

# SUMMER OF THE SWANS

# LIVING LITERATURE SERIES

BETSY BYARS

A PERMA-BOUND PRODUCTION

TEACHER'S GUIDE

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## SYNOPSIS

Fourteen-year-old Sara Godfrey is experiencing the most confusing summer of her life. Beset by feelings of inadequacy—her feet are too big, her nose is crooked, she is too tall—Sara can't make the normal events of her summer life fit into their familiar pattern. One minute she is happy, the next she is miserable.

Sara lives in West Virginia with her Aunt Willie (Willamina Godfrey), her nineteen-year-old and pretty sister Wanda, and her 10-year-old brother Charlie, who became brain damaged after a series of extremely high fevers when he was three years old. The other member of the household is Boysie, the family dog grown lazy with old age. Until this summer, Sara has "loved her sister without envy, her aunt without finding her coarse, her brother without pity." But now she is "filled with a discontent, an anger about herself, her life, her family" that seems incurable.

Swans have recently arrived at the nearby lake. One evening, after Wanda leaves to see them with her boyfriend Frank on his motor scooter, Sara walks down to the lake herself with Charlie. Both are deeply impressed by the silent smoothness, the beauty and elegance, of the gliding swans.

In bed that night, Sara expresses her feeling of nothingness and discontent to Wanda, who attempts to console her. Meanwhile, Charlie is unable to sleep, bothered by a missing button on his pajamas. Earlier, Charlie had tried to get Aunt Willie to fix the missing button, but she had been busy watching television. When he turned to Sara, she was too busy dyeing her orange sneakers blue in an attempt to make her foot size less noticeable. (Unfortunately, the sneakers turn puce instead.)

Now, looking out his bedroom window, Charlie sees a white shape—the neighbors' cat. Convinced it is one of the swans, Charlie goes outside and wanders off in search of the lake. He becomes lost. Terrified by unseen barking dogs, Charlie flees deep into the woods, comforted only by the reassuring ticking and motion of his watch (which he cannot use, however, to tell time).

In the morning, Sara discovers Charlie is missing. Aunt Willie calls the police, and then her brother, the children's father. Sam Godfrey lives and works in Ohio, visiting his family in West Virginia on occasional weekends. He became remote and gray after Charlie's illness and Mrs. Godfrey's death the following year. Sara accurately predicts he will not come now even though Charlie is lost; he does promise to call back that evening.

On the way to search for Charlie, Sara encounters Joe Melby, a classmate. When he offers to help, Sara accuses

him of stealing Charlie's beloved watch several months ago, although she now has some inner doubts about his guilt.

Sara and her best friend, Mary Weicek, start to search; Sara is certain she knows the direction in which Charlie has gone. Mary tells Sara the truth about Charlie's watch. Some other boys took it to tease Charlie, and Joe got it back from them and returned it to Charlie. Now Joe finds Charlie's slipper and brings it to Sara; Mary leaves to tell the other searchers (and to get ready for Bennie Hoffman's party, to which Sara has not been invited). With difficulty, Sara apologizes to Joe. Together they continue the search.

Charlie, meanwhile, has wandered into a ravine and can't find a way out. Sara and Joe struggle up the steep hillside to the top of a strip-mining bank, calling continuously for Charlie. Why had she cried so much over her own petty miseries this summer, Sara wonders. Now she has a true sadness and cannot cry. But then Charlie responds to her calls. Wild with joy, Sara races down to the ravine. Finding and embracing her brother, she cries.

As Sara and Joe bring the unharmed Charlie down the hill to the anxiously waiting Aunt Willie, Sara suddenly feels wonderful, all the summer's discontent dissipated. The swans mutely fly by, returning to their home, but Sara no longer yearns to fly away herself. And Joe Melby invites Sara to Bennie Hoffman's party.

Back home, just before getting ready to go out, Sara answers the phone. It is her father, who isn't coming until the weekend, if at all, now that Charlie has been found. Sara suddenly sees life as a set of enormous steps. Her father merely sits on them listlessly, but Sara has just taken a huge step herself out of the shadows and is now poised, ready to start climbing the stairway that goes as high as the sky.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Betsy Byars was born in Charlotte, North Carolina, and graduated from Queens College in Charlotte in 1950. Since her marriage to a university professor of engineering, she has lived in West Virginia and South Carolina. Byars began writing children's books while her own four children were growing up, drawing most of her ideas from real-life incidents. The idea for the swans, for example, came from an article in her college alumni magazine about swans that kept leaving the beautiful university lake for less attractive nearby ponds.

