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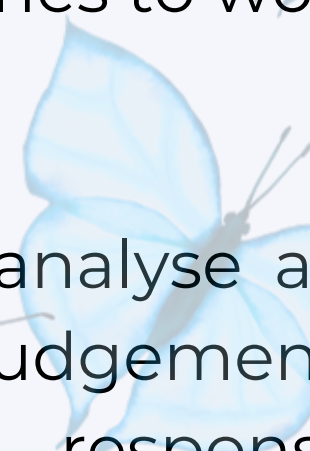
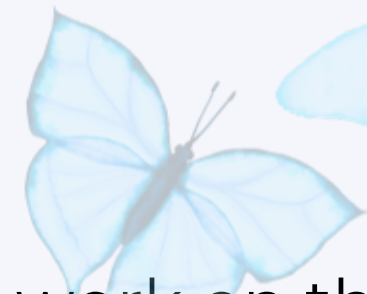
Stories 4 Wings

2024-1-ES01-KA220-ADU-000255317

Additional Stories

★ Critical Thinking





This document offers a series of additional stories to work on the concept of **CRITICAL THINKING**.

Critical thinking is the ability to objectively analyse and evaluate information in order to make reasoned judgements. It helps inmates understand consequences, take responsibility, and improve decision-making and relationships in prison. After release, it supports reintegration, employability, and confidence, reducing reoffending by enabling better life choices and problem-solving.

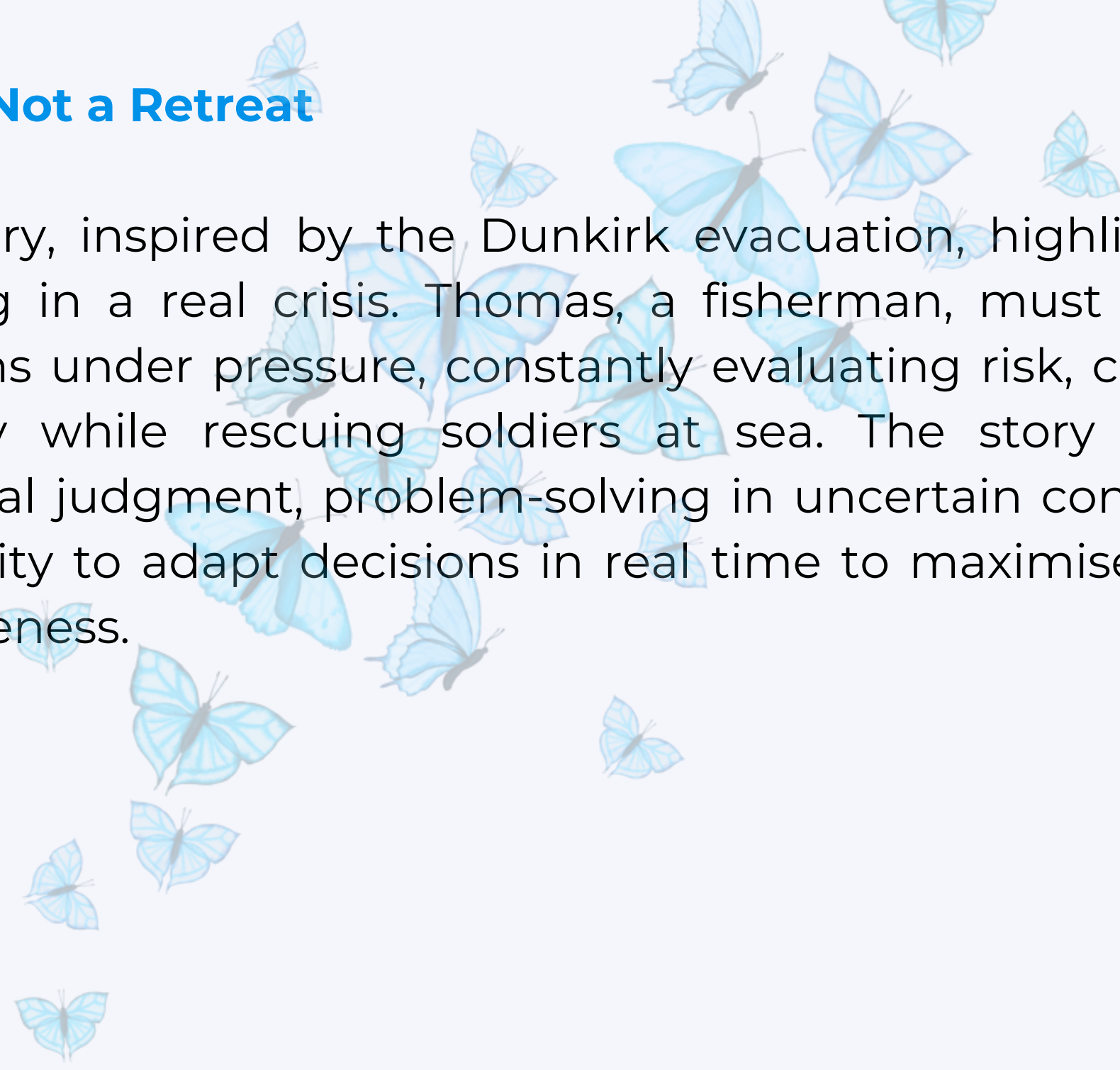
The stories selected are:

