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ENGLISH ACTIVE READING

LEVEL 3

The Snow Goose and Other Stories

Paul Gallico



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What's the book about?

- 1 There are three stories in this book. Look at the pictures below.
Guess which picture (1, 2, 3) is from each story.



- a *The Snow Goose*: Philip helps a bird.
- b *The Doll*: Doctor Amomy buys a present for a little girl.
- c *The Silver Swans*: Doctor Fundoby meets a young woman who lives on a boat.
- 2 When and where do the stories happen? Tick (✓) the correct answers.
- a 1800 to 1900 1930 to 1960 2000 to 2010
- b England the US South Africa

1.2 What happens first?

Look at the pictures on pages 1–11. What can you guess about Philip?
Circle the correct words.

- 1 Philip likes *birds* / *parties*.
- 2 He lives by a *river* / *the sea*.
- 3 He is an *artist* / *sailor*.
- 4 He is *handsome* / *kind*.

The Snow Goose

*Women turned their eyes away when they saw him.
So they never learned that he liked all living things.*

The Great **Marsh** lies on the Essex coast, between the villages of Chelmsbury and Wickaeldroth.

It is one of the last wild and lonely places in England. Nobody lives there. The only sounds are the cries of the many birds that make their homes in the marsh. It is a long, low, flat land of grass and water. Greys and blues and soft greens are the colours. But sometimes, when the sun goes down, the sky and land are a wonderful red and gold.

In the spring of 1930, a man bought some land and an old, empty **lighthouse** standing at the mouth of the little river Aelder. The man's name was Philip Rhayader. He lived and worked alone at the lighthouse all through the year. He was a painter, and he painted pictures of the birds and the marsh.



marsh /mu:f/ (n) an area of soft, wet land

lighthouse /'laɪthaus/ (n) a tall building with a bright light that tells ships about dangerous rocks

Philip lived at the lighthouse because he wanted to live alone. Every two weeks he went to the village of Chelmbury for the food and other things that he needed. When the villagers first saw the strange shape of his body and his dark, bearded face, they were a little afraid of him. They spoke of him as 'that strange painter-man from the lighthouse'. But slowly, as time passed, they learned to accept his strange ways.

Philip was a **hunchback**. His left arm was weak and thin and **twisted**, and his left hand looked like a bird's foot. He was twenty-seven when he came to the lighthouse on the Great Marsh.

He lived in many places before he came there. He always tried hard to make friends with the people that he met. But other people did not want to be friends with Philip. His twisted body made them uncomfortable. Women turned their eyes away when they saw him. So they never learned that he was a **gentle** man and liked all living things.

Philip did not hate these people. His heart was too full of affection; he could only feel sadness for them.



hunchback /'hʌntʃbæk/ (n) an impolite word for a person with a thick, hard part on their back, or with a very rounded back

twisted /'twɪstɪd/ (adj) strangely turned into a shape that is not normal

gentle /'dʒentl/ (adj) calm and kind

He spent time with his birds and his paintings. He owned a sailing boat and he could sail very well in it. He sailed up and down the rivers, and sometimes out to sea. Often he went away for many days. He looked for different birds to draw and photograph, and then to paint.

He built an **enclosure** at the side of the lighthouse, and sometimes he caught birds and put them in there. He never shot at a bird. If someone shot at them, he told them not to come near the lighthouse. He was a friend to all living things, and so all living things became his friends.

Some of the birds in the enclosure were the **geese** that flew down the coast from Iceland and Spitzbergen each October. They filled the air with the noise of their **wings**. Many hundreds came and stayed with him through the cold weather, from October to the early spring. Then they flew north again. But they came back in the autumn. Something inside them knew that Philip's place was a safe place for the winter.

And this made Philip happy.



enclosure /ɪnˈkloʊʒə/ (n) an area with something like a wall around it

goose /guːs/ (n) a large water bird with a long neck that makes a loud noise

wing /wɪŋ/ (n) one of the two parts of a bird's body that it uses for flying

The Snow Goose and Other Stories

Paul Gallico

British English

Classic

'The Snow Goose' is the most famous of these three stories by Paul Gallico. It is the story of Philip, a lonely painter who lives in an old lighthouse, and Fritha, a young girl who brings him a large white bird – the snow goose. It becomes a special bird in Philip's life – and later, the girl becomes special too.

Number of words (excluding activities): 12,991

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1200 headwords
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