Wednesday 4/4

Albert

1 One chilly spring morning high in the mountains of Colorado, two small peregrine falcons were born. No soft feathers or grass lined their nest, or aerie. Their home was a hard ledge covered with dirt and small rocks near the top of a towering cliff. Frosty winds blew around the precipice, and snow glistened in the forested foothills below. Yet the peregrines were not uncomfortable. Their mother and father tended them carefully—feeding the nestlings when they were hungry and shielding them from the wind with their larger, soft bodies.

2 At first the two peregrines spent most of their time sleeping. Born blind and helpless, they could do little but eat. Yet soon long, tapering gray and white feathers replaced their soft downy ones. Their yellow feet grew large and strong. By the time they were only six weeks old, they were as big and handsome as their parents.

3 The two young peregrines, absorbed in their own affairs, were not aware that they were being watched. A wildlife biologist was studying them. For six weeks she had been writing down everything she saw them doing, for these birds were special. They belonged to a race known as *Falco peregrinus anatum*, the American peregrine falcon. Peregrine falcons are the fastest of all living creatures. They are also endangered, which means so few are left in the world that their species may not survive into the next century.

4 The young falcons did not know this, of course. Nor did they know that the biologist had named them Albert and Leopold for ease in her note taking. For the time being, only one thing was on the nestlings' minds: learning how to fly.

5 Unfortunately, this skill seemed to elude them. Especially Albert. Every time he tried to fly, his legs got in the way. When he ran along the cliff, he fell down. When he tried to climb the rocks to the ridge top, he slid backward on his rear. It seemed improbable that he would ever live up to the peregrine label "king of the air."

6 Leopold, however, was more adept. He could hop a foot or two into the air and beat his wings so rapidly that he stayed airborne for several seconds.

7 Because Leopold could move so fast, he usually got first grab at the food, which was unfortunate for Albert. Then the day came when Leopold jumped off the ledge and actually flew. Albert watched as his brother pumped his wings wildly and zigzagged far above the ground, wailing a high-pitched *Ki! Ki! Ki!* Instantly Albert's father soared by and reached out with his talons to pass food to Leopold in midair.

8 Now Albert was starving, too, and he squealed for attention, but his father had already left. After an hour the adult peregrine returned carrying more food. He flew by Albert and dangled it in front of his son's beak. This was strange. Always before he'd dropped it off at Albert's feet. Albert screeched his annoyance. His father

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merely called out a soft *echup-chupp* and continued flying in front of him. Albert squealed louder. He was petrified.

9 The biologist, who was watching carefully, held her breath. She realized how important it was that the young peregrine learn to fly—and fly well. He was a hunter, and his skill at procuring food would make all the difference to his survival. At this point for his species, the success of each individual peregrine counted.

10 Albert ran back and forth. He jumped up and down, begging, but he would not fly. Finally his father gave up and deposited the meal at Albert's feet.

11 For several days Albert continued his stubborn resistance to learning how to fly. He preferred to go hungry rather than work for his dinner. Leopold's skill was increasing daily, but Albert's fear kept him from taking the plunge off the 150-foot cliff.

12 The biologist began to worry. She observed that Albert was getting less and less food, but there was nothing she could do. Then, one hot morning in July, Albert was not fed at all.

13 Leopold had left to soar on his own and explore the territory. The adult peregrines had not been seen since daybreak. At lunchtime Albert's father was at last spotted bringing home food for his timid offspring.

14 Albert, ravenous with hunger, was beside himself with excitement. He leaped into the air and, without thinking, jumped off the cliff. Finding himself in midair, he panicked. Floating down, down, down like a parachute, he crashed upon a rock halfway down the cliff. He tried desperately to grasp the boulder but slid backward.

15 Albert shrieked. He took off again and tried to hop and flutter back to the nest, but he didn't have the energy to climb the sheer cliff wall. High above him towered the aerie. Albert slid down to a level spot. He sat back and screeched for help.

16 At last, when the sun began sinking in the sky, Leopold and his mother returned to the aerie. Albert jumped up and down and screeched for them to rescue him, but they could do nothing. Hungry and tired and alone, Albert rocked back and forth on his dark, narrow perch.

17 Soon afterward Albert's father returned to soar above the cliff. From his powerful talons dangled a tasty meal for his nestling.

18 Food! Albert stopped screeching. Suddenly he seemed to know that if he were to survive, he must learn how to fly—and fly *now*.

19 Giving his feathers a shake, Albert stood up straight. With Leopold crying from above, he leaped into the air. Wings flapping like electric beaters, he lifted himself higher

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and higher in furious fits and spurts, until at last he stumbled upon the aerie.

20 Quickly Albert's father soared over and dropped the food at his feet. Albert grabbed the morsel with his talons, puffed out his feathers, then dove into dinner. Like his brother, Albert had at last become a fledgling.

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15. How are Albert's and Leopold's first experiences in the air different from each other?

A. Albert crashes on the cliff, whereas Leopold receives food midair.

B. Albert's experience is caused by fear, whereas Leopold is motivated by food.

C. Albert tries to fly by himself, whereas Leopold receives help from the parents.

D. Albert stays close to the nest, whereas Leopold flies out of sight immediately.

16. "For the time being, only one thing was on the nestlings' minds: learning how to fly. Unfortunately, this skill seemed to **elude** them. Especially Albert. Every time he tried to fly, his legs got in the way."

What does the word **elude** mean?

A. bore

B. govern

C. escape

D. threaten

17. Why does the biologist feel it is so important for Albert to learn how to fly? Use information from the passage to support your answer. Write your answer in the **Answer Document**. (2 points)

18. Which sentence from the passage most strongly develops a mood of pity?

A. "For several days Albert continued his stubborn resistance to learning how to fly."

B. "Albert grabbed the morsel with his talons, puffed out his feathers, then dove into dinner."

C. ". . . Albert's fear kept him from taking the plunge off the 150-foot cliff."

D. "Hungry and tired and alone, Albert rocked back and forth on his dark, narrow perch."

19. What finally motivates Albert to learn to fly?

A. He is scared and his mother is in the aerie.

B. He is hungry and his father appears with food.

C. He is lonely and wants to explore with his brother.

D. He is jealous and wants to fly better than his brother.

20. "Leopold had left to **soar** on his own and explore the territory."

The word **soar** suggests that Leopold

A. flies often.

B. is a skilled flier.

C. has difficulty flying.

D. flies short distances.

21. Which statement best shows how competition between Albert and Leopold affects the plot of the story?

A. Albert watches his brother fly, and decides that he wants to fly as well as Leopold.

B. Because Leopold goes on flights with his mother, Albert feels rejected.

C. Albert sees that Leopold has won the approval of his parents, so Albert competes for attention.

D. Because Leopold gets most of the food the parents bring, Albert must fly soon to find food.

22. Which statement best represents a turning point in the story?

A. "Suddenly he seemed to know that if he were to survive, he must learn how to fly . . . "

B. "Albert jumped up and down and screeched for them to rescue him, but they could do nothing."

C. "When he tried to climb the rocks to the ridge top, he slid backward on his rear."

D. "Albert watched as his brother pumped his wings wildly and zigzagged far above the ground."

23. Identify two words or phrases that the author uses to create a mood of fear when Albert falls out of the nest. Explain how each word or phrase contributes to the mood of fear. Use information from the passage to support your answer. Write your answer in the **Answer Document**. (4 points)

24. Which thematic statement applies to this passage?

A. Family members must remain loyal to each other.

B. The instinct to survive overcomes incredible odds.

C. Patience is one of the keys to solving difficult problems.

D. Good things can come to those who are willing to wait.