## THE SUMMER OF THE SWANS

Byars writes in the winter and joins her husband in his cross-country hobby of gliding in the summer. Among her numerous books are *After the Goat Man*, *The Computer Nut*, *Cracker Jackson*, *Glory Girl*, and *The Midnight Fox*.

### CRITIC'S CORNER

*The Summer of the Swans*, published in 1970, received much critical recognition: it was an ALA Notable Book and a Junior Literary Guild selection, was named to the *Horn Book* Honor List, and received the prestigious Newbery Medal of the American Library Association. Critics praised the novel for its low-key yet sensitive and accurate portrayal of both adolescent pain and mental retardation.

Representative critic's comments include these:

"Young readers will appreciate the author's knowing treatment of their problems and emotions, and her ear for teenage language." (*Commonweal*, 5/22/70)

"Perceptive characterization and realistic dialog heighten the impact of the low-keyed but penetrating story of human relationships and emotions." (*The Booklist*, 6/15/70)

"Seldom are the pain of adolescence and the tragedy of mental retardation presented as sensitively and as unpretentiously as in the story of Sara and Charlie . . . . A subtly told story, echoing the spoken and unspoken thoughts of young people." (*Horn Book*, 2/71)

### INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

1. To investigate the turmoil of early adolescence through Sara's summer of confusion.
2. To explore the theme of compassion and caring as expressed by Sara's feelings and actions towards Charlie.
3. To understand better the difficulties encountered in all aspects of life by mentally handicapped individuals.
4. To recognize the stresses and responsibilities placed on a family caring for a mentally handicapped person.
5. To explore the reasons for and effects of an abdication of parenting responsibilities like Mr. Godfrey's.
6. To analyze the nature of revenge and forgiveness.
7. To examine the benefits of outer-directedness as a means of lessening inner discontent and self-absorption.
8. To study the use of dialogue as a tool to establish characterization and accomplish plot development.

### MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, or sentences that have a particular meaning in the novel. Explain each as it relates to the book. Use the page numbers given in parentheses to reread the term in context if you wish.

1. kaleidoscope (p. 13)  
(A tube with small pieces of colored glass or other colored objects at one end. The other end of the tube is held up to one eye, and the end with the colored objects is turned. Mirrors then reflect a series of continually changing patterns. Sara feels her life has become a kaleidoscope—it feels as if familiar events and routines have been shaken up and rearranged so they form a completely different pattern.)
2. motor scooter and motorcycle (p. 20).  
(Both are two-wheeled vehicles run by an engine. With two wheels connected by a footboard, a motor scooter resembles a child's scooter, but it is larger and heavier and has a saddlelike seat. A motorcycle resembles a bicycle but is much bigger and heavier and has a much more powerful engine than a motor scooter. Aunt Willie objects to Wanda's riding on a motorcycle, but Frank persuades Willie that his vehicle is just a motor scooter and so is "perfectly safe.")
3. retarded (p. 22), brain damaged (p. 52), mentally handicapped (p. 97)  
(All three are terms for a person very slow or limited in intellectual understanding and awareness, emotional development, and/or academic progress. A person may be born retarded or with brain damage, as in Down's syndrome, or sustain brain damage later in life, as Charlie did when he was three.)
4. strip mining (p. 32)  
(A method of coal mining in which the topsoil—and everything growing on and in it—is stripped away to expose the veins of coal. The stripped-away earth is pushed down into huge, often unsteady banks on the hillsides. Strip mining replaces standard deep-shaft coal mines and is possible where coal deposits are close to the surface. Federal law now requires reclamation of strip-mined terrain, but the law is often ignored or circumvented.)
5. puce (p. 55)  
(Dark or purplish brown, a color generally considered unattractive. When Sara decides to dye her orange sneakers baby blue, she fails to consider that the blue dye will combine with rather than cover up the orange. The result is puce sneakers, scarcely an improvement over orange. When Sara wears the damp sneakers, only the blue dye soaks through to her skin, so her feet do turn blue.)
6. that devil television (p. 76)  
(After Charlie's disappearance, Aunt Willie blames herself for having been too absorbed in watching "that devil television" to respond to Charlie's request to sew a button onto his pajamas. She berates herself for having failed in her promise to Charlie and Sara's mother to look after Charlie always, for having allowed "that devil television" to be more important

## THE SUMMER OF THE SWANS

than Charlie. The missing button does in fact cause Charlie's wakefulness, which leads eventually to Charlie's wandering from the house.)

