

# 1 A Crow in the House

Ruskin Bond

Read the given story and do the activities given below.

*A young boy and his grandfather decide to take care of an injured crow. Will they be able to help him live? Will he be able to fly again and live with other crows? Read on to find out what happens to the injured crow.*

A young crow had fallen from its nest and was fluttering about on the road. It was in danger there. Any moment, it could be run over by a cart or a bicycle. Or it could be seized by a cat. So I brought it home.

It was in a sorry condition. Its beak was half open and it could not hold its head up. We did not expect it to live. But my grandfather and I did our best to bring it around.

We fed it by opening its beak gently with a pencil. We pushed in a little bread and milk, then removed the pencil to allow it to swallow. For variety, we occasionally gave it a dose of my grandmother's home-made plum wine. As a result, the young crow was soon on its way to recovery.

fluttering	<i>moving lightly and quickly</i>
seized	<i>caught</i>
occasionally	<i>sometimes, but not often</i>
recovery	<i>the process of becoming well again</i>

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We were then prepared to let him go. We thought he would want to be free and go with the other crows. But he did not want his freedom. Instead he made himself at home in our house.

My grandmother, Aunt Mabel and even some of my grandfather's other pets did not like this. But there was no way of getting rid of the bird. He took over the **administration** of the house. We were not sure he was a male bird but we called him Caesar.

Before long, Caesar was joining us at meal times. He danced about on the dining table. He gave us no peace till he had been given his small bowl of meat, soup and vegetables.

He was always restless and curious. He was always looking into things. He would hop about a table to empty a matchbox of its contents. Or rip the daily paper to shreds. Or overturn a vase of flowers. Or tug at the tail of one of the dogs.

“That crow will be the ruin of us,” grumbled Grandmother.

We did try putting Caesar in a cage. But he became very angry. He cawed and flapped his wings so fiercely that we had to let him out again. It was better for our peace of mind to give him the run of the house.

He did not show any desire to join the other crows in the banyan tree. Grandfather said this was because he was really a jungle crow, a raven, and probably felt superior to ordinary crows. But it seemed to me that Caesar had grown used to living with humans, like a human. He had become proud and did not wish to mix with his own kind.

He would even pick a quarrel with Harold the hornbill, who was much larger than him. Perching on top of Harold's cage he would peck at the big bird's feet. Harold would swear and scold and try and catch Caesar through the bars.

<b>administration</b>	<i>the activities that are done in order to plan, organise or run a business, school or home</i>
<b>shreds</b>	<i>small pieces</i>
<b>grumbled</b>	<i>complained</i>
<b>perching</b>	<i>(bird) staying on a branch</i>

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In time, Caesar learnt to talk a little—as ravens sometimes do—in a cracked voice. He would sit for hours outside the window, banging on the glass with his beak and calling, “Hello, hello.” He seemed to recognise the click of the gate when I came home from school and would come to the door with a hop, skip and a jump to say, “Hello, hello.”

I had also taught him to sit on my arm and say ‘kiss, kiss’ while he placed his head gently against my mouth.

On one of my Aunt Mabel’s visits, he flew up and sat on her arm and cackled, “Kiss, kiss.”

Aunt Mabel was delighted and leaned forward for a kiss. But Caesar’s attention had shifted to my aunt’s gleaming spectacles. Thrusting at them with his beak, he knocked them off. Aunt Mabel was never a success with pets.

Grandmother said that Caesar was a pest in spite of his engaging habits. It would not have been so bad if he had kept his activities to our own house. But he took to visiting neighbour’s houses and stealing pens and pencils, hair-ribbons, combs, keys, toothbrushes and false teeth.



He was especially fond of toothbrushes and made a collection of them on top of the cupboard in my room. Most of the neighbours were represented in our house by a toothbrush. Toothbrush sales went up that year and so did my grandmother's blood pressure.

Caesar spied on children going to the sweet shop and often managed to **snatch** sweets from them as they came out.

Clothes pegs fascinated him. Neighbours would return from the bazaar to find their washing lying in the mud and no sign of the pegs. These too found their way to the top of my cupboard.

It was Caesar's gardening activities which finally led to disaster. He was helping himself to a neighbour's beans when a stick was flung at him, breaking his leg. I carried the unfortunate bird home, and Grandfather and I washed and bandaged his leg as best we could. But it would not mend.

Caesar hung his head and no longer talked. He grew weaker day by day, refusing to eat. An occasional sip of Grandmother's home-made wine was all that kept him going.

<b>gleaming</b>	<i>clean and bright</i>
<b>engaging</b>	<i>pleasant, attractive and charming</i>
<b>snatch</b>	<i>take hold of something suddenly and roughly</i>

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One morning, I found him dead on the sofa, his legs stiff in the air. Poor Caesar! His **anti-social** habits had led to his early end. I dug a shallow grave in the garden and buried him there along with all the toothbrushes and clothes pegs he had taken the trouble to collect.

**anti-social**

*annoying to other people or to society at large*



## Think and Answer

1. Why do you think Caesar remained in the house?
2. Why could Caesar not be kept in a cage?
3. How did Caesar recover his health?
4. Why does the author say that Aunt Mabel **was never a success with pets?**



## Using Words

**Fill in the blanks with suitable words from the box to complete the idioms.**

up   heart   away   home   charity

1. Home is where the \_\_\_\_\_ is.
2. Home sweet \_\_\_\_\_.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ begins at home.
4. Set \_\_\_\_\_ your home.
5. This hostel is a home \_\_\_\_\_ from home



## Appreciation

**Characterisation** refers to how a character is created in a story through description of appearance and behaviour. In this story, Caesar's character has been etched vibrantly by the writer. The black raven has myriad shades to his personality.

**Can you draw a character-sketch of Caesar by quoting instances from the text?**



## Writing

**Imagine you are the grandmother. Write a diary entry for the day when Caesar came home.**

Make sure to use some of these words: **caw, feeble, feather, ruffle, peck, hop, gentle, kind, broken.**

You may begin this way.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Diary, \_\_\_\_\_

This child will grow up to be a veterinarian or zoo keeper! Every injured animal on the street has to find shelter in our house. Today he brought in an injured crow. Its drooping head and broken wing makes it a sorry sight. \_\_\_\_\_

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## Discussion

**Do your neighbours have pets? What would you do if your neighbour's pet was a nuisance? Work in groups of four and discuss these questions.**

Talk about

- whether you would scare them away if they bothered you.
- whether you think Caesar deserved what happened to him.
- whether you think the author agrees with what happened to Caesar.
- how you can avoid troubles with pets.