208 Seconds of Silence

This story, inspired by Chesley Sullenberger, highlights the value of critical thinking in high-pressure situations. After a sudden engine failure, the pilot carefully assesses limited options and chooses the safest solution instead of reacting impulsively. The story emphasizes calm analysis, sound judgment, and the ability to adapt knowledge to unexpected circumstances in order to make effective decisions in moments of crisis.

It Was Not a Retreat

This story, inspired by the Dunkirk evacuation, highlights critical thinking in a real crisis. Thomas, a fisherman, must make rapid decisions under pressure, constantly evaluating risk, capacity, and urgency while rescuing soldiers at sea. The story emphasizes analytical judgment, problem-solving in uncertain conditions, and the ability to adapt decisions in real time to maximise safety and effectiveness.





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Critical Thinking

208 Seconds of Silence



The silence inside the cockpit was so thick it seemed to muffle the sound of the engines. Or rather, the absence of sound. Because after the impact with a flock of birds, the engines no longer roared. The aircraft, an Airbus A320, had just taken off from LaGuardia Airport in New York. On board were 155 souls. In the cockpit, Captain Chesley Sullenberger and First Officer Jeffrey Skiles had barely completed the routine climb protocols. And then, the improbable happened.

Reality arrived in the form of dull thuds: the birds, the engines, the sudden loss of power. What followed were 208 seconds in which life was reduced to decisions.

Sullenberger didn't shout, didn't gesture wildly, didn't hesitate. Instead of switching on mental autopilot, he activated something rarer: critical thinking.

While air traffic control suggested options, returning to La Guardia, land in Teterboro, Sully observed. The altitude was dropping with brutal speed. Could he turn? Was there time? What did the instruments say? What did his instinct tell him, shaped by decades of flying and years of study in aviation safety?

The first officer scanned data and searched for answers in mental manuals. But Sully knew procedures alone wouldn't be enough. He had to interpret beyond them: what information was missing? What scenario wasn't being considered?

Then he thought of the Hudson.

The absurdity of the idea crossed his mind for a millisecond. A river? In the dead of winter? Skyscrapers, ferries, chaos? But something in the geography and the moment suggested it was the only possible path. It was the only choice that didn't depend on more engines, more altitude, or more luck. It was remote-controlled, imperfect but viable.

When Sully announced his intention to "ditch" in the river, the tower responded with hesitation. A river is not a runway. But they didn't object. No one had a better answer.





In the final seconds, the captain focused on descent angle, fuselage stability, and warning the passengers. There was no inflated heroism. Only calculation, silence, and resolve.

And then, they touched water.

The cabin filled with screams and freezing water. But the plane floated. Against all odds, it remained intact. Rescue boats approached. Everyone was evacuated. Zero deaths.

Later, in interviews and documentaries, they called him a hero. He insisted he simply did what he was trained to do. But it was more than that. What Sully did was rarer: he thought clearly when everything else pointed toward chaos.

