Kiko and the Injured Robin

READING TEXT • Ages 10–12 • Read carefully before answering the questions.

The first snowfall of December had transformed the village into a glittering wonderland. Kiko pulled her red scarf closer and adjusted her woolly hat as she walked towards the little bakery. Snowflakes clung to the loose strands of her brown hair, and the pink cherry-blossom ribbon tied around her ponytail fluttered in the wind.

She was passing an old stone wall when a faint rustling made her stop. Beneath a holly bush lay a robin, its orange-red breast bright against the snow. One wing hung at a precarious angle, as though the slightest movement might make things worse. Kiko crouched beside it, careful not to startle the tiny bird.

For a moment, the robin remained almost motionless. Its chest rose and fell, but its feet did not move and its head barely turned. Kiko felt a knot of worry tighten in her stomach. She wanted to help, yet she knew that frightened wild animals could be harmed by careless handling.

She called her mother, who contacted a local wildlife rescue volunteer. The volunteer advised them to keep the robin somewhere quiet, warm and dark while they arranged help. Kiko was reluctant to leave the bird alone; she lingered beside the bush, unwilling to walk away even for a minute. At last, with her mother's help, she gently placed it in a ventilated cardboard box lined with a soft towel.

Back at home, they prepared a makeshift shelter in the spare room. It was not a proper animal hospital - just a sturdy box with air holes, a folded towel and a lid to keep out the light. Kiko resisted the urge to peek inside. The rescue volunteer had explained that peace and quiet would help the robin until it could be examined.

When the volunteer arrived, she inspected the robin's wing and explained that it needed professional care. Over the following days, Kiko received updates from the rescue centre. She remained vigilant, checking her mother's messages each afternoon and paying close attention to every scrap of news. At first, the bird was weak, but soon it began to eat and perch again.

A week later, the volunteer invited Kiko to watch the robin's release. In a sheltered garden, the little bird made a tentative hop towards the open door of its carrier. It paused uncertainly, took one small step, then another. Finally, it fluttered onto a low branch. The volunteer smiled: the robin had had time to recuperate, growing stronger after its injury and recovering enough to return to the wild.

Kiko watched as the robin flew into the winter sunshine. She felt exhilarated - so full of happiness and excitement that she could hardly keep still. The bird disappeared into the branches, leaving only a sprinkle of snow behind. Kiko smiled. Sometimes the kindest thing you could do was help a creature become strong enough to fly away.

Vocabulary in Context

8 MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS • Circle ONE answer (A–D) for each question.

1. What does precarious most nearly mean in the story?

A. Perfectly straight

B. Unstable or unsafe

C. Carefully decorated

D. Completely hidden

2. What does motionless suggest about the robin?

A. It is making a loud noise

B. It is moving quickly

C. It is hardly moving at all

D. It is flying in circles

3. Why is Kiko described as reluctant?

A. She does not want to leave the bird

B. She is excited to go shopping

C. She is too tired to speak

D. She wants to frighten the bird

4. What is a makeshift shelter?

A. A shelter made of expensive materials

B. A shelter built many years ago

C. A shelter designed for a large animal

D. A temporary shelter made from available items

5. What does vigilant tell us about Kiko?

A. She is easily distracted

B. She is watchful and attentive

C. She is angry with the volunteer

D. She has forgotten about the robin

6. What does tentative mean when describing the robin’s hop?

A. Loud and aggressive

B. Fast and confident

C. Cautious and uncertain

D. Wild and uncontrolled

7. What does recuperate mean?

A. Recover strength after illness or injury

B. Search for somewhere to hide

C. Learn how to sing

D. Become frightened again

8. What does exhilarated mean in the final paragraph?

A. Extremely disappointed

B. Quietly confused

C. Nervous and suspicious

D. Full of excitement and joy

Answers & Explanations

TEACHER ANSWER SHEET • Each explanation identifies the clue in the text.

1. B — Unstable or unsafe

The wing hangs at an awkward angle, and even a small movement might make matters worse.

2. C — It is hardly moving at all

The text says its feet did not move and its head barely turned.

3. A — She does not want to leave the bird

She lingers beside the bush and is unwilling to walk away.

4. D — A temporary shelter made from available items

The shelter is an ordinary cardboard box and towel, not a proper animal hospital.

5. B — She is watchful and attentive

She checks updates every afternoon and pays close attention to news.

6. C — Cautious and uncertain

The robin pauses uncertainly and moves one small step at a time.

7. A — Recover strength after illness or injury

The robin grows stronger after its injury and becomes well enough to be released.

8. D — Full of excitement and joy

Kiko is so happy and excited that she can hardly keep still.

Teaching tip: Ask pupils to underline the words around each highlighted vocabulary item that helped them choose their answer. Encourage them to explain why the other options do not fit the passage.