use  
 To cultivate the Muse  
 If vulgar people  
 Can't tell a village pump from a church steeple.  
 I am merely apologizing  
 For the lack of the surprising  
 In what I write  
 To-night.  
 I am quite well-meaning,  
 But a lot of things are always intervening  
 Between  
 What I mean  
 And what it is said  
 I had in my head.  
 It is all very puzzling.  
 Uncle Ned  
 Says Poets need muzzling.  
 He might  
 Be right.  
 Good-night!

**colonial** (adj.) (here) American **testimonial** (n) (here) character certificate **vulgar** (adj.) (here) common  
**church steeple** tall tower of the church **muzzling** (v) silencing, restraining

**Activity**

**Read the poem carefully.**

**A. Choose the correct option and rewrite the complete sentence.**

1. 'My inspiration has run dry' means \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (a) his ability to write poetry is exhausted
  - (b) his family members are always quarrelling with each other
  - (c) his finances are in bad shape
  - (d) his mental condition is unstable
2. There is a vast gap between what the poet thinks and \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (a) aunt Sue understands
  - (b) Mr. Drewitt understands
  - (c) people understand
  - (d) the poet understands
3. Mr. Drewitt was \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (a) a clergyman
  - (b) a critic
  - (c) the poet's brother
  - (d) the poet's father
4. The poet ironically apologises because \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (a) common people cannot differentiate between everyday language and poetry
  - (b) he cannot compose poetry
  - (c) his inspiration has run dry
  - (d) the poets need muzzling
5. The figure of speech in 'The Rich were not aware of it, The Poor took no care of it;' is \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (a) Anthithesis
  - (b) Euphemism
  - (c) Litotes
  - (d) Metaphor

**B. Answer the following questions in brief.**

1. List the people who were unaware of the poet being what he was.
2. Why was the poet unable to convey his ideas?
3. Why does the poet say, 'It is all very puzzling'?
4. Comment on the ending of the poem.
5. Explain the irony in the following lines.

'Uncle Ned  
Said I was off my head:  
(This from a Colonial  
Was really a good testimonial.)'



**Introduction**

**Joseph Rudyard Kipling** (1865 – 1936) was an English journalist, short-story writer, poet and novelist. Kipling's major works include novels like *The Jungle Book*, *Kim* and poems like *Mandalay*, *Gunga Din* and *The White Man's Burden*. At the age of 41, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

**If** is an instructive poem that will help one to lead a meaningful life. The poem is addressed to Kipling's son, John.

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If you can keep your head when all about you  
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;  
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,  
But make allowance for their doubting too:  
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,  
Or, being lied about, don't deal in lies,  
Or being hated don't give way to hating,  
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;  
If you can dream – and not make dreams your master;  
If you can think – and not make thoughts your aim,  
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster  
And treat those two impostors just the same:  
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken  
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,  
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,  
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools;  
  
If you can make one heap of all your winnings  
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,  
And lose, and start again at your beginnings,

And never breathe a word about your loss:  
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew  
To serve your turn long after they are gone,  
And so hold on when there is nothing in you  
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on!"

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,  
Or walk with Kings — nor lose the common touch,  
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,  
If all men count with you, but none too much:  
If you can fill the unforgiving minute  
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,  
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,  
And which is more: you'll be a Man, my son!

### Glossary

**imposter** (n) pretender **knaves** (n) dishonest, unscrupulous persons **build' em up** (build them up) (here)  
rebuild the broken parts of your life **pitch-and-toss** a kind of game **sinew** (n) ligament

### Activity

**Read the poem carefully.**

**A. Choose the correct option and rewrite the complete sentence.**

1. The poet advises his son on \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (a) acquiring something that can be perceived as a set of virtues
  - (b) being an outstanding citizen of the community and the world
  - (c) ignoring the advice of others
  - (d) the way to trust oneself
2. The poet asks his readers to make themselves strong enough such that they \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (a) can fight against all
  - (b) can take responsibility for their actions
  - (c) keep up their reputation
  - (d) prove their strength

3. According to the poet, a person should muster enough confidence \_\_\_\_\_ .
- (a) to become very rich                      (b) to believe in himself and his potential
- (c) to fight with his enemies              (d) to speak the truth
4. Kipling asks his readers to dream and think and advises them to \_\_\_\_\_ .
- (a) continue dreaming
- (b) do anything to achieve their dreams
- (c) help others also to achieve their dreams
- (d) prevent dreams from controlling every waking moment
5. In 'If you can fill the unforgiving minute 'the figure of speech used is \_\_\_\_\_ .
- (a) Litotes                                      (b) Metaphor
- (c) Oxymoron                                  (d) Personification

**B. Answer the following questions in brief.**

1. Explain the line: 'But make allowance for their doubting too :'
2. Mention the importance of being balanced in the treatment of victory and failure.
3. What should be mended with 'worn out tools'?
4. Why is it necessary to hold on in times of adversity?
5. How does the poet justify the value of balance and detachment in the poem?
6. Find examples of Antithesis in the poem.



## Introduction

**Jaya Mehta** (1932-) was born in a village in Saurashtra and spent her childhood in Mumbai. Exposure to the world of poetry and research, as a translator, inspired Jaya Mehta to start creative writing.

**When a Stone Is in One's Hands** is a translation from Gujarati into English by Pradip N. Khandwalla. A stone may have many symbolic meanings. Read on to find out.

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Stone is history  
 an edifice  
 a sculpture  
 of Gandhi, Jesus, Buddha.  
 Stone is memory of  
 the Taj's opulence  
 a memorial stone  
 a support  
 a weapon.  
 When did we learn all this?  
 When a stone is in hand  
 one experiences power  
 and forgets that what gets wounded  
 is hide  
 whether white or black  
 hurt by a sharp pebble.  
 When a stone is in hand  
 one forgets that  
 a fallen person  
 can be given water, even an enemy.  
 Such amnesia  
 When the hand grips a stone....

## Glossary

**edifice** (n) structure **opulence** (n) wealth **hide** (n) (here) skin **amnesia** (n) forgetfulness

## Activity

**Read the poem carefully.**

**A. Choose the correct option and rewrite the complete sentence.**

1. When a stone is in one's hand, one experiences \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) anger (b) confidence  
(c) fear (d) power
2. When a stone is in hand, one forgets that even an enemy can be \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) helped (b) killed  
(c) loved (d) tortured
3. The line, 'one forgets that what gets wounded is hide' means \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) everyone feels the same pain (b) many can feel the pain  
(c) only few can feel the pain (d) only the wounded can feel the pain
4. 'Stone' here does not symbolize \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) history (b) opulence  
(c) power (d) revolt
5. The figure of speech in the line, 'When a stone is in hand' is \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Metonymy (b) Onomatopoeia  
(c) Oxymoron (d) Tautology

**B. Answer the following questions in brief.**

1. How is the stone described as both constructive and destructive?
2. Describe the different feelings that one experiences when a stone is in hand.
3. 'Stone is history'. Explain.
4. Comment on the significance of the image of forgetfulness in the poem.



