

II

The Black Aeroplane

THE moon was coming up in the east, behind me, and stars were shining in the clear sky above me. There wasn't a cloud in the sky. I was happy to be alone high up above the sleeping countryside. I was flying my old Dakota aeroplane over France back to England. I was dreaming of my holiday and looking forward to being with my family. I looked at my watch: one thirty in the morning.

'I should call Paris Control soon,' I thought. As I looked down past the nose of the aeroplane, I saw the lights of a big city in front of me. I switched on the radio and said, "Paris Control, Dakota DS 088 here. Can you hear me? I'm on my way to England. Over."

The voice from the radio answered me immediately: "DS 088, I can hear you. You ought to turn twelve degrees west now, DS 088. Over."

I checked the map and the compass, switched over to my second and last fuel tank, and turned the Dakota twelve degrees west towards England.

'I'll be in time for breakfast,' I thought. A good big English breakfast! Everything was going well — it was an easy flight.

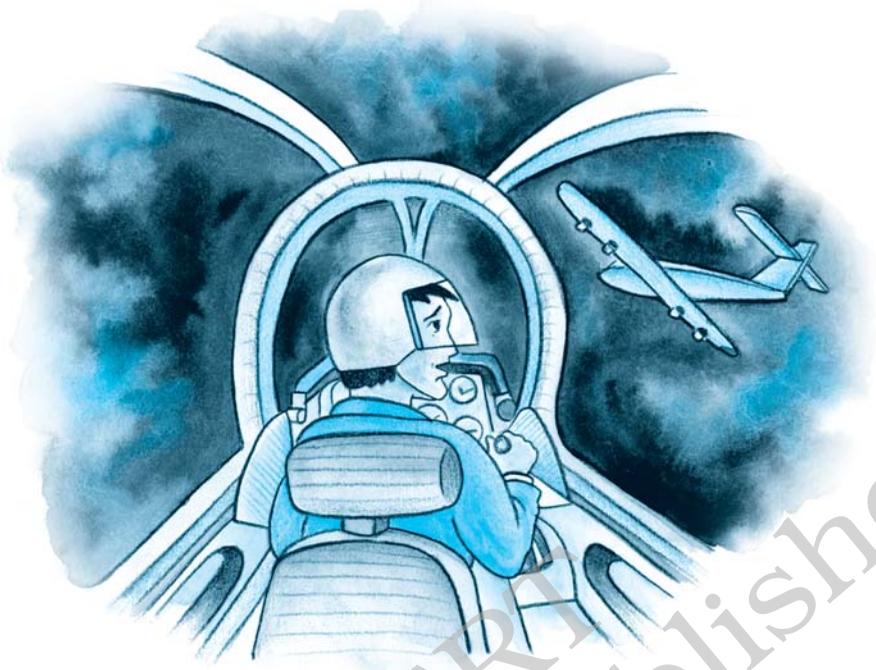
Paris was about 150 kilometres behind me when I saw the clouds. Storm clouds. They were huge. They looked like black mountains standing in front of me across the sky. I knew I could not fly up and over them, and I did not have enough fuel to fly around them to the north or south.

"I ought to go back to Paris," I thought, but I wanted to get home. I wanted that breakfast.

'I'll take the risk,' I thought, and flew that old Dakota straight into the storm.

Inside the clouds, everything was suddenly black. It was impossible to see anything outside the aeroplane. The old aeroplane jumped and twisted in the air. I looked at the compass. I couldn't believe





my eyes: the compass was turning round and round and round. It was dead. It would not work! The other instruments were suddenly dead, too. I tried the radio.

“Paris Control? Paris Control? Can you hear me?”

There was no answer. The radio was dead too. I had no radio, no compass, and I could not see where I was. I was lost in the storm. Then, in the black clouds quite near me, I saw another aeroplane. It had no lights on its wings, but I could see it flying next to me through the storm. I could see the pilot's face — turned towards me. I was very glad to see another person. He lifted one hand and waved.

“Follow me,” he was saying. “Follow me.”

‘He knows that I am lost,’ I thought. ‘He’s trying to help me.’

He turned his aeroplane slowly to the north, in front of my Dakota, so that it would be easier for me to follow him. I was very happy to go behind the strange aeroplane like an obedient child.

