



FLIGHT

A SHORT STORY FOR READING & SPEAKING

Flight — Full Lesson Plan

A Fantastic Tales short story and lesson plan, courtesy of ManWrites.

Table of Contents

[Introductory Questions](#)

[Flight](#)

[Reading Comprehension Questions](#)

[Flight — Story and Reading Comprehension Questions](#)

[Essential Vocabulary](#)

[True or False](#)

[What is the Correct Synonym?](#)

[What is the Correct Antonym?](#)

[Words and Meanings](#)

[Gap Fill Exercise](#)

[Discussion Questions](#)

[Role Play: The Walk Home](#)

[Debate: Should Children Be Allowed to Raise Wild Animals?](#)

[Writing](#)

[Reading Comprehension Questions — Model Answers](#)

[True or False — Answers](#)

[What is the Correct Synonym? — Answers](#)

[What is the Correct Antonym? — Answers](#)

[Words and Meanings — Answers](#)

[Gap Fill Exercise — Answers](#)

[Credits](#)

Introductory Questions

1. How do birds learn to fly?
2. Can a person teach a bird how to fly?
3. If you found a small chick, what would you do with it?

Flight

“She can fly,” I said. “I’ve trained her.”

Dad didn’t even look at me.

“Rubbish. You got wings? Where are they?”

He pinched the skin between my shoulder blades and laughed. I shook his hand off and held onto the box. Inside, the bird flapped around and let out another cry.

She hated being inside that box. But I had to put her in the thing to get her here.

The wind blew harder. Icy-cold in my face.

“That’s a strong wind,” said Dad. “Sure that pigeon can fly in this?”

He knew she wasn’t a pigeon.

“She’s not a pigeon,” I said. “I told you before.”

“Oh yeah, that’s right. A seagull. One of those noisy damn things.”

I went to say something but clamped my lips together.

He didn’t have one good word for Elsie. That’s what I called her. After Mum’s grandmother. Elsie.

It just sounded right. An old-fashioned name for her. It suited her.

She flapped around inside the box and screeched. I held tightly onto the sides of it. She moved around so much I nearly dropped the box earlier.

Dad didn't notice. He was busy telling our neighbour about going to the top of the hill at the end of Station Road.

"Got to let this bird out," he said. "It's been with us since he found it on the ground. Surprised it lasted this long, to be honest."

The neighbour gave me a friendly nod, but I pretended to be busy securing the box. That's when Elsie shook about inside and the box nearly fell out of my hands.

All the way to Station Road, Dad made comment after comment. Always the same thing.

That stupid bird won't fly.

That stupid bird is lucky to be alive.

No reason she shouldn't be alive. I fed her. I made sure she ate every day.

Just a little blob when I found her on the ground. She hardly had any feathers and her eyes were almost completely shut.

But I touched her and she moved a little bit.

So I took her home.

Mum said I couldn't keep her in the house.

"It's dirty," she said. "It might have fleas."

"She's a she, Mum," I said. "And she doesn't have fleas. I washed her."

At first, I didn't know what to give her. I crumbled up some bread and soaked it in water, breaking tiny bits off for her to swallow. She spat most of it out, and I thought she was going to die. The pet shop man said she wouldn't last more than two days anyway. He wasn't interested.

I didn't want him to be right.

So I went to the library instead and found a book on birds.

There was a picture of a man using a little dropper, giving a baby bird some water and soft mash.

I didn't know birds drank water. I thought they drank something special, like a secret food only they knew about.

The book said a few drops of water could keep them alive.

Mashed-up grains or soft food, too.

So that's what I did. And she lived.

I wanted to go down to that pet shop one day, hold Elsie up high and say: See? You were wrong.

"So what you planning on doing," said Dad. "Throwing it off the top here?"

He didn't know anything.

"I'll help her," I said. "I've been helping her the last two weeks."

Dad laughed again. The same laugh whenever he thought he was right.

A smug laugh, Mum called it. But she always smiled when he laughed like that. She liked it when he proved himself right and her wrong.

That's what being married is all about. One person is always right and the other one is always wrong, and that's how they live for the rest of their lives.

I wouldn't do that.

“Come on then,” said Dad. “Get on with it. It’s freezing up here.”

I put the box on the grass and knelt down to open the lid. As I fumbled around opening the cardboard box, Elsie flapped around inside.