Inspired by the story of Captain Chesley “Sully” Sullenberger, US Airways Flight 1549





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Critical Thinking

It Was Not a Retreat



Thomas woke up at five in the morning, just as he had been doing since he was twelve. The scent of salt drifted between the planks of his small boat docked in the port of Dover. He was planning to go mackerel fishing. That was his thing: watching the sea, understanding its language, coming back with a harvest that barely paid for engine oil.

But that day was not like the others.

He'd just put the coffee on the fire when his neighbour George (a man who barely nodded hello) arrived, flustered, his eyes shining like lanterns.

"They're calling for volunteers. Civilians with boats. There are soldiers trapped in France. Thousands. It's being organised from above. They're calling it an evacuation."

Thomas was silent. France. War. Soldiers. Everything that had once felt distant was now just a crossing away.

"And what exactly are we supposed to do?"

George shrugged. "Transport them. Get them out of Dunkirk. Help. If we don't do it... who will?"

Thomas looked at his boat. Barely ten metres of worn wood. He'd never gone beyond Calais. And wasn't even sure he had enough fuel. He could stay. Keep fishing. Or he could go, risk his boat, and face the uncertainty.

Two hours later, he was on his way.

The sea was turbulent—not because of the weather, but the invisible: explosions on the horizon and murmurs among civilians. Some boats had sunk. Others returned empty, unable to be reached.

Thomas had no clear orders. Just knew he had to approach the coast, take whoever he could, and return. But how many should he take? How much could his boat handle without tipping? Who had priority?



As he neared the beach, he saw smoke. A grey curtain cloaking bodies, boots, and helmets. Gunshots rang in the distance. Cries without direction.

At the pickup point, soldiers rushed toward him like men gasping for air. There was organised chaos: everyone wanted on, but no one pushed. There was resignation in their eyes—and also quiet hope.

Thomas looked at them. He had to choose. The engine couldn't carry more than nine people. It was a matter of weight. Of balance. "You, you, and you." He pointed to three visibly wounded men. Then four more, barely able to stand. The rest waited. Some raised a hand in farewell, as if understanding this wasn't their turn. A favourable current helped them reach Dover in barely two hours.

He could have stopped there. He'd done his part. But he returned.

On the second trip, he saw a shattered boat in the distance. Its occupants were floating, clinging to debris. He could divert and help. But that meant taking longer. What if, by the time he reached the coast, it was too late to rescue anyone?

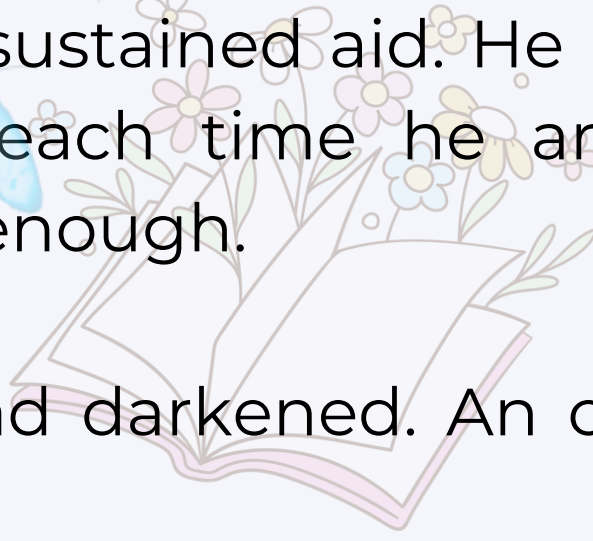
Thomas turned. He steered his boat over, tossed ropes, and helped two men aboard. One had burns on his face. The other didn't speak. He placed them in the safest spot, redistributed the weight, and reorganised his mental cargo.

He returned with fewer soldiers than expected. But alive.

In total, he made three trips. Each one was a decision between speed and safety, between urgent help or sustained aid. He never knew how many he couldn't save. But each time he arrived, someone squeezed his hand. And that was enough.

At the end of the third journey, the sky had darkened. An officer stopped him at the dock.