## Introduction

**William Butler Yeats** (1865 - 1939), an Irish poet, was one of the foremost figures of 20th century literature. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature – the first Irishman so honoured. His works include *The Tower*, *The Winding Stair*, *A Prayer for My Daughter*, *The Second Coming* and *Two Plays for Dancers*.

**The Wild Swans at Coole** takes us to the scene of a placid lake on an autumn evening. The poem symbolically depicts the transition of life.

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The trees are in their autumn beauty,  
The woodland paths are dry,  
Under the October twilight the water  
Mirrors a still sky;  
Upon the brimming water among the stones  
Are nine-and-fifty swans.  
The nineteenth autumn has come upon me  
Since I first made my count;  
I saw, before I had well finished,  
All suddenly mount  
And scatter wheeling in great broken rings  
Upon their clamorous wings.  
I have looked upon those brilliant creatures,  
And now my heart is sore.  
All's changed since I, hearing at twilight,  
The first time on this shore,  
The bell-beat of their wings above my head,  
Trod with a lighter tread.  
Unwearied still, lover by lover,  
They paddle in the cold  
Companionable streams or climb the air;  
Their hearts have not grown old;  
Passion or conquest, wander where they will,  
Attend upon them still.  
But now they drift on the still water,  
Mysterious, beautiful;



Among what rushes will they build,  
 By what lake's edge or pool  
 Delight men's eyes when I awake some day  
 To find they have flown away?

### Glossary

**clamorous** (adj.) noisy, loud **rushes** (n) (here) marsh plants **wheeling** (v) flying in a wide circle or curve

### Activity

**Read the poem carefully.**

**A. Choose the correct option and rewrite the complete sentence.**

1. How many years have passed since the poet first visited Coole Park?
 

(a) 16	(b) 17
(c) 18	(d) 19
2. In spite of ageing the swans are not \_\_\_\_\_ at heart.
 

(a) depressed	(b) old
(c) sore	(d) young
3. The wild swans fly in a \_\_\_\_\_ formation.
 

(a) arrow	(b) circular
(c) straight	(d) triangular
4. In the last stanza, the poet is disturbed because \_\_\_\_\_.
 

(a) he does not know where the swans will nest	(b) the number of swans will decrease
(c) the swans will drift away in water	(d) the swans will not fly anymore
5. Identify the figure of speech in 'Under the October twilight the water, /Mirrors a still sky'
 

(a) Apostrophe	(b) Metaphor
(c) Paradox	(d) Pun

**B. Answer the following questions in brief.**

1. How is autumn described by W. B. Yeats?
2. What makes the poet unhappy?
3. Describe the activities of the swans when they become old.
4. Mention the epithets used to describe the swans.
5. Why would the swans fly away some day?
6. 'The realization that life, in all its wonder, is fragile.' Elucidate with reference to *The Wild Swans at Coole*.



## Supplementary Reading

1

# The Friday Everything Changed

### Introduction

**Anne Hart** (1935- ) is a Canadian author, a biographer and a Member of the Order of Canada. She is best known for *The Life and Times of Miss Jane Marple*, her biography of the Agatha Christie character.

**The Friday Everything Changed** describes how a simple question challenges the unspoken rule and tradition. In the process, it brings people closer.

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Tradition. In Miss Ralston's class the boys have always carried the water bucket. Until one day, the girls decide it's time to challenge the rule.

The last hour of school on Friday afternoons was for Junior Red Cross. The little kids would get out their Junior Red Cross pins and put them on and us big kids would start elbowing down the aisles to the book cupboard at the back to see who would get the interesting magazines. There was a big pile of them and they were of two kinds: the National Geographic and the Junior Red Cross News. Apart from the magazines for the big kids and maybe the teacher reading a story to the little kids, about the only other thing that happened regularly during Red Cross was picking the two boys who would carry water the next week.

In our school the water bucket always stood on a shelf at the front of the room just behind the teacher's desk. First you'd make a paper cup out of a piece of scribbler paper, then you'd grab the teacher's attention from wherever it happened to be and then up you'd go to the front of the room for a drink from the water bucket.

It was kind of interesting to stand at the front of the room behind the teacher's desk and drink water. The school looked different from up there and sometimes you could get just a glimpse of an idea of what the teacher thought she was all about. I mean, from the front, looking down on those rows of kids with their heads bent over their desks and the sun coming in the windows and the blackboards and all that stuff on the walls, you might almost think, at first glance, that you were looking at one of those real city schools—like in the health books—where the kids were all so neat and all the same size. But after the first strange moment it just became our school again, because you had to start adding in things like the coal stove and the scarred old double desks and the kids themselves. I mean, we just didn't look like the kids in those pictures. Maybe it was because we were so many different sizes—from the kids snuffling in the front rows over their Nan and Dan readers to the big boys hunched over their desks at the back, maybe it was because we wore so many heavy clothes all the time, or maybe it was because of something that wasn't even there at all but seemed to be on the faces of the kids in those city pictures: a look as if they liked being where they were.

But all that's a long way from Junior Red Cross and who would carry the water.

The water for our school came from a pump at the railway station, which was about a quarter of a mile away. One day long ago a health inspector had come around and had announced that water must be made available to the school. For a while there had been some talk of digging a well but in the end we got a big, shiny, galvanized water bucket and permission to use the railway station pump. And from that day on—for

all the boys—the most important thing that happened at school, even more important than softball, was who would get to carry the water.

If you were a boy it was something you started dreaming about in Grade I, even though there was not the remotest chance it could ever happen to you before at least Grade 5, and only then if the teacher thought you were big and strong enough. You dreamed about it partly because carrying the water meant you were one of the big guys, and carrying the water meant you could get away from school for maybe half an hour at a time. But mostly you dreamed about it because carrying the water was something real, and had absolutely nothing whatever to do with Nan and Dan and all that stuff. So every Friday afternoon toward the end of Red Cross, when it got to be time for the teacher to pick the two boys who would go for water the next week, all the National Geographics came to rest like huge butterflies folding up their yellow wings and a big hush fell all over the back rows. And that's the way it had always been until one extraordinary afternoon when, right out of the blue, just after the teacher had picked Ernie Chapman and Garnet Dixon to carry the water, my seatmate, Alma Niles, put up her hand and said: "Why can't girls go for the water, too?"

If one of those German planes, like in the war movies, had suddenly appeared over the school and dropped a bomb, we all couldn't have been more surprised. A silence fell over the room and in that silence everyone looked at the teacher.

