



The Boy Who Could Fly

David A. Hill



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David A. Hill was born in Walsall in the UK, and after school he trained^o and worked as a teacher in England. In 1977 he left the UK, and lived in Italy, Serbia and Hungary. He also worked with students and teachers in many other countries around the world. Throughout his life, David wrote many educational course books and original readers such as *The Boy Who Could Fly* and *Operation Osprey*. David was also a published poet and he translated poetry, too.

In his spare time he played and sang in a blues^o band and performed traditional English folk songs. In fact, David wrote a teachers' resource book for Helbling called *Traditional Folk Songs*. David also studied art, architecture and the natural world. He was a keen naturalist^o and wrote many articles on ornithology^o and botany^o. His love for birds and plants is very clear in this story.

In an interview about *The Boy Who Could Fly*, David said: "I have always loved birds and the beauty of their flight. One of my oldest hobbies is birdwatching, and I have always thought how wonderful^o it would be to be able to fly. The story began by thinking about what flying would be like for a person with wings, and then what problems someone who could fly might have.


"The message underneath this story is that people must be allowed to be different, and that we should be happy that there are differences. Differences are what make the world an interesting place. It is also important that we include people who are different, and accept them and make them welcome, while respecting their individuality."

David died peacefully in his home in Hungary in October 2017. He is sadly missed.

- **blues:** type of slow, sad music developed by African-Americans
- **botany:** the study of plants
- **naturalist:** someone who studies animals and plants
- **ornithology:** the study of birds
- **trained:** learned to become
- **wonderful:** great; amazing

BEFORE READING



- 1  There are around 9,700 different kinds of birds in the world today. They are all very different from each other in size, shape, the food they eat, the places they live, and the things they can do. Look at the pictures of these four birds. What do you know about them? How are they different from each other? Discuss with a partner.



a Emperor Penguin



b House Sparrow



c Eagle Owl



d Ostrich

- 2 Answer these questions:

- a Which bird lives near people?
- b Which bird runs very fast?
- c Which bird lives in a cold climate?
- d Which bird flies at night?
- e Which bird eats fish?
- f Which bird eats meat?
- g Which bird can swim underwater?
- h Which birds cannot fly?

BEFORE READING



- 1 Most birds can fly. In order to do this, birds have different bodies from other living creatures. They have very light bones, and very big chest muscles to move their wings up and down. They also have things which other living creatures don't have: wings and feathers. Label these two pictures.



a



b

- 2 People have always wanted to fly. What do you know about the history of human flight? Match the people (a-c) with the actions (1-3).

- a Daedalus and Icarus
b Leonardo da Vinci
c Orville and Wilbur Wright

- 1 Studied flight and made drawings of different kinds of flying machines.
2 Made the first manned flight at Kittyhawk in the USA in 1903.
3 The father made wings for his son, but he flew too close to the sun. The wax that held the feathers onto his arms melted, and the son fell into the sea.

- 3 Which one of the three sets of people and events above did not really exist?

4 Look at this picture and write a description of the person. Think about how he is different from you and describe the differences.



5 How do you think it feels to be able to fly like a bird? What would be the advantages and disadvantages? Make some notes below.

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES

6  Discuss your ideas with a partner.


BEFORE READING




- 1 The main character in the story is Michael Broad – he is ‘the boy who could fly’. He is the only person in the world who has wings and can fly. Read this extract from Chapter 2:

