



Learn English Through Stories

F Series

F58

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1. THE DOVE AND THE CROW

Gliding softly through the clouds like a sunray on a grey morning, the dove descended towards her nest in the banyan tree. In her beak were tightly held two grains gathered from a nearby field, and in her eyes was a liquid light, almost like a squint, from the concentration of her desire to get home for her eggs.

As she reached within sight of the tree, she inclined on her shoulder, to the left, opened her wings wide and embraced the air, as though she was about to settle on the firmament. Her eyes were intent and her heart felt the pull of home. The light of the day shone across her neck like a smile.

Before her now stood the taller branches of the banyan tree. Only a little while ago had she ascended into the air from the cluster of leaves on the edge of the biggest branches of the banyan. But, somehow, the leaves seemed different, they seemed to have been parted from above.

The concentration of the light in the dove's eyes nearly tore the air, as she quickly wheeled and made an effort to dive into the pit for there was the sign, the sure sign, of the crow's approach towards her nest. And this crow was the sworn enemy of her eggs, the vandal, the destroyer, who had twice before killed her young ones just before they had been born. He always came from the top of the tree because he knew that her husband, the He-dove slept near the base of the tree in a little nest on a cavity of the main trunk.

She tore through as though her second sight, and her mother love, had combined to make her the vehicle of flight itself. And what looked like a nose dive became a safe landing on the top of the tree.

She sat on a strong twig, folded her wings and tried to collect herself together. A thin gauze of confusion covered her and her body trembled in spite of her will to remain calm. From what secret source of energy arose the passion, she knew not, but in her nerves, from deep beneath her flesh, there arose tremors which disturbed the even flow of her breath and the usual peace of her presence.

She cooed.

Immediately she heard the caw caw of her enemy, the crow, from below. The ugly eater of dirt had surely destroyed her eggs. She fluttered and cooed.

The crow caw-cawed and was heard to hop away. Collecting herself together,

she peered into the pit below her and with the concentration of instinct, saw her nest. The two eggs she had been hatching lay, grey-white. Perhaps, they were safe. She had come in time.

There was no breath in her to wait. She darted to the branch on which, among the leaves, nestled her little home.

The crow cawed defiantly, even as he hopped a little way away from the branch.

Shivering through fear and trembling on the borders of hope, the mother dove walked to her nest. And, blind, but with her nerves taut, she spread her wings to feel the contours of her eggs beneath the warm down of her belly. Warm were the eggs beneath her safe, untouched. She had come in time, before the crow had attacked them. She cooed with satisfaction, with the instinct of the mother who finds her little ones safe after the agony of separation... She cooed deeply as she felt them near her flesh... She cooed again and spread her wings as though the little ones, still unhatched could listen...

The crow caw-cawed, even as he heard the dove coo. He wanted to frighten her, to bully her, as though to say: 'Your eggs are safe now, but I can still get them if I like; I have a strong beak, to fight with and my claws are strong like a vulture's.'

The mother dove cooed, this time a deep shriek of a coo, to call her husband, the sleepy lazy-bones, who had slept through the crisis, on the outpost in the cavity of the trunk of the banyan tree.

There was no answer.

She cooed again, more shrilly.

The crow caw-cawed to drown her soft voice.

She felt helpless. But the eggs were safe near the belly and she spread her wings wide and, looking this side and that, she sat, on the defensive, alert, equal to the fight, should he attack before the He-dove came.

The crow knew that he could not attack. He had lost his opportunity. Perhaps if the He-dove did not come he could overpower the mother dove and break her eggs, take her stock of grain and despoil her nest. Only, should the He-dove awake and call the other birds, together, his chance would be lost.

The dove cooed.

Stung by failure, craven and mad, the crow suddenly hopped nearer towards her to attack.

Fluttering, shrieking, cooing, with her wings spread wide, the grey mother dove stood on guard... And, nerved to resist, should the crow attack, she cooed defiantly, though a coo can never be a hoarse shout, as a caw can never be a whisper.

The little sparrows below heard the agonised coo of the mother dove. The He-dove awoke as the strange coo of mother dove fell into his ears. The little sparrows raised a hue and cry.

The mother dove cooed softly now, with assurance. The crow attacked her, picking at her wings in a desperate effort to avenge himself on her for her alertness. The dove fluttered wildly and beat off the attack, the white of her under-wings glistening like the light of danger before the cawing crow.

The He-dove flew up, followed by the sparrows. The crow caw-cawed and fled far to the end of the branch. The mother dove cooed to the He-dove, half remonstrating, half satisfied that he had come after all. The sparrows chirped and mocked at the crow.

The He-dove was stung by the reproach of the mother dove, cooed deeply and proudly, and lifted his beak towards the crow. The crow rubbed his beak with his feathers to clean it of the blood he had on it.

The mother dove cooed with pain. The He-dove came and put his beak into her beak. The kiss gave the mother dove warmth and she cooed with love. The crow fled away at the sound of the love song, cawing bitter hatred in his mouth.

They say in the Punjab that the dove can resist the attack of the crow, her proverbial enemy, with cooing. For the cooing comes from the deep, deep love of the mother for its young ones, and the cawing of the crow, as well as its red-eyed anger, comes from the smoke and ashes of the hatred in his heart.

2. The Dove and the Crow - Modified

A dove flew gently through the sky, like a soft ray of sun on a cloudy day. She carried two grains in her beak from a nearby field. Her eyes shone with focus as she hurried home to her nest in a big banyan tree. She wanted to reach her eggs.