Now our teacher that year was named Miss Ralston and even though she came from River Hibbert we all liked her quite a lot. She was strict but she was never really mean like some of the teachers we'd had. Because she was young (she'd just finished Grade 11 the year before herself—River Hibbert had fancy things like Grade 11) she'd had quite a rough time the first week of school with the bigger boys. But she was pretty big herself and after she'd strapped most of them up at the front of the room before our very eyes (and even the little kids could see that it really hurt) things had settled down. The boys kind of admired Miss Ralston for strapping so hard, and us girls admired her because she was so pretty and wore nylon stockings and loafers all the time. But the really unusual thing about Miss Ralston was the way she sometimes stopped in the middle of a lesson and looked at us as if we real people, instead of just a lot of kids who had to be pushed through to their next grades. And that was why, on that Friday afternoon when Alma Niles put up her hand and said: "Why can't girls go for the water, too?" we all turned and looked at Miss Ralston first instead of just bursting out laughing at Alma right away.

And Miss Ralston, instead of saying, "Whoever heard of girls going for the water?" or "Are you trying to be saucy, Alma?" like any other teacher would, said nothing at all for a moment but just looked very hard at Alma, who had gone quite white with the shock of dropping such a bombshell.

After a long moment, when she finally spoke, Miss Ralston, instead of saying, "Why that's out of the question, Alma," threw a bombshell of her own: "I'll think about that," she said—as if, you know, she would—"and I'll let you know next Friday."

The trouble started right away as soon as we got into the school yard, because all the boys knew, from the moment Miss Ralston had spoken, that something of theirs was being threatened and that, as long as there was the remotest chance that any girl might get to carry the water, they had to do everything in their power to stop it. Like driving a tractor or playing hockey for the Toronto Maple Leafs, carrying water was real, and because it was real it belonged to them.

So they went right for Alma as soon as she came out of school and that was when another funny thing happened. Instead of just standing back and watching Alma get beaten up, as we usually did when the boys were after someone, the girls rushed right in to try and help her. In the first place we all liked Alma, and in the second place we all had seen, as clearly as the boys, what our carrying the water might mean; that, incredibly, we, too, might get to skip school for half an hour at a time, that we, too, might get to sneak into Rowsell's store on the way back and, most dizzying thought of all, that we too might get to do something real.

And, because we were so intoxicated by the whole idea, and took the boys so much by surprise by standing up to them, we somehow managed to get Alma and ourselves out of the schoolyard with only a few bruises and torn stockings, leaving the boys in possession of the schoolyard where, as we could glimpse over our shoulders as we ran down the hill, they had begun to gather together in a single ominous knot.

And for the rest of that weekend, though of course we never talked about it in front of our parents, all we could think of, both boys and girls, was what was going to happen at school that coming week.

The first thing, clearly evident by recess on Monday morning, was that the boys had decided not to let us girls field at softball any more.

Softball at our school used to go like this: every Monday morning at recess two of the bigger boys—that year it was usually Ernie Chapman and Junior LeBlanc—used to pick their teams for the week. Whoever came out on top in laddering hands up the softball bat got to pick first and the loser second and so it went back and forth—until all the boys who were considered good enough to be on a team had been picked. Then Ernie and Junior laddered the bat again to see which side would get up first and the losing side took to the field to be joined by the little boys who hadn't been picked and us older girls who were allowed to act as sort of permanent supplementary fielders. And for the rest of the week the teams remained locked, at every recess and lunchtime, in one long softball game which had, as we discovered to our surprise several years later when the television came through, some strange rules.

The way we played, for example, every single boy had to get out before the other team could come in. And any boy hitting a homerun not only had the right to bat straight away again but also to bring back into the game any boy who had got out. Which led to kids who couldn't remember their six-times table properly being able to announce—say, by noon on Thursday “The score's now 46 to 39 because, in the last inning starting Tuesday lunchtime, Junior's team was all out except for Irving Snell, who hit three homers in a row off of Lorne Ripley, and brought in Ira and Jim and Elton who brought in the rest except for Austin who got out for the second time on Wednesday with a foul ball one of the girls caught behind third base. ...”

Some days it got so exciting that at noon we couldn't wait to eat our lunches but would rush straight into the schoolyard, gobbling our sandwiches as we ran, toward that aching moment when the ball, snaking across the yellow grass or arching toward us from the marsh sky, might meet our open, eager hands.

So it was a hard blow, Monday morning recess, when Ernie Chapman whirled the bat around his head, slammed it down as hard as he could on home base and announced. “The first girl that goes out to field, we break her neck.” We clustered forlornly around the girls' entry door knowing there was nothing we could really do.

“Oh Alma,” mourned Minnie Halliday, biting the ends of her long, brown braids, “why couldn’t you just have kept your mouth shut?” It was a bad moment. If we’d tried to go out to field they’d have picked us off one by one. We couldn’t even play softball on our own. None of us owned a bat and ball.

If it hadn’t been for Doris Pomeroy, we might have broken rank right there and then. Doris, who was in Grade 9 and had had a home permanent and sometimes wore nail polish and had even, it was rumoured, gone swimming in the quarry all alone with Elton Lawrence, flicked a rock against the schoolhouse wall in the silence following Minnie’s remark and steadied us all by saying: “Don’t be foolish, Minnie. All we have to do is wait. They need us to field and, besides, they kind of like to have us out there looking at them when they get up to bat.”

But it was a long, hard week. Besides not letting us field, the boys picked on us whenever they got the chance. I guess they figured that if they made things bad enough for us, sooner or later we’d go to Miss Ralston and ask her to forget the whole thing. But all their picking on and bullying did was to keep us together. Whenever one of us was tripped going down the aisle or got an ink ball in her hair or got trapped in the outhouse by a bunch of boys it was as if it was happening to all of us. And looking back on that week—when there were so many bad feelings and so many new feelings in the air—it was kind of nice, too, because for the first time us girls found ourselves telling each other our troubles and even our thoughts without worrying about being laughed at. And that was something new at our school.

As for Alma, who kept getting notes thrown on her desk promising her everything awful, we stuck to her like burrs. But maybe Alma’s hardest moment had nothing to do with bullying at all. It was when her cousin Arnold came over to see her Wednesday after school and asked her to drop the whole idea of girls going for the water.

“If they find out about it, Alma,” said Arnold. “they’ll probably take away the water bucket.” “Who’s they?” asked Alma. She and Arnold had played a lot together when they were little kids and she was used to listening to his opinions on most things.

“Well, the health inspector,” said Arnold, “and guys like that.”

“They’ll never take away that water bucket,” said Alma, though she wasn’t all that sure. “They don’t care who carries the water as long as it gets carried.”

“Alma,” said Arnold earnestly, “the other guys would kill me if they ever found out I told you this but sometimes carrying the water isn’t that much fun. On cold days it’s real hard work. You’re better off in the warm school.”

Alma knew what it cost Arnold to tell her this but she stood firm. “I’m sorry, Arnold,” she said. “but I’m used to cold weather. In winter I walk to school the same as you.” So Arnold went away.

If Miss Ralston, as the week wore on, noticed anything unusual going on in her school, she gave little sign of it. She passed out the usual punishments for ink balls, she intercepted threatening notes and tore them up unread, she looked at Alma’s white face, and all she asked about were the principal rivers of Europe. Nor were we surprised. Nothing in our experience had led us to believe the grown-ups had the slightest inkling—or interest—in what really went on with kids.