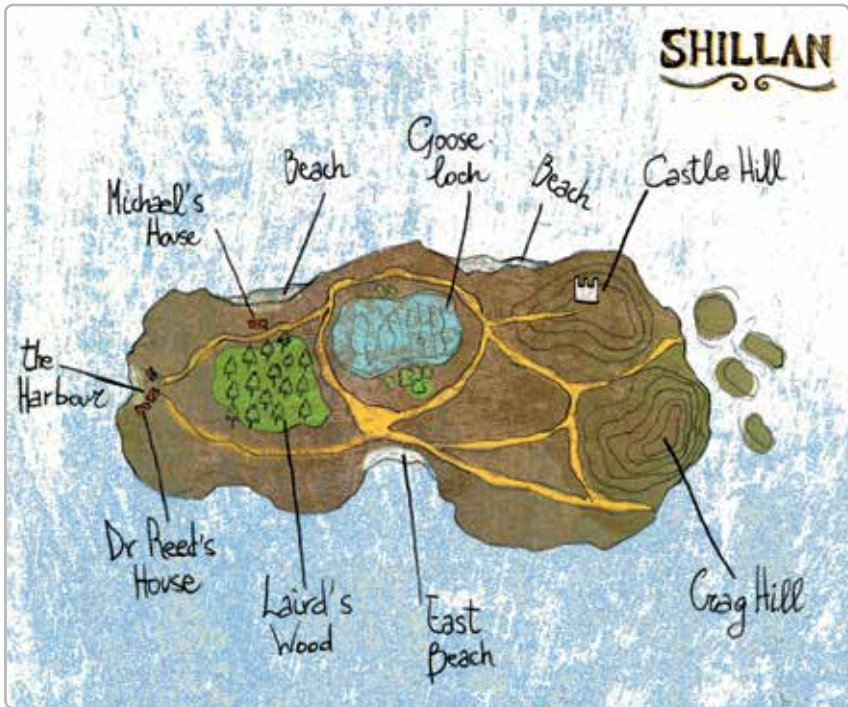
“ Nobody knew where Michael came from. Sarah and George Broad, who owned a small shop, found him on the doorstep of their house one morning. He was in a basket, with a bag of new clothes and some baby food. Sarah guessed he was about nine months old. Later she found a piece of paper in the bag. The name Michael was written on it. ”

Where do you think Michael came from? How could he grow wings and fly? Give reasons for your answers.

- 2  In pairs look at these pictures from the story. Describe the setting of each one. What is happening in each picture? Choose one and write a detailed description. Try to imagine what happens next.




- 3  Listen to this extract from the story. Draw the route the three men took on the map.



- 4 Now answer these questions:

- Who are the three men?
- Did they kill Michael?
- What did they do with him?

- 5  Why do you think the men want to capture Michael? With a partner discuss possible reasons. Think of the following:

- What ability makes Michael special?
- How can the men use this ability?



Today



One hundred metres above the earth, the man who could fly moved his large white wings gently backwards and forwards.

It was very quiet up there, and the air was clean and fresh. When he looked down, he could see the village where he lived and the school where he taught. If he turned his head, he could see the park and, beyond[•] that, fields with cows and sheep in them.

He moved his wings a little faster and rose[•] higher. He could see even more now – those hills in the distance were the Bellock Hills. And that large blue shape[•] was Willtery Lake.

Then he began to feel a bit dizzy[•] and sick. He could fly quite easily at this height, but looking down at the ground so far below him always made him feel strange. Sometimes he was afraid of falling, but of course he never did. Birds don't fall to the ground, and he was like a bird.

He took one last look at the countryside, then he opened his wings wide, made a few slow circles and gracefully[•] flew down towards the park below.

He landed easily on his feet. After folding[•] his wings flat[•] onto his back, he put on his special extra-large jacket to cover them. Now he looked the same as everyone else. As he walked home across the grass, he thought about his supper.

Flying always gave him a good appetite[•].

- **appetite:** desire to eat
- **beyond:** further away
- **dizzy:** confused; without balance
- **flat:** lying on a surface
- **folding:** making smaller (something flat)
- **gracefully:** in a smooth and beautiful way
- **rose:** moved upwards
- **shape:** form

How it all started



Nobody knew where Michael came from. Sarah and George Broad, who owned a small shop, found him on the doorstep of their house one morning. He was in a basket with a bag of new clothes and some baby food. Sarah guessed he was about nine months old. Later she found a piece of paper in the bag. The name *Michael* was written on it.

The Broads immediately told the police about the baby. Michael's picture and details were soon in all the papers and he was even on the national news. But nobody recognised him or came to take him back, so the Broads looked after him and a year later they adopted him.

Adoption

The following people all have one thing in common: they were adopted. Do you know why they are famous?

