

“The Birds” Study Guide

1. On December the third, two apparently minor incidents occur. One involves the farmer and one involves Nat. What are these incidents, and how do they **foreshadow**, or hint at, what the story’s **conflict** will be? What fact in the incident involving Nat seems most ominous or threatening to you?
2. List at least five ominous details describing the weather in the paragraph beginning “The sky was hard,” on page 55. As the story goes on, how does the weather get worse as the birds become more aggressive?
3. Nat keeps trying to find a rational explanation for the birds’ behavior. What explanations does he propose? How do other people react to the birds? How do they try to explain the birds’ actions?
4. How does the information we get from time to time about the BBC create **suspense**? What details about the planes add to our anxiety?
5. Is there a **climax** to this story, or do you think the climax is yet to come? Explain.
6. What **resolution (denouement)** to the conflict might be suggested in the final scene—by the silent wireless and the burning cigarette package?
7. Do you think the scene at the Triggs’s **foreshadows** what will happen to Nat and his family? Or do you think they will survive? In other words, do you read this as a **doomsday story** (about the end of human life on Earth)? Or do you read it as a story of humans versus nature, in which humans will triumph because of their superior reasoning powers? Cite details from the story to support your interpretations.
8. Explain why you think the writer chose birds to be the attackers in this story. Would other creatures have done as well?
9. Find at least five details that suggest that an evil force is directing the birds to turn on people. What do you imagine this force might be?
10. Du Maurier at times includes details that seem critical of people and of the way they respond to disaster. Find at least three of these details. Do you think the various people in the story respond to this emergency in believable way? Explain.