“Come on, girl,” I said in what I hoped was a soothing voice.

“Come on now.”

“Saying your last goodbyes?” said Dad. “So sad.”

He couldn’t say any more as he went into one of his coughing fits. He bent over and hacked and hawed as he tried to clear his chest.

I got the flap open and Elsie let her wings spill outside and into the cold air. She stretched them above her head at awkward angles.

“Come on, girl,” I whispered. I put my hands down the insides of the box and slid my fingers under her tiny body. She pecked at my fingers in a rapid motion. I was used to her doing it. When she first did it, I pulled my fingers away.

“It’s okay,” I said. “I’ll help you.”

Elsie calmed down a little, and I got my fingers underneath her body. She appeared so strong with all her feathers now, but I could feel how skinny she was. She ate her own weight in food every day, but still like a little bag of bones.

I pulled her out of the box and held her close to my chest. Dad had gone quiet. I didn't look at him in case it made him start again.

The grass sloped in a decline in front of me and then went at a sharp angle down. I got as far as I could and stopped. She had done it so many times before with me. I had held her, and she flew right to the end of the garage. One time she flew into the door.

She was strong, I could feel it.

I held my hands up higher to give her a full view of what was in front of us.

"Come on, girl," I said. "You got this."

I closed my eyes and lifted my hands higher. She let out a cry; it sounded like she said Far.

Faaaar!

Then I felt her wings pound the air. I could feel her body lifting.

She left my hands and flew up a little. But the wind was strong. She was batting around like a butterfly.

Her wings flapped around awkwardly and with no grace at all.

But she persevered. She flew ahead, straight to the edge of the cliff.

I watched in horror as her small body dropped out of view.

The whole world went quiet. And I held my breath, unable to move.

Then I saw her rise up again and soaring into the air.

And she was gone.

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. What does the boy claim about the bird?
2. How does Dad react to his son's claim?
3. Why is the bird inside a box?
4. What is the weather like?
5. What does the boy call the bird, and why?
6. How does Dad describe the bird?
7. What nearly happens as the boy carries the box?
8. Who else is present in this scene?
9. What does Dad tell the neighbour about the bird?
10. How does the neighbour react to the boy?
11. What does Dad keep repeating on the way to Station Road?
12. How does the boy respond to Dad's comments?
13. What did the bird look like when the boy found her?
14. How did Mum react to bringing the bird home?
15. How did the boy defend keeping Elsie in the house?
16. Why do you think he insists on calling her "she"?
17. What did the boy first try to feed Elsie?

18. What did the pet shop man say would happen?
19. Where did the boy go for better advice?
20. What did he see in the book at the library?
21. What surprised the boy about what birds drink?
22. How did he keep Elsie alive?
23. What did he dream of doing at the pet shop?
24. What does this reveal about his character?
25. What does Dad suggest the boy will do with the bird?
26. How does the boy answer him?
27. How does Mum describe Dad's laugh?
28. What is the boy's view of marriage?
29. What does Dad urge the boy to do?
30. How does Elsie behave inside the box?
31. What does the boy say to calm her?
32. Why does Dad stop speaking?
33. What happens when the box is opened?
34. How does Elsie react to the boy's hands?
35. What does the boy say to reassure her?
36. How does this show his patience with her?
37. What does the boy notice about Elsie's body?

38. How much does she eat each day?
39. What does the boy do once she is out of the box?
40. Why does he avoid looking at Dad?
41. What practice flights had Elsie done before?
42. What happened one time in the garage?
43. What does the boy believe about Elsie's strength?
44. What encouragement does he give her?
45. What sound does Elsie make as she takes off?
46. How does the boy know she is lifting?
47. How does the wind affect her flight?
48. How is her flying described?
49. What happens when Elsie first reaches the cliff?
50. How does the boy react in that moment?
51. What does Elsie do after disappearing from sight?
52. How does the story end?

Flight — Story and Reading Comprehension Questions

This is the story divided into clear sections with reading comprehension questions below each section.

This format might be easier for certain classes.

You can find the model answers for the questions at the end of the lesson plan.

Section 1

“She can fly,” I said. “I’ve trained her.”

Dad didn’t even look at me.

“Rubbish. You got wings? Where are they?”

He pinched the skin between my shoulder blades and laughed. I shook his hand off and held onto the box. Inside, the bird flapped around and let out another cry.