Only Doris Pomeroy thought differently. “Miss Ralston looks real mad,” said Doris as we trailed in thankfully from Friday morning recess.

“Mad?” a couple of us asked.

“Yeah. Like when she comes out to ring the bell and we’re all hanging around the entry door like a lot of scared chickens. She rings that old hand bell as if she wished all those yelling boys’ heads were under it. Of course they do things differently in River Hibbert. I know for a fact that girls there get to play on softball teams just like the boys.”

“On teams? Just like the boys?” But it was all too much for us to take in at that moment, so preoccupied were we with that after-noon’s decision on the water. All that long, hard week it was as if Friday afternoon and Junior Red Cross would never come again. Now that it was almost upon us most of us forgot, in our excitement, at least for the time being, Doris’ heady remark about softball.

So at lunchtime, just as the boys were winding up their week’s game (“And real great, eh? Without the girls?” Ernie Chapman was gloating loudly from the pitcher’s mound), when Miss Ralston, without her bell, leaped through our clustered huddles at the entry door and headed straight toward the softball field, she took us all completely by surprise. Crunch, crunch, crunch went Miss Ralston’s bright red loafers against the cinders and the next thing we knew she’d grabbed the bat from Irving Snell and, squinting against the sun, was twirling and lining it before our astonished eyes.

“Come on! Come on!” cried Miss Ralston impatiently to Ernie who stood transfixed before her on the pitcher’s mound. “Come on! Come on!” she cried again and she banged the bat against the ground.

“Come on! Come on!” cried Doris Pomeroy and we rushed after her across the cinders. The first ball Ernie threw was pretty wobbly and Miss Ralston hit it at an angle so that it fell sideways, a foul ball, toward George Fowler’s outstretched hands.

“Ah-h-h-h-h,” we moaned from the side-lines and some of us closed our eyes so we wouldn’t have to look. But George jumped too eagerly for such an easy ball and it fell right through his fingers and rolled harmlessly along the ground.

Ernie took a lot more time over his second pitch. He was getting over the first shock of finding Miss Ralston opposite him at bat and by this time he was receiving shouts of encouragement from all over the field.

“Get her! Get her!” the boys yelled recklessly at Ernie and they all fanned out behind the bases. Ernie took aim slowly. None of us had ever seen the pirouettings of professional pitchers but there was a certain awesome ceremony, nevertheless, as Ernie spat savagely on the ball, glared hard at Miss Ralston, slowly swung back his big right arm and, poised for one long moment, his whole body outstretched, threw the ball as hard as he could toward home base where Miss Ralston waited, her body rocking with the bat.

For a fleeting moment we had a glimpse of what life might be like in River Hibbert and then Miss Ralston hit the ball.

“Ah-h-h-h-h-h,” we cried as it rose high in the air, borne by the marsh wind, and flew like a bird against the sun, across the road and out of sight, into the ox pasture on the other side.

“Ah-h-h-h-h-h ...”

We all stared at Miss Ralston. “School’s in,” she announced over her shoulder, walking away.

Hitting the ball into the ox pasture happened maybe once a year.

That afternoon, toward the end of Red Cross, there was a big hush all over the room. "Next week," said Miss Ralston, closing the school register, tidying her books, "next week Alma Niles and Joyce Shipley will go for the water."

She swept her hand over the top of her desk and tiny dust motes danced in the slanting sun.

### Glossary

**snuffling** (v) breathing noisily due to cold or crying **quarry** (n) (here) a large deep pit **burrs** (n) thorny seed or fruit that sticks to grazing animals or clothes **pirouetting** (v) spinning and turning **dust motes** tiny dust particles

### Activity

**Read the lesson carefully.**

**A. Choose the correct option and rewrite the complete sentence.**

1. The water at the school came from a pump at the \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) bus station (b) gas station  
(c) radio station (d) railway station
2. Miss Ralston was a / an \_\_\_\_\_ teacher.  
(a) funny and loyal (b) lazy and calm  
(c) old and ugly (d) young and pretty
3. This was something new at the school that \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) the boys would fetch the water  
(b) the girls exchanged their troubles and thoughts without worrying  
(c) the girls were bullied by the boys  
(d) the teacher had threatened the boys
4. Arnold earnestly told Alma that carrying water was \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) a compulsion for the boys (b) a punishment for them  
(c) an alternative to reading books (d) hard work on cold days
5. What was Miss Ralston's reply to Alma's question ?  
(a) "Girls need not fetch the water." (b) "How can you make such a demand?"  
(c) "I'll think about that." (d) "It's out of question."

**B. Answer the following questions in brief.**

1. Bring out the difference between the city schools and the author's school.
2. What did the health inspector announce? What was the impact?
3. Why was carrying water an important activity for the boys?
4. How did the boys react to the idea of girls carrying the water?
5. Describe the experience of girls when they came together.
6. How did Arnold try to convince Alma to drop her idea?
7. Can Miss Ralston be called a reformer? Why?



**Introduction**

**Richard David Bach** (1936- ), an American writer, is widely known as the author of the very popular 1970s bestseller, *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*. He has also written works of non-fiction like *One* and *Out of My Mind*. Bach is noted for his love of aviation and for his books related to flying in a metaphorical context.

**Jonathan Livingston Seagull** is a fable about a seagull learning about life and flight. Read this excerpt to find out.

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It was morning, and the new sun sparkled gold across the ripples of a gentle sea.

A mile from shore a fishing boat chummed the water, and the word for Breakfast Flock flashed through the air, till a crowd of a thousand seagulls came to dodge and fight for bits of food. It was another busy day beginning.

But way off alone, out by himself beyond boat and shore, Jonathan Livingston Seagull was practising. A hundred feet in the sky he lowered his webbed feet, lifted his beak, and strained to hold a painful hard twisting curve through his wings. The curve meant that he would fly slowly, and now he slowed until the wind was a whisper in his face, until the ocean stood still beneath him. He narrowed his eyes in fierce concentration, held his breath, forced one ... single ... more ... inch ... of ... curve ... Then his feathers ruffled, he stalled and fell.

Seagulls, as you know, never falter, never stall. To stall in the air is for them disgrace and it is dishonour.

But Jonathan Livingston Seagull, unashamed, stretching his wings again in that trembling hard curve – slowing, slowing, and stalling once more – was no ordinary bird.

Most gulls don't bother to learn more than the simplest facts of fight – how to get from shore to food and back again. For most gulls, it is not flying that matters, but eating. For this gull, though, it was not eating that mattered, but flight. More than anything else, Jonathan Livingston Seagull loved to fly.

This kind of thinking, he found, is not the way to make one's self popular with other birds. Even his parents were dismayed as Jonathan spent whole days alone, making hundreds of low-level glides, experimenting.

