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## Feathered Friend Summary

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**Feathered Friend** is a science fiction story by Arthur C. Clarke that explores life aboard a space station and the unique challenges faced by astronauts. The story revolves around Sven Olsen, a skilled construction worker in space, and his pet canary, Claribel. Despite the absence of regulations against pets in space, Sven secretly brings Claribel aboard the station. The canary adapts remarkably well to the zero-gravity environment, providing companionship and an unexpected safety function.

The narrative highlights the daily routines of astronauts, the technical difficulties they encounter, and the importance of teamwork and vigilance. Claribel's presence becomes crucial when she alerts the crew to a dangerous drop in oxygen levels, demonstrating how even a small creature can play a vital role in space safety.

### Key Elements

- **Characters:** Sven Olsen (construction worker), Claribel (canary), Jock Duncan (cook-doctor-dietitian), Jim (duty engineer)
- **Themes:** Adaptation to new environments, companionship, teamwork, vigilance and safety in space
- **Setting:** A space station orbiting Earth
- **Plot:** Introduction of Claribel, her adaptation, the oxygen crisis, and her role in saving the crew

## Important Quotes

- “Claribel thrived and grew fat.” – shows the canary’s successful adaptation to space
- “If you visit any space station, don’t be surprised if you hear an inexplicable snatch of birdsong.” – emphasizes Claribel’s role as a safety measure

## Practice Set

### Level 1 – Easy

- Who is Sven Olsen and what is his job on the space station?
- Why did Sven bring Claribel to the space station?

### Level 2 – Moderate

- Describe how Claribel adapted to the zero-gravity environment.
- Explain the significance of Claribel’s role during the oxygen crisis.

### Level 3 – Challenging

- Analyze the theme of companionship in the story and how it affects the astronauts’ lives.
- Discuss the importance of vigilance and teamwork as portrayed in the story.

## Answer Key

- **Who is Sven Olsen and what is his job on the space station?** Sven Olsen is a construction worker who specializes in assembling structures in zero gravity.
- **Why did Sven bring Claribel to the space station?** He brought Claribel partly out of scientific curiosity to see how a bird would behave in zero gravity and also for companionship.

- **Describe how Claribel adapted to the zero-gravity environment.** Claribel learned to operate without gravity, hanging motionless in the air and flying with minimal effort.
- **Explain the significance of Claribel's role during the oxygen crisis.** Claribel's fainting alerted the crew to a drop in oxygen levels, allowing them to take action and avoid disaster.
- **Analyze the theme of companionship in the story and how it affects the astronauts' lives.** The presence of Claribel provides emotional support and a sense of normalcy, reducing isolation in space.
- **Discuss the importance of vigilance and teamwork as portrayed in the story.** The crew's cooperation and alertness, combined with Claribel's unexpected warning, highlight the critical nature of teamwork in space safety.

## Quick Reference

- **Claribel:** The canary pet adapted to zero gravity
- **Sven Olsen:** Skilled construction worker in space
- **Zero Gravity:** Condition of weightlessness in space
- **Oxygen Crisis:** A dangerous drop in oxygen levels detected by Claribel's fainting

## Glossary

- **Wiry:** Thin but strong
- **Girders:** Long steel or concrete beams supporting structures
- **Dovetailed:** Fitted together precisely
- **Garbs:** Special clothing
- **Handiwork:** Creation or work done by hand
- **Canary:** A small bird kept as a pet, used here as a safety indicator
- **Microgravity:** Very low gravity environment in orbit
- **Safeguarded:** Protected or kept safe

## Character Sketches

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**Sven Olsen:** A wiry, skilled construction worker aboard the space station. He is resourceful and curious, demonstrated by his decision to bring Claribel aboard. Sven is dedicated to his work and values companionship.

**Claribel:** A small yellow canary who adapts remarkably well to the zero-gravity environment. She is not bothered by the absence of gravity and becomes an important member of the crew by alerting them to danger.

**Jock Duncan:** The cook, doctor, and dietitian of the space station. He is practical and caring, attempting to help Claribel when she is found unconscious.

**Jim:** The duty engineer responsible for the station's technical systems. Initially skeptical about the oxygen problem, he later acknowledges the failure of the alarm system.

## Practice Set

### Level 1 – Easy

- Name the main characters in the story.
- What role does Jock Duncan play on the space station?

### Level 2 – Moderate

- Describe Sven Olsen's personality and his role in the story.
- How does Claribel's behavior differ from that of an earthbound canary?