She hated being inside that box. But I had to put her in the thing to get her here.

The wind blew harder. Icy-cold in my face.

“That’s a strong wind,” said Dad. “Sure that pigeon can fly in this?”

He knew she wasn't a pigeon.

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. What does the boy claim about the bird?
2. How does Dad react to his son's claim?
3. Why is the bird inside a box?
4. What is the weather like?

Section 2

"She's not a pigeon," I said. "I told you before."

"Oh yeah, that's right. A seagull. One of those noisy damn things."

I went to say something but clamped my lips together.

He didn't have one good word for Elsie. That's what I called her. After Mum's grandmother. Elsie.

It just sounded right. An old-fashioned name for her. It suited her.

She flapped around inside the box and screeched. I held tightly onto the sides of it. She moved around so much I nearly dropped the box earlier.

Dad didn't notice. He was busy telling our neighbour about going to the top of the hill at the end of Station Road.

Reading Comprehension Questions

5. What does the boy call the bird, and why?
6. How does Dad describe the bird?

7. What nearly happens as the boy carries the box?
8. Who else is present in this scene?

Section 3

“Got to let this bird out,” he said. “It’s been with us since he found it on the ground. Surprised it lasted this long, to be honest.”

The neighbour gave me a friendly nod, but I pretended to be busy securing the box. That’s when Elsie shook about inside and the box nearly fell out of my hands.

All the way to Station Road, Dad made comment after comment. Always the same thing.

That stupid bird won’t fly.

That stupid bird is lucky to be alive.

Reading Comprehension Questions

9. What does Dad tell the neighbour about the bird?
10. How does the neighbour react to the boy?
11. What does Dad keep repeating on the way to Station Road?
12. How does the boy respond to Dad’s comments?

Section 4

No reason she shouldn’t be alive. I fed her. I made sure she ate every day.

Just a little blob when I found her on the ground. She hardly had any feathers and her eyes were almost completely shut. But I touched her and she moved a little bit.

So I took her home.

Mum said I couldn't keep her in the house.

"It's dirty," she said. "It might have fleas."

"She's a she, Mum," I said. "And she doesn't have fleas. I washed her."

At first, I didn't know what to give her. I crumbled up some bread and soaked it in water, breaking tiny bits off for her to swallow. She spat most of it out, and I thought she was going to die. The pet shop man said she wouldn't last more than two days anyway. He wasn't interested.

Reading Comprehension Questions

13. What did the bird look like when the boy found her?
14. How did Mum react to bringing the bird home?
15. How did the boy defend keeping Elsie in the house?
16. Why do you think he insists on calling her "she"?
17. What did the boy first try to feed Elsie?
18. What did the pet shop man say would happen?

Section 5

I didn't want him to be right.

So I went to the library instead and found a book on birds. There was a picture of a man using a little dropper, giving a baby bird some water and soft mash.

I didn't know birds drank water. I thought they drank something special, like a secret food only they knew about.

Reading Comprehension Questions

- 19. Where did the boy go for better advice?
- 20. What did he see in the book at the library?
- 21. What surprised the boy about what birds drink?

Section 6

The book said a few drops of water could keep them alive. Mashed-up grains or soft food, too.

So that's what I did. And she lived.

I wanted to go down to that pet shop one day, hold Elsie up high and say: See? You were wrong.

"So what you planning on doing," said Dad. "Throwing it off the top here?"

Reading Comprehension Questions

- 22. How did he keep Elsie alive?
- 23. What did he dream of doing at the pet shop?
- 24. What does this reveal about his character?
- 25. What does Dad suggest the boy will do with the bird?

Section 7

He didn't know anything.

"I'll help her," I said. "I've been helping her the last two weeks."

Dad laughed again. The same laugh whenever he thought he was right.

A smug laugh, Mum called it. But she always smiled when he laughed like that. She liked it when he proved himself right and her wrong.

That's what being married is all about. One person is always right and the other one is always wrong, and that's how they live for the rest of their lives.

I wouldn't do that.

"Come on then," said Dad. "Get on with it. It's freezing up here."

Reading Comprehension Questions

26. How does the boy answer him?

27. How does Mum describe Dad's laugh?

28. What is the boy's view of marriage?

29. What does Dad urge the boy to do?

Section 8

I put the box on the grass and knelt down to open the lid. As I fumbled around opening the cardboard box, Elsie flapped around inside.