7. Bennie Hoffman's party (pp. 98, 100, 135)  
(A neighborhood party to which Mary Weicek, Sara's best friend, has been invited but Sara has not. Mary is obviously delighted to be going—she talks about the party often, keeps her hair in rollers all day, and worries that searching for Charlie will make her late for the party. Sara, although justifiably impatient with Mary's concern about the party in the face of Charlie's loss, also seems jealous because she herself has not been invited. After Charlie's return, a final, undeniable signal that Sara's cloud of adolescent misery has lifted occurs—Joe Melby asks Sara to the party.)
8. guru, and the message of Joe's story about the guru (p. 105)  
(Guru is a Hindi term for a wise teacher who gives personal religious instruction. The point of Joe's story is that the longer a person waits to say something—perhaps while trying to formulate the perfect way to say it—the harder it becomes to say anything at all. Joe is encouraging Sara to say a simple "I'm sorry.")
9. ravine (p. 108)  
(A ravine is a deep, narrow, steep-sided valley or cut between two hills. Charlie wanders into a ravine and cannot get back out; the sides are too steep and brushy to climb, and he has lost the one path leading in and out.)
10. the swans were mute (p. 132)  
(One type of swan, the Mute Swan, has no voice, but it can hiss when angry. The Trumpeter Swan has a carrying, hornlike call. Either type is like Charlie, who no longer speaks but does yell or wail loudly.)

### COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

#### Questions 1-3 Literal Level

1. In what ways is Charlie unable to function like other children?  
(Charlie has extreme difficulty performing simple manual tasks like inserting the stick into his lollipop or winding his watch. He cannot talk, and his thought processes are cloudy, so he often cannot communicate his needs, desires, and anxieties to others, or understand them himself. He does not grasp the concept of telling time. Because Charlie can't remember things very well or maintain a chain of thought, he is easily confused; he can become lost three blocks from home. Any disruption in his daily routine confounds Charlie; he cannot reason or adapt his behavior to new circumstances.)
2. Describe the ways in which Sara exhibits her love of and concern for Charlie.

(Sara is extremely patient with Charlie, even when he exasperates her. She repeatedly puts the stick back into her brother's lollipop. She explains things kindly to Charlie as she does them for him—securing the ends of the blanket tent, breaking the bread into swan-sized pieces. Although Sara is anxious to get home, she lets Charlie stay for five more minutes at the lake to watch the swans. She feels a deep empathy with Charlie: "It's like I know how he feels about things." When Charlie gets lost, Sara is determined to find him, searching to the point of exhaustion.

Sara is also fiercely protective of Charlie. When a neighborhood girl calls Charlie a "retard," Sara turns the garden hose on the offender. Convinced that Joe Melby stole Charlie's watch, Sara tapes a sign reading FINK onto Joe's back at school. She tells off a group of boys who tease Charlie at the bus stop. As Sara tells Mary, "Nobody's going to pick on my brother and I mean it.")

3. What things reassure Charlie? What things frighten him?  
(Sameness and routine assure Charlie; "as long as [his] routine was kept up, he felt safe and well." This even extends to sitting in the same seat on the school bus each day. The rhythmic ticking of his watch and the motion of its red second hand soothe Charlie as they "block out the whole clamoring world." The soft silent smoothness of the swans warms Charlie, and the soft silent moonlight world seems a natural haven to him.

Noise, activity, and strangeness, on the other hand, frighten and confuse Charlie, shattering his ability to function. The blood and pain of Sara's broken nose, for example, caused Charlie to flee in a terrified, directionless frenzy. Speeding bicycles, noisy lawn mowers, shouting children, and rushing traffic make Charlie more than willing never to venture alone beyond his own yard. Barking dogs terrify him as he wanders up the hill at night. The radio announcer cautions that being approached by a stranger can alarm Charlie. A search party tramping through the woods and yelling will scare Charlie so much, Sara says, he won't come to the calls.)