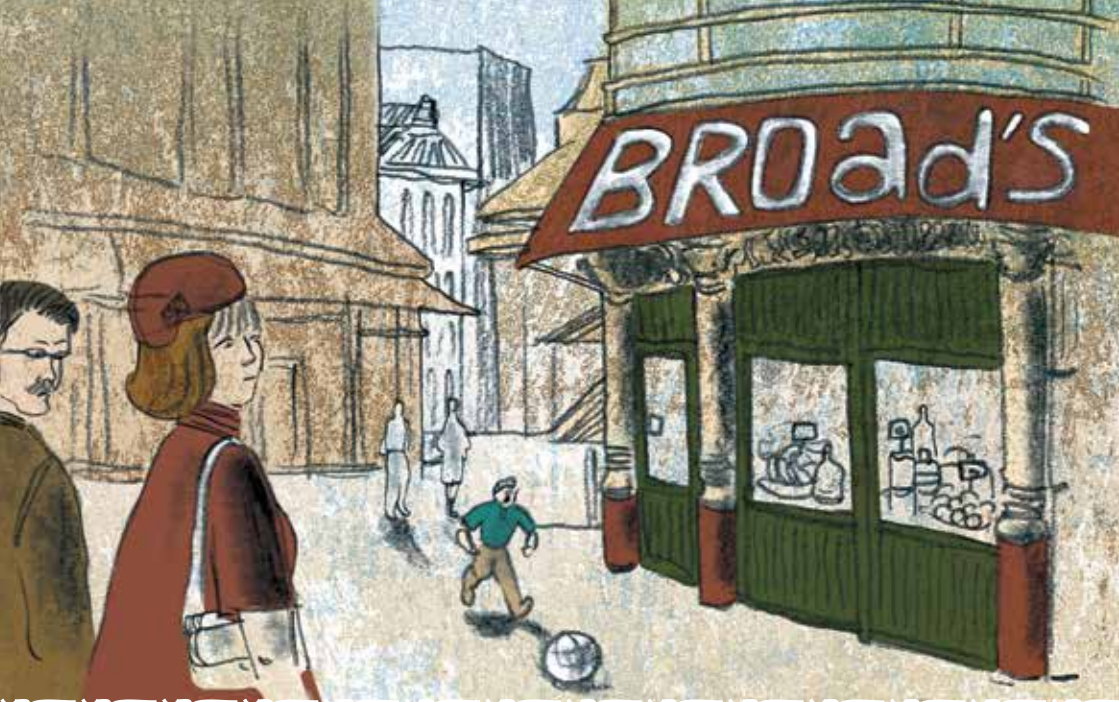


Discuss with a partner.

- Aristotle
- Charles Dickens
- Crazy Horse
- Edgar Allan Poe
- John Lennon
- Nelson Mandela

See if you can discover the names of other famous adopted people or adoptive parents.

- **adopted:** took Michael into their family and legally made him their son
- **doorstep:** a small step outside the main door to a house
- **owned:** possessed; had
- **recognised:** knew who he was



Michael was happy with Sarah and George. And they were happy with him. They didn't have any children so he became the son they never had.

Michael grew up to be a nice boy. He was very popular with the customers^o in the Broads' shop, and with his friends and teachers at his nursery school^o. When he was old enough to understand, Sarah and George explained to him that they weren't his real parents, but he didn't mind^o.

Like all children, Michael grew taller and stronger every day. He was a normal child in every way, except for the size of his chest^o. His chest was very large. And it grew larger and stronger as he got older. People began to notice it. The teachers began to talk about it. The Broads began to wonder^o about it.

- **chest:** the upper front part of the body
- **customers:** clients
- **he didn't mind:** it wasn't a problem for him
- **nursery school:** school for children aged between 3 and 5
- **wonder:** think; ask themselves questions

Going to school



Michael's life changed when he started primary school. He started feeling pains[•] in his back, near his shoulders. Sometimes he couldn't sleep at night because of them. The family doctor examined him but he found nothing unusual.

When Michael started his second year at school the pains got much worse, so Sarah took him to see a specialist[•] at the hospital. The specialist examined him and ordered x-rays. From the x-rays he could clearly see that some extra bones were growing out of Michael's shoulders. These bones were pushing against his skin and causing the pains. The doctor told Sarah to bring him back the following day, but it was too late.

That night Sarah and George were woken up by shouts from Michael's bedroom. They quickly ran to him and were shocked by what they saw. A large bone was growing out of each of his shoulders!

George called an ambulance, and an hour later Michael was back in the hospital. They x-rayed him again and several specialists examined him. George and Sarah stayed there all night and were able to see him from time to time. Between visits, the specialists asked them a lot of questions about Michael. At seven o'clock in the morning a nurse told them to go home.

'What about Michael?' asked George.

'He has to stay here,' the nurse replied.

• **feeling pains:** suffering

• **specialist:** expert