“Come on, girl,” I said in what I hoped was a soothing voice.
“Come on now.”

“Saying your last goodbyes?” said Dad. “So sad.”

He couldn’t say any more as he went into one of his coughing fits. He bent over and hacked and hawed as he tried to clear his chest.

I got the flap open and Elsie let her wings spill outside and into the cold air. She stretched them above her head at awkward angles.

Reading Comprehension Questions

- 30. How does Elsie behave inside the box?
- 31. What does the boy say to calm her?
- 32. Why does Dad stop speaking?
- 33. What happens when the box is opened?

Section 9

“Come on, girl,” I whispered. I put my hands down the insides of the box and slid my fingers under her tiny body. She pecked at my fingers in a rapid motion. I was used to her doing it. When she first did it, I pulled my fingers away.

“It’s okay,” I said. “I’ll help you.”

Elsie calmed down a little, and I got my fingers underneath her body. She appeared so strong with all her feathers now, but I could feel how skinny she was. She ate her own weight in food every day, but still like a little bag of bones.

Reading Comprehension Questions

- 34. How does Elsie react to the boy's hands?
- 35. What does the boy say to reassure her?
- 36. How does this show his patience with her?
- 37. What does the boy notice about Elsie's body?
- 38. How much does she eat each day?

Section 10

I pulled her out of the box and held her close to my chest.

Dad had gone quiet. I didn't look at him in case it made him start again.

The grass sloped in a decline in front of me and then went at a sharp angle down. I got as far as I could and stopped. She had done it so many times before with me. I had held her, and she flew right to the end of the garage. One time she flew into the door.

Reading Comprehension Questions

- 39. What does the boy do once she is out of the box?
- 40. Why does he avoid looking at Dad?
- 41. What practice flights had Elsie done before?
- 42. What happened one time in the garage?

Section 11

She was strong, I could feel it.

I held my hands up higher to give her a full view of what was in front of us.

“Come on, girl,” I said. “You got this.”

I closed my eyes and lifted my hands higher. She let out a cry; it sounded like she said Far.

Reading Comprehension Questions

43. What does the boy believe about Elsie’s strength?

44. What encouragement does he give her?

45. What sound does Elsie make as she takes off?

Section 12

Faaaar!

Then I felt her wings pound the air. I could feel her body lifting.

She left my hands and flew up a little. But the wind was strong. She was batting around like a butterfly.

Her wings flapped around awkwardly and with no grace at all.

But she persevered. She flew ahead, straight to the edge of the cliff.

Reading Comprehension Questions

- 46. How does the boy know she is lifting?
- 47. How does the wind affect her flight?
- 48. How is her flying described?

Section 13

I watched in horror as her small body dropped out of view.

The whole world went quiet. And I held my breath, unable to move.

Then I saw her rise up again and soaring into the air.

And she was gone.

Reading Comprehension Questions

- 49. What happens when Elsie first reaches the cliff?
- 50. How does the boy react in that moment?
- 51. What does Elsie do after disappearing from sight?
- 52. How does the story end?

Essential Vocabulary

trained	rubbish	pinched
shoulder blades	flapped	icy-cold
clamped	old-fashioned	screeched
pretended	securing	blob
feathers	fleas	pet shop
smug	knelt	fumbled
soothing	coughing fit	bent over
hacked	stretched	awkward angle
whispered	pecked	calmed down
skinny	bag of bones	sloped
sharp angle	batting	persevered
in horror	soaring	lid
spill	tiny	dropped
freezing	comment	damn
pound	awkwardly	rapid motion

Vocabulary Practice Exercise

Follow the steps below to help you learn and remember new words and phrases more effectively:

1. Write each new word or phrase in your vocabulary notebook.
2. Look up the meaning of each word in your dictionary. Write a clear and simple definition next to the word.
3. Create your own sentence using the word or phrase correctly. Try to make the sentence meaningful and connected to your own life or experiences.

Examples

Trained – *having been taught a particular skill or type of behaviour through practice and instruction over a period of time.*

Example sentence: *The bodyguard walking next to the president was a trained fighter.*

Rubbish – *something that is not true or unrealistic.*

Example sentence: *I stopped reading the news — I think it's all rubbish!*

Why do this?