### Level 3 – Challenging

- Discuss the significance of each character's contribution to the story's theme of survival in space.

## Answer Key

- **Name the main characters in the story.** Sven Olsen, Claribel, Jock Duncan, and Jim.
- **What role does Jock Duncan play on the space station?** He is the cook, doctor, and dietitian.
- **Describe Sven Olsen's personality and his role in the story.** He is skilled, curious, and determined, responsible for construction work and bringing Claribel aboard.
- **How does Claribel's behavior differ from that of an earthbound canary?** She can float motionless and perform backward loops in zero gravity, unlike earthbound birds.
- **Discuss the significance of each character's contribution to the story's theme of survival in space.** Sven's curiosity leads to Claribel's presence; Jock's medical skills aid in the oxygen crisis; Jim's engineering knowledge is crucial for system repairs; Claribel's sensitivity to air quality provides an early warning.

## Themes in Feathered Friend

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**Adaptation to New Environments:** The story explores how living beings adjust to the unique conditions of space, exemplified by Claribel's ability to fly and live in zero gravity.

**Companionship and Emotional Support:** The presence of Claribel provides comfort and a sense of normalcy to the astronauts, highlighting the importance of companionship in isolated environments.

**Teamwork and Vigilance:** The crew's cooperation and alertness are vital for survival, especially during emergencies like the oxygen crisis.

**Technology and Human Limitations:** Despite advanced technology, human error and system failures can occur, emphasizing the need for multiple safeguards.

## Practice Set

### Level 1 – Easy

- What is one way Claribel adapts to space?
- Why is companionship important for astronauts?

## Level 2 – Moderate

- Explain how teamwork helped the crew during the oxygen crisis.
- Discuss the role of technology and its limitations as shown in the story.

## Level 3 – Challenging

- Analyze how the theme of adaptation is portrayed through Claribel and the astronauts.
- Evaluate the importance of vigilance in space missions based on the story.

## Answer Key

- **What is one way Claribel adapts to space?** She flies and moves easily in zero gravity, folding her wings and floating motionless.
- **Why is companionship important for astronauts?** It provides emotional support and reduces feelings of isolation.
- **Explain how teamwork helped the crew during the oxygen crisis.** The crew worked together to identify the problem, administer oxygen, and fix the system.
- **Discuss the role of technology and its limitations as shown in the story.** Technology is advanced but can fail, as seen with the air purifier and alarm system malfunction.
- **Analyze how the theme of adaptation is portrayed through Claribel and the astronauts.** Both adjust to the space environment physically and mentally to survive and perform their duties.
- **Evaluate the importance of vigilance in space missions based on the story.** Constant alertness is crucial to detect and respond to emergencies promptly, ensuring safety.

## Literary Devices in Feathered Friend

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**Imagery:** Vivid descriptions of the space station, zero gravity, and Claribel's movements help readers visualize the setting and action.

**Personification:** Claribel is given human-like qualities, such as learning and signaling, enhancing her role as a character.

**Symbolism:** Claribel symbolizes vigilance and the unexpected ways safety can be ensured.

**Irony:** The canary, a small and seemingly insignificant creature, becomes the key to saving the crew's lives.

**Dialogue:** Conversations between characters reveal their personalities and advance the plot.

## Examples from Text

- "She did a curious kind of backward loop I'm sure no earthbound canary had ever managed." – imagery and personification
- "If you visit any space station, don't be surprised if you hear an inexplicable snatch of birdsong." – symbolism
- "Half a million dollars' worth of chemical and electronic engineering had let us down completely." – irony

## Practice Set

### Level 1 – Easy

- Identify one example of imagery in the story.
- What does Claribel symbolize?

### Level 2 – Moderate

- Explain the use of irony in the story.

- How does personification enhance Claribel's character?

### Level 3 – Challenging

- Analyze how the author uses dialogue to develop the story.
- Discuss the effectiveness of literary devices in conveying the story's themes.

### Answer Key

- **Identify one example of imagery in the story.** The description of Claribel's backward loop in zero gravity.
- **What does Claribel symbolize?** Vigilance and safety in space.
- **Explain the use of irony in the story.** Despite advanced technology, a small bird is the key to detecting danger.
- **How does personification enhance Claribel's character?** It makes her actions relatable and important to the crew.
- **Analyze how the author uses dialogue to develop the story.** Dialogue reveals character traits and moves the plot, such as the discussion about the oxygen problem.
- **Discuss the effectiveness of literary devices in conveying the story's themes.** They create vivid imagery and emotional connection, highlighting adaptation, vigilance, and teamwork.