

Kingshaw is a ten year old boy. After being bullied, he escapes into the countryside. Walking through a cornfield, he has an unwelcome visitor...

When he first saw the crow, he took no notice. There had been several crows. This one glided down into the corn on its enormous, ragged black wings. He began to be aware of it when it rose up suddenly, circled overhead, and then dived, to land not very far away from him. Then it rose, and circled, and came down again, this time not quite landing, but flapping about his head, beating its wings and making a sound like flat leather pieces being slapped together. It was the largest crow he had ever seen. As it came down for the third time, he looked up and noticed its beak, opening in a screech. The inside of its mouth was scarlet, it had small glinting eyes.

Kingshaw got up and flapped his arms. For a moment, the bird retreated a little way off, and higher up in the sky. He began to walk rather quickly back, through the path in the corn, looking ahead of him. Stupid to be scared of a rotten bird. What could a bird do? But he felt very alone, high up in the cornfield.

For a moment, he could only hear the soft thudding of his own footsteps, and the silky sound of the corn, brushing against him. Then, there was a rush of air, as the great crow came beating down, and wheeled about his head. The beak opened and the hoarse caaw came out again and again, from inside the scarlet mouth.

Kingshaw began to run, not caring, now, if he trampled the corn, wanting to get away, down into the next field. He thought that the corn might be some kind of crow's food store, in which he was seen as an invader. Perhaps this was only the first of a whole **battalion*** of crows, that would rise up and swoop at him. Get on to the grass then, he thought, get on to the grass, that'll be safe, it'll go away.

His progress was very slow through the cornfield, the thick stalks bunched together and got in his way, and he had to shove them back with his arms. But he reached the gate and climbed it, and dropped on to the grass of the field on the other side. Sweat was running down his forehead and into his eyes. He looked up. The crow kept on coming. He ran.

***battalion**: a large group of soldiers

Answer all the questions below. Pay attention to how many marks each question is worth. Ask for more paper if you need it.

The final question is a writing task: leave at least 20 minutes to complete it.

1. What does Kingshaw think when he first sees the crow? (1 mark)

2. What do the crow's wings look like? (1 mark)

3. What do the crow's wings sound like? (1 mark)

4. What makes the crow's head look frightening? (2 marks)

5. How does Kingshaw try to get away from the crow? (2 marks)

6. "Stupid to be scared of a rotten bird. What could a bird do?"

How does Kingshaw feel? (3 marks)

7. Re-read the third paragraph ("For a moment...).

What feelings do these sounds create?

"the soft thudding of his own footsteps" (1 mark)

"the silky sounds of the corn" (1 mark)

“a rush of air” (1 mark)

“the hoarse caaw came out again and again” (1 mark)

8. Re-read the fourth paragraph (“Kingshaw began to run...”). How does the writer make this event sound like a war? (3 marks)

9. In the final paragraph, what is slowing his escape? (3 marks)