Doing this regularly will help you improve all areas of your English — reading, writing, speaking, and listening. By writing definitions and making your own examples, you are actively using the language, which helps it stick in your memory.

True or False

Read the statements below and decide if they are True or False.

You can find all the correct answers at the end of the lesson plan.

1. The boy claims he has trained the bird to fly.
2. Dad immediately believes the boy's claim about the bird.
3. The bird is a pigeon.
4. The boy calls the bird Elsie, after his mum's grandmother.
5. Mum is happy to let the boy keep the bird inside the house.
6. The pet shop man predicts the bird will die within two days.
7. The boy learns how to feed the bird by asking his father for advice.
8. Dad suggests the boy should throw the bird off the hill.

9. When the box is opened, Elsie immediately flies away without hesitation.
10. At the end of the story, Elsie flies away successfully.

What is the Correct Synonym?

Look at the table below.

Match the word on the left with the correct synonym on the right.

A synonym is a word of similar meaning.

Words	Synonyms
trained	icy
rubbish	fell
smug	minuscule
soothing	rising
persevered	clumsily
awkwardly	persisted
soaring	calming
tiny	self-satisfied
freezing	nonsense
dropped	skilled

What is the Correct Antonym?

Look at the table below.

Match the word on the left with the correct antonym on the right.

An antonym is a word of opposite meaning.

Words	Antonyms
trained	huge
smug	boiling
soothing	quit
tiny	gracefully
freezing	plummeting
persevered	flared up
awkwardly	plump
soaring	untrained
calmed down	humble
skinny	irritating

Words and Meanings

Look at the words below.

Match each word with the correct meaning underneath.

You can find all the correct answers at the end of the lesson plan.

Word Bank

shoulder blades • blob • coughing fit • bag of bones • pet shop • fleas • lid • spill • securing • screeched

Meanings

- a) an idiom describing someone or something that is extremely thin
- b) making something firmly fixed or held in place
- c) the flat, triangular bones on the upper back, one on each side of the spine
- d) tiny jumping insects that live on the skin of animals and feed on their blood
- e) a sudden, uncontrollable period of repeated coughing
- f) made a loud, high-pitched, unpleasant sound
- g) a small, soft, shapeless mass or lump of something

- h) a removable cover for the top of a container or box
- i) a shop that sells animals and pet supplies
- j) to accidentally let a substance escape or flow out of a container

Gap Fill Exercise

Look at the word bank below.

Use each word from the word bank to complete the sentences below.

You can find all the correct answers at the end of the lesson plan.

Word Bank

clamped • pretended • fumbled • stretched • pecked •
calmed down • sloped • batting • dropped • whispered

Sentences

a) The kitten kept _____ at the ball of wool on the floor.

b) He accidentally _____ his phone on the pavement,
cracking the screen.

c) She _____ the secret so quietly that no one else could
hear.

d) He _____ his jaw shut, refusing to answer any more
questions.

e) She _____ to be asleep when her brother walked into the
room.

f) He _____ with his keys for several minutes before finally opening the door.

g) The cat _____ lazily after waking up from its long nap.

h) The hen _____ at the ground, searching for seeds among the grass.

i) After a few deep breaths, she _____ and was able to speak clearly again.

j) The field _____ gently down towards the river.

Discussion Questions

1. In your own words, tell the story.
2. How do you think the boy feels about the bird? Why does he care so much about it, do you think?
3. Why does the boy call the bird Elsie? What is so special about this name to the boy?
4. What significance does the bird's name "Elsie" hold for the boy? How does it reflect his feelings towards her?
5. Describe the boy's father. What kind of person is he?
6. What does the boy think of his father?
7. What kind of relationship does the boy have with his father? Are they close?
8. What about the boy's relationship with his mother?
9. Do you think they are a close family?
10. The boy's father doesn't seem very positive about the bird flying? Why does he think this way?
11. What challenges did the narrator face when taking care of Elsie? How did they overcome these challenges?

12. Do you think a young man can nurse a very young bird to health and teach it to fly? Is this scenario realistic?
13. What would you do if you found a bird like this?
14. Would your family allow you to keep it?
15. Why do some people want to care for animals in this way?
16. Do you think the boy has many friends at school?
Why/why not?
17. What emotions did the narrator experience when they released Elsie into the air? How do you think they felt when she flew away?
18. Do you think the narrator's determination to help Elsie was justified? Why or why not?
19. What would the conversation be between the boy and his father as they walk home?
20. Compare and contrast the narrator's perspective on Elsie with their dad's perspective. How do their attitudes toward the bird differ?
21. What if the bird did not fly? What would happen after?