After half an hour the strange black aeroplane was still there in front of me in the clouds. Now



there was only enough fuel in the old Dakota's last tank to fly for five or ten minutes more. I was starting to feel frightened again. But then he started to go down and I followed through the storm.

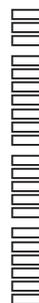
Suddenly I came out of the clouds and saw two long straight lines of lights in front of me. It was a runway! An airport! I was safe! I turned to look for my friend in the black aeroplane, but the sky was empty. There was nothing there. The black aeroplane was gone. I could not see it anywhere.

I landed and was not sorry to walk away from the old Dakota near the control tower. I went and asked a woman in the control centre where I was and who the other pilot was. I wanted to say 'Thank you'.

She looked at me very strangely, and then laughed.

"Another aeroplane? Up there in this storm? No other aeroplanes were flying tonight. Yours was the only one I could see on the radar."

So who helped me to arrive there safely without a compass or a radio, and without any more fuel in my tanks? Who was the pilot on the strange black aeroplane, flying in the storm, without lights?



Thinking about the Text

1. "I'll take the risk." What is the risk? Why does the narrator take it?
2. Describe the narrator's experience as he flew the aeroplane into the storm.
3. Why does the narrator say, "I landed and was not sorry to walk away from the old Dakota...?"
4. What made the woman in the control centre look at the narrator strangely?
5. Who do you think helped the narrator to reach safely? Discuss this among yourselves and give reasons for your answer.

Thinking about Language

I. Study the sentences given below.

- (a) They looked like black mountains.
- (b) Inside the clouds, everything was suddenly black.
- (c) In the black clouds near me, I saw another aeroplane.
- (d) The strange black aeroplane was there.

The word 'black' in sentences (a) and (c) refers to the very darkest colour. But in (b) and (d) (here) it means without light/with no light.

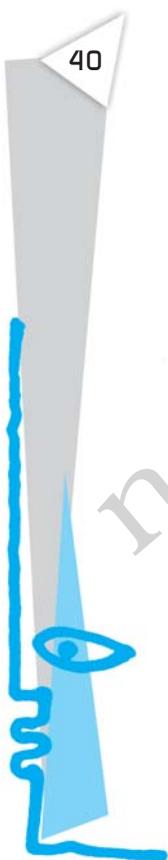
'Black' has a variety of meanings in different contexts. For example:

- (a) 'I prefer *black* tea' means 'I prefer tea without milk'.
- (b) 'With increasing pollution the future of the world is *black*' means 'With increasing pollution the future of the world is very depressing/without hope'.

Now, 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. _____





II. Look at these sentences taken from the lesson you have just read:

- (a) I was flying my old Dakota aeroplane.
- (b) The young seagull had been afraid to fly with them.

In the first sentence the author was controlling an aircraft in the air. Another example is: Children are flying kites. In the second sentence the seagull was afraid to move through the air, using its wings.

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

III. **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

Writing

Have you ever been alone or away from home during a thunderstorm? Narrate your experience in a paragraph.

In This Lesson

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

Provided two stories about flying — one about a bird, another about a human being in a plane.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

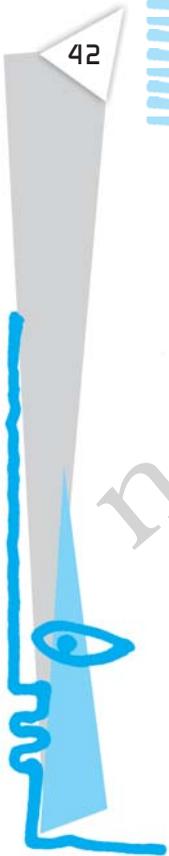
- As they read the story of the seagull, students can be asked to imagine how a baby learns to walk, and compare and contrast the two situations.

- After they read the second story students should be asked for their ideas about the phantom plane: Was it really there or did the pilot imagine it? If the students feel it was really there, who could have been piloting it?
- Ask students to narrate their own stories about flying. It could be about flying in an airplane, or flying a kite, or about watching a bird flying — in short, anything to do with flight. Give students ten minutes to think quietly about the topic — during this time, they can make notes about what they want to say. Then ask for volunteer speakers.



Compound Words Whose Parts Mean Just the Opposite or Something Else

- Quicksand works slowly
- There is no egg in eggplant nor ham in hamburger; neither apple nor pine in pineapple.
- Boxing rings are square



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