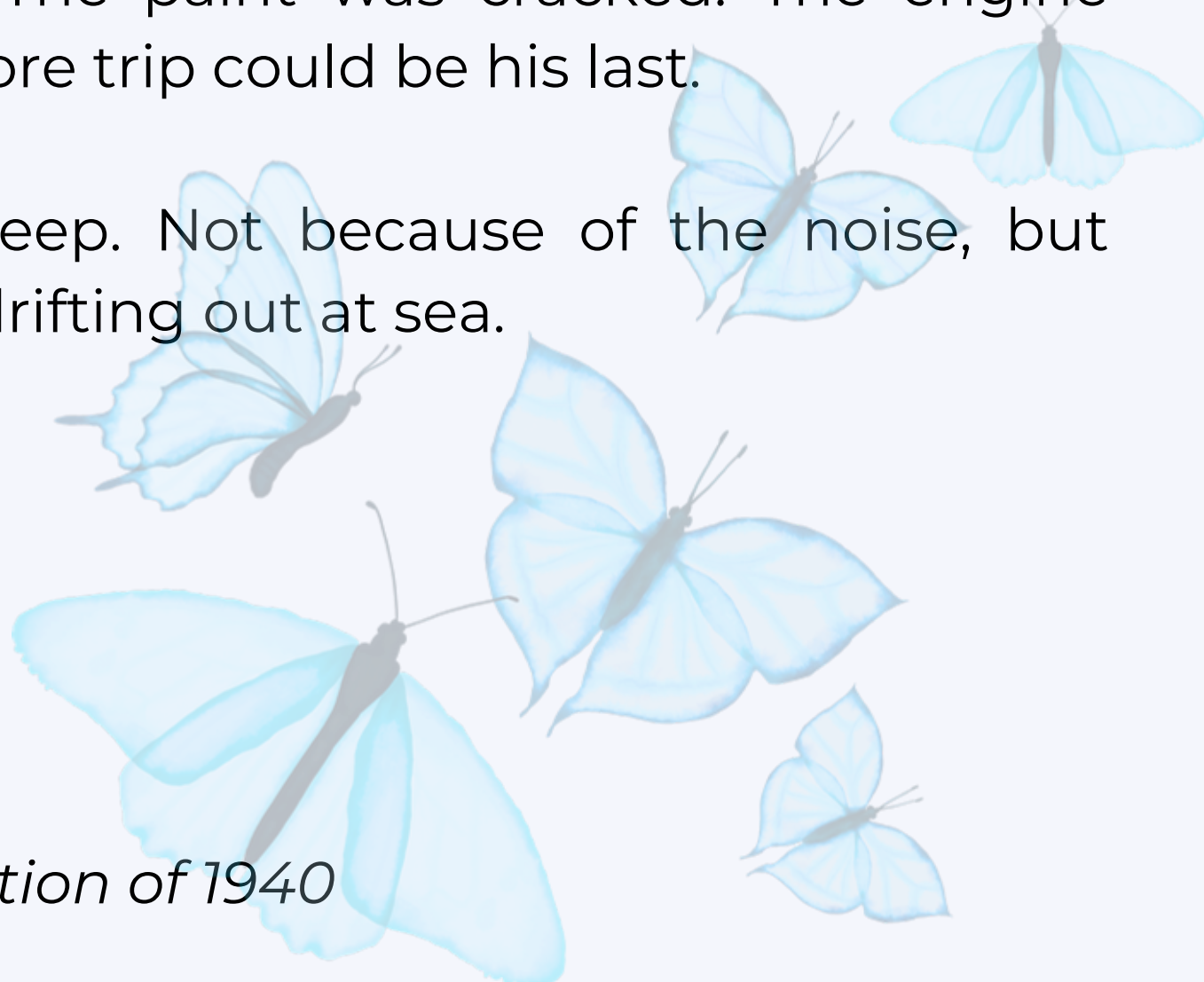
"Your boat's at its limit. You've done enough."





Thomas looked at his boat. The paint was cracked. The engine roared oddly. He knew one more trip could be his last.

He went home. He didn't sleep. Not because of the noise, but because of the decisions still drifting out at sea.



Based on the Dunkirk evacuation of 1940





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