



Flying Blind by Anna Myers

Subjects: Wildlife conservation—Florida—Juvenile fiction; Orphans—Juvenile fiction; Herons—Juvenile fiction; Florida—Juvenile fiction

Book List: Florida, North America

Props: Macaw puppet, top hat

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Flying Blind is a memorable story for many reasons. It takes place in the Florida Everglades. It goes back in time to the year 1905. And it has two narrators; one, a boy named Ben and two, a bird named Murphy.

(Speak as parrot puppet) Caw! Caw! Pretty Bird! Pretty Bird! This is my story. It's about a boy, Ben, who quite frankly always got on my nerves. I remember clearly the day he was born, disgusting human creature. Professor had taken in the boy's mother. I was sitting on Professor's shoulder when we saw her. "Murphy," he said to me, "that young lady needs help." I flew off his shoulder, flapped my wings, and squawked a warning, but Professor paid me no mind. Just made the woman comfortable in the back of the wagon, built a fire, and prepared a fine hot soup for her.

Pearl was her name and the boy was born a month later. Professor grabbed up the bundle and kissed it right on the head. But Pearl didn't seem to care for the boy at all and she eventually left. Just disappeared one day. But the Professor loved the little human and we kept him. Well, time went by and not much happened until the boy's thirteenth year. That was the year that I changed everything! It was because of the feeling that grew inside me. You see, I am no ordinary bird. I can sense things. And this feeling or message was clear, "Go to Florida." It was overwhelming, undoubtedly the strongest of the many messages I've received. I passed it on to the Professor as soon as I could. I sat on his pillow and thought, "Florida, Florida." I was surprised and pleased when the Professor stood up one morning and announced, "We're off to Florida." *(Put down puppet)*

(Put hat on) I'm Ben and I have a reason for the hat. The Professor, Murphy, the bird, and I make a living traveling from town to town. Murphy and I perform, mostly

reciting Shakespeare, and the Professor sells his magic elixir that can cure all your ills. The hat is part of my performance. When the Professor announced that we were going to Florida I was excited. We had travelled the same route as long as I could remember, and a change felt good. The Everglades were untamed and beautiful. And there were the white birds that filled the strange twisted trees called Mangroves. I'd never seen such wonderful birds!

The Professor looked at them through the field glasses. "White cranes," he said. "Egrets, I believe." Later that day, we stopped at the general store and the Professor, Murphy, who sat on the Professor's shoulder, and I went inside. When we met the storekeeper he took one look at Murphy and said, "I'd watch that bird around here, there's folks that hunt them to sell their feathers." Murphy stuck his head under his wing. There are times when I would swear that bird understands every word he hears. The storekeeper continued, "In New York City they say feathers are the thing for women's hats. Some even wear whole birds on their hats. Why I heard a feller in here just yesterday, told me he figures he's killed him upward of 25,000 birds this year. Just him. I don't feel good about it, killing all them birds so some fancy women can have pretty hats."

(Take off hat) Ben knows the killings must be stopped, but then they meet two orphans who rely on feathering, on killing the birds to stay alive. The lines between right and wrong are seriously blurred. Will he help the orphans or the birds? What is the right thing to do? Decide for yourself, *(Hold up book)* read *Flying Blind* by Anna Myers.