He didn't know why, for instance, but when he flew at altitudes less than half his wingspan above the water, he could stay in the air longer, with less effort. His glides ended not with the usual feet-down splash into the sea, but with a long flat wake as he touched the surface with his feet tightly streamlined against his body. When he began sliding into feet-up landings on the beach, then pacing the length of his slide in the sand, his parents were very much dismayed indeed.

“Why, Jon, why?” his mother asked. “Why is it so hard to be like the rest of the flock, Jon? Why can't you leave low flying to the pelicans, the albatross? Why don't you eat? Jon, you're bone and feathers!”



“I don’t mind being bone and feathers, Mum. I just want to know what I can do in the air and what I can’t, that’s all. I just want to know.”

“See here, Jonathan,” said his father, not unkindly. “Winter isn’t far away. Boats will be few, and the surface fish will be swimming deep. If you must study, then study food, and how to get it. This flying business is all very well, but you can’t eat a glide, you know. Don’t you forget that the reason you fly is to eat.”

Jonathan nodded obediently. For the next few days he tried to behave like the other gulls; he really tried, screeching and fighting with the flock around the piers and fishing boats, diving on scraps of fish and bread. But he couldn’t make it work.

It’s all so pointless, he thought, deliberately dropping a hard-won anchovy to a hungry old gull chasing him. I could be spending all this time learning to fly. There’s so much to learn! It wasn’t long before Jonathan Gull was off by himself again, far out at sea, hungry, happy, learning.

The subject was speed, and in a week’s practice he learned more about speed than the fastest gull alive.

From a thousand feet, flapping his wings as hard as he could, he pushed over into a blazing steep dive toward the waves, and learned why seagulls don’t make blazing steep power-dives. In just six seconds he was moving seventy miles per hour, the speed at which one’s wing goes unstable on the upstroke.

Time after time it happened. Careful as he was, working at the very peak of his ability, he lost control at high speed.

Climb to a thousand feet. Full power straight ahead first, then push over, flapping, to a vertical dive. Then, every time, his left wing stalled on an upstroke, he’d roll violently left, stall his right wing recovering, and flick like fire into a wild tumbling spin to the right.

He couldn’t be careful enough on that upstroke. Ten times he tried, and all ten times, as he passed through seventy miles per hour, he burst into a churning mass of feathers, out of control, crashing down into the water.

The key, he thought at last, dripping wet, must be to hold the wings still at high speeds – to flap up to fifty and then hold the wings still.

From two thousand feet he tried again, rolling into his dive, beak straight down, wings full out and stable from the moment he passed fifty miles per hour. It took tremendous strength, but it worked. In ten seconds he had blurred through ninety miles per hour. Jonathan had set a world speed record for seagulls!

But victory was short-lived. The instant he began his pull-out, the instant he changed the angle of his wings, he snapped into that same terrible uncontrolled disaster, and at ninety miles per hour it hit him like dynamite. Jonathan Seagull exploded in mid-air and smashed down into a brick-hard sea.

When he came to, it was well after dark, and he floated in moonlight on the surface of the ocean. His wings were ragged bars of lead, but the weight of failure was even heavier on his back. He wished, feebly, that the weight could be just enough to drag him gently down to the bottom, and end it all.

As he sank low in the water, a strange hollow voice sounded within him. There’s no way around it. I am a seagull. I am limited by my nature. If I were meant to learn so much about flying, I’d have charts

for brains. If I were meant to fly at speed, I'd have a falcon's short wings, and live on mice instead of fish. My father was right. I must forget this foolishness. I must fly home to the flock and be content as I am, as a poor limited seagull.

The voice faded, and Jonathan agreed. The place for a seagull at night is on shore, and from this moment forth, he vowed, he would be a normal gull. It would make everyone happier.

He pushed wearily away from the dark water and flew toward the land, grateful for what he had learned about work-saving low-altitude flying.

But no, he thought. I am done with the way I was, I am done with everything I learned. I am a seagull like every other seagull, and I will fly like one. So he climbed painfully to a hundred feet and flapped his wings harder, pressing for shore.

He felt better for his decision to be just another one of the flock. There would be no ties now to the force that had driven him to learn, there would be no more challenge and no more failure. And it was pretty, just to stop thinking, and fly through the dark, toward the lights above the beach.

Dark! The hollow voice cracked in alarm. Seagulls never fly in the dark!

Jonathan was not alert to listen. It's pretty, he thought. The moon and the lights twinkling on the water, throwing out little beacon-trails through the night, and all so peaceful and still ...

Get down! Seagulls never fly in the dark! If you were meant to fly in the dark, you'd have the eyes of an owl! You'd have charts for brains! You'd have a falcon's short wings!

There in the night, a hundred feet in the air, Jonathan Livingston Seagull — blinked. His pain, his resolutions, vanished.

Short wings. A falcon's short wings!

That's the answer! What a fool I've been! All I need is a tiny little wing, all I need is to fold most of my wings and fly on just the tips alone! Short wings!

He climbed two thousand feet above the black sea, and without a moment for thought of failure and death, he brought his forewings tightly in to his body, left only the narrow swept daggers of his wingtips extended into the wind, and fell into a vertical dive.

The wind was a monster roar at his head. Seventy miles per hour, ninety, a hundred and twenty and faster still. The wing-strain now at a hundred and forty miles per hour wasn't nearly as hard as it had been before at seventy, and with the faintest twist of his wingtips he eased out of the dive and shot above the waves, a grey cannonball under the moon.

He closed his eyes to slits against the wind and rejoiced. A hundred forty miles per hour! And under control! If I dive from five thousand feet instead of two thousand, I wonder how fast ...

His vows of a moment before were forgotten, swept away in that great swift wind. Yet he felt guiltless, breaking the promises he had made himself. Such promises are only for the gulls that accept the ordinary. One who has touched excellence in his learning has no need of that kind of promise.

By sunup, Jonathan Gull was practising again. From five thousand feet the fishing boats were specks in the flat blue water, Breakfast Flock was a faint cloud of dust motes, circling.

He was alive, trembling ever so slightly with delight, proud that his fear was under control. Then without ceremony he hugged in his forewings, extended his short, angled wingtips, and plunged directly toward the sea. By the time he passed four thousand feet he had reached terminal velocity, the wind was a solid beating wall of sound against which he could move no faster. He was flying now straight down, at two hundred fourteen miles per hour. He swallowed, knowing that if his wings unfolded at that speed he'd be blown into a million tiny shreds of seagull. But the speed was power, and the speed was joy, and the speed was pure beauty.

He began his pullout at a thousand feet, wingtips thudding and blurring in that gigantic wind, the boat and the crowd of gulls tilting and growing meteor-fast, directly in his path.

He couldn't stop; he didn't know yet even how to turn at that speed.

Collision would be instant death. And so he shut his eyes.

It happened that morning, then, just after sunrise, that Jonathan Livingston Seagull fired directly through the centre of Breakfast Flock, ticking off two hundred twelve miles per hour, eyes closed, in a great roaring shriek of wind and feathers. The Gull of Fortune smiled upon him this once, and no one was killed.