As she got close to the tree, she turned left, spread her wings wide, and glided down. Her heart pulled her toward her nest. The sunlight glowed on her neck like a happy smile.

She could see the tall branches of the banyan tree now. Not long ago, she had left her nest in those branches. But something looked strange. The leaves seemed pushed apart from above.

Her sharp eyes spotted danger. She knew a crow was near—her enemy. This crow had hurt her eggs before, breaking them just before they hatched. He always came from the top of the tree. He knew her husband, the He-dove, slept below in a small hole in the trunk.

The dove flew fast, like a mother who could feel her babies needed her. What looked like a dive turned into a safe landing on the top of the tree. She stood on a strong twig, folded her wings, and tried to calm down. Her body shook, even though she wanted to be still. She didn't know where her strength came from, but she felt it deep inside. She made a soft "coo" sound.

Then she heard the loud "caw caw" of the crow below. That mean bird must have found her nest! She fluttered her wings and cooed again. The crow cawed back and hopped away a little.

The dove looked down into her nest. Her two eggs were still there, safe and grey-white. She had made it in time! She flew down to the branch where her nest sat among the leaves.

The crow cawed loudly, as if to say, "I'm still here!" He hopped closer. The dove shivered with fear but stayed hopeful. She sat on her eggs, feeling their warmth under her belly. They were safe. She cooed happily, spreading her wings over them like a hug.

The crow cawed again, trying to scare her. He seemed to say, "I can still get your eggs! My beak is strong, and my claws are sharp!" The dove cooed loudly this time, calling her husband. He was lazy and still sleeping below in the tree.

She cooed again, sharper now. The crow cawed to cover her voice. She felt alone, but her eggs were safe. She spread her wings wide, ready to fight if the crow came closer.

The crow knew he had missed his chance. If the He-dove didn't wake up, maybe he could still attack. But if the He-dove came with other birds, the crow would lose. The dove kept cooing.

Suddenly, the crow got angry and hopped toward her. The dove fluttered her wings and cooed loudly, standing strong. She was ready to protect her eggs.

Little sparrows below heard her cry. The He-dove woke up to her strange coo. The sparrows chirped and made noise. The dove cooed softer now, feeling safer. The crow attacked her wings, pecking hard. She fought back, her white wings shining like a warning.

The He-dove flew up with the sparrows. The crow cawed and jumped to the end of the branch. The dove cooed to her husband—half mad, half glad he came. The sparrows chirped and laughed at the crow.

The He-dove felt bad for sleeping. He cooed loudly and faced the crow. The crow wiped blood off his beak with his feathers. The dove cooed in pain. The He-dove touched her beak with his, like a kiss. She felt warm and cooed with love. The crow flew away, cawing with anger.

People in Punjab say a dove can fight a crow with her cooing. Her coo comes from deep love for her babies. The crow's caw comes from hate in his heart.

3. Comprehension

Question 1: What was the dove carrying in her beak as she flew toward her nest?

Question 2: Why was the dove hurrying to her nest in the banyan tree?

Question 3: What did the dove notice that made her realize a crow was near?

Question 4: How did the dove react when the crow attacked her wings?

Question 5: Who helped the dove scare the crow away in the end?

Answers

Answer 1: The dove was carrying two grains in her beak.

Answer 2: She was hurrying to her nest to protect her eggs from danger.

Answer 3: She noticed that the leaves of the banyan tree seemed pushed apart from above, indicating the crow's presence.

Answer 4: The dove fought back, fluttering her wings and cooing loudly to protect her eggs.

Answer 5: The He-dove and the little sparrows helped scare the crow away.

4. Grammar Page

out of	<i>leaving something:</i> The cat jumped out of the window. <i>to the outside of:</i> She went out of the room. <i>from among:</i> We won two games out of three. <i>material:</i> The bridge is made out of steel. <i>beyond:</i> The child is not out of danger.
past	<i>up to and beyond:</i> I walked past the post office. <i>after (in time):</i> It was half past three when I reached there.
round	<i>in a circle:</i> We're sitting round the campfire.
through	<i>going from one point to the other point:</i> You shouldn't walk through the forest. <i>for the whole of a period:</i> We slept through the night. <i>by means of:</i> Skill improves through practice.
towards	<i>in the direction of:</i> We ran towards the hut.
up	<i>from low to high:</i> He went up the hill.
down	<i>from high to low:</i> He came down the hill. The ball rolled down the stairs.
beyond	<i>further than; exceeding:</i> That was beyond my expectations.
during	<i>throughout a period:</i> She works during the night.
except	<i>not including:</i> I invited all except Jenny.
per	<i>for each:</i> He drove around 60 kilometres per hour.
since	<i>from a specific time in the past:</i> I had been waiting since two o'clock. <i>from a past time until now:</i> I have been waiting here since noon.
throughout	<i>in every part of:</i> This custom is found throughout the world. <i>for the whole of a period:</i> I faced that problem throughout the winter.
till/until	<i>up to a certain time:</i> They will stay here until Friday.
up to	<i>as far as:</i> I have read up to page 100. <i>depending on:</i> The decision is up to you.
within	<i>inside of:</i> I will be there within ten minutes. Mark within the circle.
without	<i>not having:</i> Do not leave without eating breakfast. He came here without his camera.