

Medea Greek revenge tragedy about a woman with magical powers.

something blank and crazy in her stare. Some madness from a distant country. I didn't recognise her. *This isn't my hawk*. The hood was on, the ring numbers checked, the bird back in the box, the yellow form folded, the money exchanged, and all I could think was, *But this isn't my hawk*. Slow panic. I knew what I had to say, and it was a monstrous breach of etiquette. 'This is really awkward,' I began. 'But I really liked the first one. Do you think there's any chance I could take that one instead...?' I tailed off. His eyebrows were raised. I started again, saying stupider things: 'I'm sure the other falconer would like the larger bird? She's more beautiful than the first one, isn't she? I know this is out of order, but I... Could I? Would it be all right, do you think?' And on and on, a desperate, crazy barrage of incoherent appeals.

I'm sure nothing I said persuaded him more than the look on my face as I said it. A tall, white-faced woman with wind-wrecked hair and exhausted eyes was pleading with him on a quayside, hands held out as if she were in a seaside production of **Medea**. Looking at me he must have sensed that my stuttered request wasn't a simple one. That there was something behind it that was very important. There was a moment of total silence.

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

This extract from the book describes the moment when Macdonald first meets the hawk she has decided to train. It is a moment of great significance – the relationship that she builds with this bird is the main topic of the book and is the method that she adopts for dealing with her grief for her father.

KEY POINT

Non-fiction can incorporate elements more associated with fiction, such as creative use of narrative.

Although the second hawk that is pulled out is the one that she has reserved for herself, Macdonald makes a very quick decision on instinct. There is something she does not like about the larger bird and she decides to ask for the one that the man brought out first. She describes both birds in detail.

This kind of writing is sometimes called 'creative non-fiction'. This is because, although it is factual, it is also imaginative and highly-crafted writing. When you re-read the extract, look out for the same kinds of writing that you get in fiction – description, narrative, dialogue, thoughts and feelings, as well as more fact-based explanation.

ACTIVITY 1

A01

SKILLS ANALYSIS

▼ EXAMINING THE DETAIL

Much of the success of creative non-fiction is in the detail. Copy and complete the following table, examining details from the extract and considering what they tell the reader.

▼ LINES	▼ DETAILS	▼ WHAT DOES THIS TELL THE READER?
9–11	'a sudden thump... as if someone had punched it, hard, from within'	The bird is powerful and aggressive.
	'...in one practised movement, folding her wings, anchoring her broad feathered back against his chest...'	
	'Her beak was open, her hackles raised; her wild eyes were the colour of sun on white paper...'	