By the time he had pulled his beak straight up into the sky he was still scorching along at a hundred and sixty miles per hour. When he had slowed to twenty and stretched his wings again at last, the boat was a crumb on the sea, four thousand feet below.

His thought was triumph. Terminal velocity! A seagull at *two hundred fourteen miles per hour*! It was a breakthrough, the greatest single moment in the history of the Flock, and in that moment a new age opened for Jonathan Gull. Flying out to his lonely practice area, folding his wings for a dive from eight thousand feet, he set himself at once to discover how to turn.

A single wingtip feather, he found, moved a fraction of an inch, gives a smooth sweeping curve at tremendous speed. Before he learned this, however, he found that moving more than one feather at that speed will spin you like a rifle ball ... and Jonathan had flown the first aerobatics of any seagull on earth.

He spared no time that day for talk with other gulls, but flew on past sunset. He discovered the loop, the slow roll, the point roll, the inverted spin, the gull bunt, the pinwheel.

When Jonathan Seagull joined the Flock on the beach, it was full night. He was dizzy and terribly tired. Yet in delight he flew a loop to landing, with a snap roll just before touchdown. When they hear of it, he thought, of the Breakthrough, they'll be wild with joy. How much more there is now to living! Instead of our drab slogging forth and back to the fishing boats, there's a reason to life! We can lift ourselves out of ignorance, we can and ourselves as creatures of excellence and intelligence and skill. We can be free! We can learn to fly!

The years ahead hummed and glowed with promise.

The gulls were flocked into the Council Gathering when he landed, and apparently had been so flocked for some time. They were, in fact, waiting.

"Jonathan Livingston Seagull! Stand to Centre!" The Elder's words sounded in a voice of highest ceremony. Stand to Centre meant only great shame or great honour. Stand to Centre for Honour was the way the gulls' foremost leaders were marked. Of course, he thought, the Breakfast Flock this morning; they saw the Breakthrough! But I want no honours. I have no wish to be leader. I want only to share what I've found, to show those horizons out ahead for us all. He stepped forward.

“Jonathan Livingston Seagull,” said the Elder, “Stand to Centre for shame in the sight of your fellow gulls!”

It felt like being hit with a board. His knees went weak, his feathers sagged, and there was a roaring in his ears. Centred for shame? Impossible! The Breakthrough! They can’t understand! They’re wrong, they’re wrong!

“... for his reckless irresponsibility,” the solemn voice intoned, “violating the dignity and tradition of the Gull Family ...”

To be centred for shame meant that he would be cast out of gull society, banished to a solitary life on the Far Cliffs.

“... one day, Jonathan Livingston Seagull, you shall learn that irresponsibility does not pay. Life is the unknown and the unknowable, except that we are put into this world to eat, to stay alive as long as we possibly can.”

A seagull never speaks back to the Council Flock, but it was Jonathan’s voice raised. “Irresponsibility? My brothers!” he cried. “Who is more responsible than a gull who finds and follows a meaning, a higher purpose for life? For a thousand years we have scrabbled after fish heads, but now we have a reason to live – to learn, to discover, to be free! Give me one chance, let me show you what I’ve found ...”

The Flock might as well have been stone.

“The Brotherhood is broken,” the gulls intoned together, and with one accord they solemnly closed their ears and turned their backs upon him.

Jonathan Seagull spent the rest of his days alone, but he flew way out beyond the Far Cliffs. His one sorrow was not solitude, it was that other gulls refused to believe the glory of flight that awaited them; they refused to open their eyes and see.

He learned more each day. He learned that a streamlined high-speed dive could bring him to find the rare and tasty fish that schooled ten feet below the surface of the ocean: he no longer needed fishing boats and stale bread for survival. He learned to sleep in the air, setting a course at night across the offshore wind, covering a hundred miles from sunset to sunrise. With the same inner control, he flew through heavy sea-fogs and climbed above them into dazzling clear skies ... in the very times when every other gull stood on the ground, knowing nothing but mist and rain. He learned to ride the high winds far inland, to dine there on delicate insects.

What he had once hoped for the Flock, he now gained for himself alone; he learned to fly, and was not sorry for the price that he had paid. Jonathan Seagull discovered that boredom and fear and anger are the reasons that a gull’s life is so short, and with these gone from his thought, he lived a long fine life indeed.

They came in the evening, then, and found Jonathan gliding peaceful and alone through his beloved sky. The two gulls that appeared at his wings were pure as starlight, and the glow from them was gentle and friendly in the high night air. But most lovely of all was the skill with which they flew, their wingtips moving a precise and constant inch from his own.

Without a word, Jonathan put them to his test, a test that no gull had ever passed. He twisted his wings, slowed to a single mile per hour above stall. The two radiant birds slowed with him, smoothly, locked in position. They knew about slow flying.

“But you can, Jonathan. For you have learned. One school is finished, and the time has come for another to begin.”

As it had shone across him all his life, so understanding lighted that moment for Jonathan Seagull. They were right. He could fly higher, and it was time to go home.

He gave one last long look across the sky, across that magnificent silver land where he had learned so much.

“I’m ready,” he said at last.

And Jonathan Livingston Seagull rose with the two star-bright gulls to disappear into a perfect dark sky.

He folded his wings, rolled, and dropped in a dive to a hundred ninety miles per hour. They dropped with him, streaking down in flawless formation.

At last he turned that speed straight up into a long vertical slow-roll. They rolled with him, smiling.

He recovered to level flight and was quiet for a time before he spoke. “Very well,” he said, “who are you?”

“We’re from your Flock, Jonathan. We are your brothers.” The words were strong and calm. “We’ve come to take you higher, to take you home.”

“Home I have none. Flock I have none. I am outcast. And we fly now at the peak of the Great Mountain Wind. Beyond a few hundred feet, I can lift this old body no higher.”

“But you can, Jonathan. For you have learned. One school is finished, and the time has come for another to begin.”

As it had shone across him all his life, so understanding lighted that moment for Jonathan Seagull. They were right. He could fly higher, and it was time to go home.

He gave one last long look across the sky, across that magnificent silver land where he had learned so much.

“I’m ready,” he said at last.

And Jonathan Livingston Seagull rose with the two star bright gulls to disappear into a perfect dark sky.