22. The story is called 'Flight'. Is it about the bird taking flight? Or the boy? Explain your thoughts in class.
23. How does the story explore themes of perseverance and determination? Give examples from the text.
24. Why do you think the boy's dad didn't believe that Elsie could fly? How did the dad's opinion affect the boy?
25. Is this good or bad behaviour by the boy's father?
26. Do you agree with the boy's decision to release Elsie into the wild? Why or why not?
27. Discuss the role of communication between humans and animals in the story. How does the narrator communicate with Elsie?
28. Describe a time when you had to care for someone or something. How did it make you feel? What challenges did you face?
29. Describe a moment from your own life where you witnessed an animal's behaviour that surprised or amazed you.

30. If you were to continue the story, what would you predict happens to Elsie? How would the boy feel about her eventual fate?

Role Play: The Walk Home

This is a role play activity.

There are two characters in the role play.

1. The boy
2. Dad

The Situation

Elsie has just flown away over the cliff. The boy and his father must now walk back down the hill together, alone.

This is the boy's chance to finally say what he has been holding back the whole story — how his father's constant mockery and doubt made him feel.

Dad, having just watched the bird actually fly after weeks of insisting it never would, must decide whether to admit he was wrong, or keep deflecting with jokes and excuses.

In pairs, create a conversation that you can present to the class.

Take some time to prepare your role play.

When you are ready, show the class.

Debate: Should Children Be Allowed to Raise Wild Animals?

The Motion

“This house believes that children should not be allowed to raise wild animals, even briefly.”

Option A — Full Two-Team Debate

Divide the class into two teams.

Team A — For the Motion

You must argue that raising a wild animal, even with good intentions, can be harmful to the animal and is not something a child should be responsible for.

Team B — Against the Motion

You must argue that a child’s care, patience, and determination — as shown in the story — can genuinely save a wild animal’s life, and that this kind of experience teaches valuable lessons about responsibility and compassion.

Preparation (10 minutes)

Each team should prepare their arguments. Think about:

- Was the boy in the story equipped to properly care for Elsie? What went right? What could have gone wrong?
- Does good intention outweigh a lack of expertise when caring for a wild animal?
- What role should parents play in decisions like this?
- What did the boy gain from this experience that he might not have gained otherwise?

The Debate

1. Team A gives an opening statement (2 minutes).
2. Team B gives an opening statement (2 minutes).
3. Rebuttal round — each team responds to the other's points (2 minutes each).
4. Closing statements — each team sums up their strongest argument (1 minute each).

The Vote

After the debate, the rest of the class votes on which side made the more convincing argument. The teacher can act as moderator and timekeeper throughout.

Option B — Simplified Class Discussion

If a full debate doesn't suit the class, the teacher can instead run this as an open discussion: pose the motion to the whole class, and go around asking individual students whether they agree or disagree and why. The teacher moderates, encourages disagreement, and draws out different opinions rather than assigning fixed sides.

Writing

This is a creative writing exercise.

You are going to write a short story. The name of the story is:

Flying

Imagine you are Elsie, the bird in the story.

Imagine that Elsie can think in English, and she wants to tell her story.

She has been found by a boy who takes her home and cares for her.

He feeds her, looks after her.

Then comes the day when he sets her free and she flies away.

Describe your thoughts and feelings as you learn to fly and navigate the challenges in the wind.

Describe your feelings of being up in the sky.

But also about leaving the boy behind. The boy who looked after you and helped you.

Write your story.

Then, when you are ready, read your story out loud in front of the class.

Or you can give it to your teacher for review.

Reading Comprehension Questions — Model Answers

1. The boy claims that the bird can fly because he has trained her.
2. Dad laughs and mocks him, saying it is rubbish.
3. The bird is inside a box because the boy had to carry her there safely.
4. The weather is cold and windy.
5. The boy calls the bird Elsie, after his mum's grandmother, because it feels like the right old-fashioned name for her.
6. Dad says it is just a noisy seagull.
7. The box nearly falls out of his hands because the bird is moving around inside.
8. The neighbour is also there, listening to Dad.
9. Dad tells the neighbour that the boy found the bird on the ground and that it is surprising it lasted this long.
10. The neighbour gives the boy a friendly nod.
11. Dad keeps saying that the stupid bird won't fly and is only lucky to be alive.