### Glossary

**stalled** (v) stopped **streamlined** (v) well organised **screeching** (v) making loud harsh sound **piers** (n) long narrow structure **anchovy** (n) small fish **speck** (n) dot **mots** (n) tiny pieces of a substance **scorching** (v) (here) moving at high speed **loop/ slow roll/ point roll/ inverted spin/ gull bunt/ pinwheel** types of aerial acrobatics **scrabbled after** grabbed **schooled** (v) (here) travelled in groups **terminal velocity** highest speed attainable by a free falling object **drab** (adj.) monotonous

### Activity

**Read the lesson carefully.**

**A. Choose the correct option and rewrite the complete sentence.**

1. Jonathan’s parents were very much dismayed because \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (a) he ate a lot of food
  - (b) he flew high like the Albatross
  - (c) he wandered here and there aimlessly
  - (d) he was not like the rest of the folk



2. According to Jonathan, the key to landing properly on water was to \_\_\_\_\_ .
- (a) burst into a churning mass of feathers
  - (b) crash down into the water
  - (c) hold the wings still at high speed
  - (d) roll violently to the left and to the right
3. The boat appeared to be a crumb on the sea when Jonathan was \_\_\_\_\_ .
- (a) four thousand feet above the sea
  - (b) five thousand feet above the sea
  - (c) pulling out at a hundred feet above the sea
  - (d) two hundred and twelve feet above the sea
4. To be centered for shame also meant \_\_\_\_\_ .
- (a) to be ashamed
  - (b) to be cast out of one's society
  - (c) to be irresponsible
  - (d) to break the brotherhood
5. The three things that result in the gull's short life are \_\_\_\_\_ .
- (a) boredom, fear, anger
  - (b) honour, promises, foolishness
  - (c) knowledge, inner control, youth
  - (d) solitude, glory, responsibility

**B. Answer the following questions in brief.**

1. What made Jonathan Livingston a unique seagull?
2. How did Jonathan Livingston react to his parents' advice?
3. In what way did Jonathan Livingston set a world speed record for seagulls?
4. When did Jonathan Livingston decide to live like other seagulls?
5. What new things did Jonathan Livingston learn and realize while experimenting with his flight of glory?
6. Was Jonathan Livingston's passion for flying a self-centred happiness? How was he treated by the other seagulls?
7. Comment on the ending of this fable.
8. Bring out the essential message delivered through the fable of Jonathan Livingston, the seagull.



**Introduction**

**Ruskin Bond** (1934-) is an Indian author of British descent. He has written over five hundred short stories, essays and novels, including *The Room on the Roof*, *The Blue Umbrella*, *Funny Side Up*, *A Flight of Pigeons* etc. He received the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1992 for *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra*, for his published work in English. He was awarded the Padma Shri in 1999 and Padma Bhushan in 2014.

**From the Primaeval Past** narrates Ruskin Bond's frightening experience with a survivor from our primaeval past. Read on to find about that thrilling incident.

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I discovered the pool near Rajpur on a hot summer's day some fifteen years ago. It was shaded by close-growing Sal trees, and looked cool and inviting. I took off my clothes and dived in.

The water was colder than I had expected. It was an icy, glacial cold. The sun never touched it for long, I supposed. Striking out vigorously, I swam to the other end of the pool and pulled myself up on the rocks, shivering.

But I wanted to swim. So I dived in again and did a gentle breast-stroke towards the middle of the pool. Something slid between my legs. Something slimy, pulpy. I could see no one, hear nothing. I swam away, but the floating, slippery thing followed me. I did not like it. Something curled around my leg. Not an underwater plant. Something that sucked at my foot. A long tongue licking at my calf. I struck out wildly, thrust myself away from whatever it was that sought my company. Something lonely, lurking in the shadows. Kicking up spray, I swam like a frightened porpoise fleeing from some terror of the deep.

Safely out of the water, I looked for a warm, sunny rock, and stood there looking down at the water.

Nothing stirred. The surface of the pool was now calm and undisturbed. Just a few fallen leaves floating around. Not a frog, not a fish, not a water bird in sight. And that in itself seemed strange. For you would have expected some sort of pond life to have been in evidence.

But something lived in the pool, of that I was sure. Something very cold-blooded; colder and wetter than the water. Could it have been a corpse trapped in the weeds? I did not want to know; so I dressed and hurried away.

A few days later I left for Delhi, where I went to work in an ad agency, telling people how to beat the summer heat by drinking fizzy drinks that made you thirstier. The pool in the forest was forgotten. And it was ten years before I visited Rajpur again.

Leaving the small hotel where I was staying, I found myself walking through the same old Sal forest, drawn almost irresistibly towards the pool where I had not been able to finish my swim. I was not over-eager to swim there again, but I was curious to know if the pool still existed.

Well, it was there all right, although the surroundings had changed and a number of new houses and buildings had come up where formerly there had only been wilderness. And there was a fair amount of activity in the vicinity of the pool.

A number of labourers were busy with buckets and rubber pipes, doing their best to empty the pool. They had also dammed off and diverted the little stream that fed it.

Overseeing this operation was a well-dressed man in a white safari suit. I thought at first that he was an honorary forest warden, but it turned out that he was the owner of a new school that had come up nearby.

“Do you live in Rajpur?” he asked.

“I used to .... Once upon a time... Why are you draining the pool?”

“It’s become a hazard,” he said. “Two of my boys were drowned here recently. Both senior students. Of course they weren’t supposed to be swimming here without permission, the pool is off limits. But you know what boys are like. Make a rule and they feel duty-bound to break it.”

He told me his name, Kapoor, and led me back to his house, a newly-build bungalow with a wide cool verandah. His servant brought us glasses of cool sherbet. We sat in cane chairs overlooking the pool and the forest. Across a clearing, a gravelled road led to the school buildings, newly white-washed and glistening in the sun.

“Were the boys there at the same time?” I asked.

“Yes, they were friends. And they must have been attacked by friends. Limbs twisted and broken, face disfigured. But death was due to drowning – that was the verdict of the medical examiner.”

We gazed down at the shallows of the pool, where a couple of men were still at work, the others having gone for their mid-day meal.

“Perhaps it would be better to leave the place alone,” I said. “Put a barbed-wire fence around it. Keep your boys away. Thousands of years ago this valley was an inland sea. A few small pools and streams are all that is left of it.”

“I want to fill it in and build something there. An open air theatre, may be. We can always create an artificial pond somewhere else.”

Presently only one man remained at the pool, knee-deep in muddy, churned up water. And Mr. Kapoor and I both saw what happened next.

Something rose out of the bottom of the pool. It looked like a giant snail, but its head was part human, its body and limbs part squid or octopus. An enormous succubus. It stood taller than the man in the pool. A creature soft and slimy, a survivor from our primaeval past.

With a great sucking motion, it enveloped the man completely, so that only his arms and legs could be seen thrashing about wildly and futilely. The succubus dragged him down under the water.

Kapoor and I left the verandah and ran to the edge of the pool. Bubbles rose from the green scum near the surface. All was still and silent. And, like bubble-gum issuing from the mouth of a child, the mangled body of the man shot out of the water and came spinning towards us.

Dead and drowned and sucked dry of its fluids.

Naturally no more work was done at the pool. A labourer had slipped and fallen to his death on the rocks that was the story that was put out. Kapoor swore me to secrecy. His school would have to close down



if there were too many strange drownings and accidents in its vicinity. But he walled the place off from his property and made it practically inaccessible. The jungle's undergrowth now hides the approach.

The monsoon rains came and the pool filled up again. I can tell you how to get there, if you'd like to see it. But I wouldn't advise you to go for a swim.

### **Glossary**

**porpoise** (n) fish- that swims alternatively rising above water and then submerging **dammed** (v) built a barrier to obstruct the flow of water

### **Activity**

**Read the lesson carefully.**

#### **A. Choose the correct option and rewrite the complete sentence.**

1. While swimming in the pool, the author was followed by a \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) bunch of weeds (b) floating carcass  
(c) floating, slippery thing (d) sharp edged boat
2. 'Calm and undisturbed pool' surprised the author because he expected \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) a boat at the bottom of the pool (b) a big stone at the bottom of the pool  
(c) a whirlpool (d) some sort of pond life in existence
3. In Delhi, he worked in a/an \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) advertising agency (b) bank  
(c) multinational company (d) school
4. The owner of the school was getting the pool drained off as \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) maintenance work had to be done  
(b) many mosquitoes had started breeding there  
(c) the pool had turned dirty  
(d) two of his students had drowned recently
5. After emptying the pool, Mr.Kapoor and the author saw a/an \_\_\_\_\_ rising out of the water.  
(a) enormous succubus (b) giant snail  
(c) monster (d) star fish

#### **B. Answer the following questions in brief.**

1. Describe Ruskin Bond's experience of swimming in the pool near Rajpur.
2. Who was Mr. Kapoor? Why did he want the pool to be filled in?
3. What horrible sight did Ruskin Bond and Mr. Kapoor witness?
4. Why was the secret of the pool never revealed to others?



**Introduction**

You have read a literary work by Ruskin Bond in the previous chapter. Now, know more about him and his writings through this interview. The interviewer is Shobita Dhar, a senior journalist.

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**You turn 80 next month. What's the nicest thing about getting old?**

For a writer the good thing about getting old is that there is so much more to write about, especially for a writer like me who delves into the past. You have so many memories that you never run out of material. When I was 17 or 18, I was left wondering what to write next after my first novel got published. As for regrets, I sometimes wonder why I hurt my mother's feelings or why I was such a bully in school. As a writer, I have no regrets. I may not have become a good writer but I managed to make a living out of writing. I have managed to keep up with inflation.

**Has your writing changed over the years? Does writing for children keep you young at heart?**

My writing has grown older with me. It might be more cynical and tongue-in-cheek now. When I was younger it used to be more emotional and naive. Writing for children may have kept me young at heart. Interestingly, I took to writing for children in the 1970s because my work for adults wasn't getting publishers. But writing for children revived me. What I like about children is that they can be so frank. Recently I was in a school and a teacher asked a little girl what she thought of Mr. Bond. She replied: "He's not a bad writer." I think this will be my epitaph.

**Children today are hooked to edgy fiction for young adults. Is it a challenge to write for them today?**

Children are reading about vampires, wizards and witches. Someone asked me why don't you also write about all this? I said I have been doing that all my life (laughs)! But I am not good at writing about it.

**A best of Ruskin Bond collection to mark your 80th birthday will be out soon. Which work is close to your heart?**

The books that I wrote in my late teens and 20s, the little love stories, they were right from the heart. It's like how you have affection for your first born. Now when I read them I realize how stupid and silly I was. *Room on the Roof*, which I wrote when I was just 17, is full of naive things. But I have never changed these stories.

**Small towns form the backdrop of many of your tales. But urbanization is eating into this world. Is your inspiration under attack?**

Small towns are easier to observe. People know each other well. And characters often originate from real life. Now, villages are turning into towns, towns into cities, and cities into mega cities. A reader once told me that the Dehradun I write about doesn't exist anymore. I say I am writing about the town it used to be 50 years ago. Delhi too has changed so much. In the 1960s I used to travel by bus from Rajouri Garden to town to watch a film. There was hardly any traffic. But even then, as now, I had trouble crossing roads.

### **You knew Khushwant Singh well. Any interesting anecdotes?**

I met him socially in the 1960s in Delhi. I was in my late 20s at the time and he was editing *Yojana*, the Planning Commission journal. I was always looking to get my stories published. I'd get Rs 50 for each. So I sent him a few and he quietly put my love stories in *Yojana*. And no one noticed. He was affable and helpful, always.

### **What do you think of the boom in Indian writing in English?**

So many authors are being published and selling well. It is very healthy for the publishing industry. At times the quality of writing may vary. But who are we to comment? However, you should respect the language you write in. And try to write something worthwhile. We have good literary writers like Amit Chaudhari and Amitav Ghosh and popular ones like Chetan Bhagat and Amish Tripathi. The more the genres of writing, the better it is. But we don't have good poets. I'd like to see more humorous verse. Girls, though, seem to be writing poetry a lot. Whenever I go down to Cambridge book shop in Mussoorie, girls hand me their poems to read. I walk back home carrying a thick sheaf of papers with poetry about love and family life.

### **You still handwrite your manuscripts and your characters too seem rooted in the pre-internet era. Are you a Luddite?**

I am hopeless with machinery. I could never learn to drive a car except into a wall. I remember being very awkward with the telephone. In my writing, I did have a character who is on his cell phone all the time. He keeps it on his pillow when he sleeps. So when he dies, the cell phone is placed in his coffin and it starts to ring when they are burying him.

#### **Glossary**

**tongue-in-cheek** being ironical **epitaph** (n) inscription on a tombstone **affable** (adj) friendly **Luddite** (n) a person opposed to increased industrialization or new technology

#### **Activity**

#### **Read the lesson carefully.**

#### **A. Choose the correct option and rewrite the complete sentence.**

1. The good thing about getting old, as a writer, for Ruskin Bond is that there are so many \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (a) awards yet to be won
  - (b) memories that you never run out of material
  - (c) more books to be read
  - (d) places worth visiting that you never run out of material
2. Ruskin Bond started writing for children because he \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (a) earned more money in writing for children
  - (b) wanted children to get more wisdom
  - (c) was not interested in writing for adults
  - (d) writing for adults wasn't getting publishers

3. Khushwant Singh helped Ruskin Bond by \_\_\_\_\_ .
- (a) allowing him to stay at his place
  - (b) booking tickets for his travel
  - (c) giving new ideas for writing
  - (d) publishing his short love stories in the *Yojana*
4. Ruskin Bond says that girls write poems about \_\_\_\_\_ .
- (a) academics
  - (b) fashion
  - (c) love and family life
  - (d) nature
5. Ruskin Bond feels that he has been hopeless with machinery as he \_\_\_\_\_ .
- (a) did not have a computer at home
  - (b) had never worked on any machinery
  - (c) had not written anything on machinery
  - (d) was awkward even with the telephone and couldn't drive

**B. Answer the following questions in brief.**

1. What does Ruskin Bond say about writing at an older age?
2. 'Small towns are easier to observe.' Explain.
3. Comment on Ruskin Bond's views on contemporary Indian writing in English.
4. Do you think that Ruskin Bond is techno savvy? Why?