12. The boy ignores the comments and focuses on holding the box tightly.

13. The bird was just a tiny blob with hardly any feathers and eyes almost shut.

14. Mum said he could not keep the bird in the house because it was dirty and might have fleas.

15. He said the bird was a she and that she did not have fleas because he washed her.

16. He insists on calling her “she” because it makes her feel more personal and important to him.

17. He first tried giving her crumbled bread soaked in water.

18. The pet shop man said the bird would die within two days.

19. He went to the library to find a book on birds.

20. He saw a picture of a man feeding a baby bird with a dropper of water and soft mash.

21. He was surprised to learn that birds drink water.

22. He fed her drops of water and mashed-up grains or soft food.

23. He wanted to hold Elsie up high and prove to the pet shop man that he was wrong.
24. This shows that he is determined and wants to prove people wrong when they doubt him.
25. Dad suggests that the boy will throw the bird off the top of the hill.
26. The boy says he will help her, just like he has been helping her for the past two weeks.
27. Mum calls it a smug laugh.
28. He believes marriage means one person is always right and the other is always wrong.
29. Dad tells him to hurry up and get on with it because it is freezing.
30. Elsie flaps around inside the box and makes noise.
31. He softly says "Come on, girl" in a soothing voice.
32. Dad stops speaking because he goes into a coughing fit.
33. Elsie stretches her wings out into the cold air.
34. She pecks at his fingers quickly.
35. He says, "It's okay, I'll help you."

36. It shows his patience because he is used to her pecking and no longer pulls away.

37. He notices that she is strong but still skinny, like a bag of bones.

38. She eats her own weight in food every day.

39. He holds her close to his chest.

40. He avoids looking at Dad so he does not start laughing or coughing again.

41. She had flown across the garage with his help.

42. One time she flew into the door.

43. He believes she is strong enough to fly properly.

44. He tells her, "Come on, girl. You got this."

45. She makes a cry that sounds like "Far."

46. He feels her body rising from his hands.

47. The wind makes her flap awkwardly and struggle in the air.

48. Her flying is described as clumsy, like a butterfly with no grace.

49. She drops out of view over the edge.

50. He is horrified and holds his breath, unable to move.

51. She rises back up into the air and soars away.

52. The story ends with Elsie flying away and disappearing into the sky.

True or False — Answers

1. True.
2. False. In fact, Dad mocks the boy and says it's "rubbish."
3. False. In fact, the bird is a seagull, not a pigeon.
4. True.
5. False. In fact, Mum says the bird is dirty and might have fleas, and doesn't want it in the house.
6. True.
7. False. In fact, he goes to the library to find a book on birds.
8. True.
9. False. In fact, Elsie hesitates, pecking at his fingers, before she is ready to fly.
10. True.

What is the Correct Synonym? — Answers

Words	Synonyms
trained	skilled
rubbish	nonsense
smug	self-satisfied
soothing	calming
persevered	persisted
awkwardly	clumsily
soaring	rising
tiny	minuscule
freezing	icy
dropped	fell

What is the Correct Antonym? — Answers

Words	Antonyms
trained	untrained
smug	humble
soothing	irritating
tiny	huge
freezing	boiling
persevered	quit
awkwardly	gracefully
soaring	plummeting
calmed down	flared up
skinny	plump

Words and Meanings — Answers

Words	Meaning
shoulder blades	c
blob	g
coughing fit	e
bag of bones	a
pet shop	i
fleas	d
lid	h
spill	j
securing	b
screeched	f

Gap Fill Exercise — Answers

Words	Sentence
clamped	d
pretended	e
fumbled	f
stretched	g
pecked	h
calmed down	i
sloped	j
batting	a
dropped	b
whispered	c

Credits

This lesson plan is courtesy of **ManWrites**.
This content is copyright © 2026 **ManWrites**
— © 2026 *ManWrites*

For more information, visit:

www.manwrites.com

Or join my mailing list below — I'll send you
more ESL teaching ideas straight to your
inbox.

[ManWrites Mailing List](#)