#### Questions 4-8 Interpretive Level

4. Why does Sara turn against her orange sneakers?  
(Sara has been experiencing the anguished mood swings of adolescence all summer. "One moment she was happy, and the next, for no reason, she was miserable. An hour ago she had loved her sneakers; now she detested them." Sara's feelings about her sneakers are a prime symptom of her fluctuating disposition.  
Also, Sara has developed a typical young adolescent's hypersensitivity about her appearance. She agonizes over her haircut, her size, her awkwardness, her crooked nose—and her large feet. Wanda sensibly points out that if Sara is worried about people noticing the size of her feet, she shouldn't call attention to them by wearing orange sneakers. Immediately after this conversation, Sara declares that she hates her sneakers.)

## THE SUMMER OF THE SWANS

5. Describe Sara's relationship with her father.

*(Sara's relationship with her father is very remote. Sam Godfrey stopped parenting his children after Charlie's illness and Mrs. Godfrey's death six years ago. He now lives and works in Ohio and comes to West Virginia only on occasional weekends, when he makes little attempt to relate to his children—he watches televised sports and never initiates a conversation. Sara feels strange when she thinks of her father and when she talks to him on the phone, because she scarcely knows him. She vaguely remembers a laughing man with black curly hair who acted like a father, but he has been replaced by a gray sober stranger.)*

*Sara can accurately predict her father's reaction to Charlie's disappearance: "He won't come . . . He won't get upset." When her father calls, Sara attempts to avoid talking to him, then responds to most of his questions in monosyllables. Sara says to Aunt Willie about her father, "I've already lost him."*

6. Why does Sara continue to accuse Joe Melby of stealing Charlie's watch even though she "sort of suspected" he hadn't done it?

*(Sara is extremely protective of Charlie and eager to take revenge on any person who has picked on him. And she keeps after the target of her revenge with devotion. Being fiercely attached to the concept of revenge, Sara cannot "bear to think" that she could be mistaken. Once Sara fixes blame on Joe Melby, she feels compelled to keep after him. If he isn't guilty, how can she have her revenge? But Sara's doubts have affected her. Joe disturbs her, and when she accuses him point blank, she feels no triumph.)*

7. What effect does Charlie's disappearance and recovery have on Sara?

*(Charlie's disappearance shocks Sara out of her self-absorbed adolescent misery. All summer she has moaned—inwardly and outwardly—about her inadequacies, her failings, her nothingness, and she has agonized over her agony. Searching for Charlie abruptly awakens Sara to the pettiness of her problems. "I have cried over myself a hundred times this summer, she thought. I have wept over my big feet and my skinny legs and my nose, I have even cried over my stupid shoes, and now when I have a true sadness there are no tears left." Sara suddenly realizes the depth of her love for her brother. Plunged into this sharp outward focus, Sara breaks away from her inner miseries. She now feels good, content, happy.)*

8. What is the meaning of the swans?

*(Physically, the swans mirror Sara's adolescent balancing between extremes of awkwardness and serenity. In the air, the swans are heavy and awkward, as graceless as Sara herself so often feels. On the water, however, they are transformed as Sara*

*yearns to be; they become elegant creatures, gliding with incredible ease. And they are all alike; no one can tell them apart, an echo of Sara's fervent wish to be pretty and free of distressingly distinctive features like big feet. The swans' ability to fly away from wherever they are strikes a responsive chord in Sara, who has often this summer ached "to fly away from everything, like the swans to a new lake."*

*For Charlie, the swans represent all that is security to him: silence, smoothness, softness, gentle motion (although, ironically, his quest for the swans shatters all his security). And like the swans, Charlie is voiceless.)*

### Questions 9 and 10 Critical Level

9. In what ways and why does the point of view change in the course of the novel?

*(While the story is told mostly from Sara's point of view, in some chapters the narrative shifts to Charlie's point of view: while he is waiting on the Weiceks' porch, when he leaves the house and runs into the woods, while he is stuck in the ravine, when he hears his name called. These shifts enable the author to describe Charlie's flight and also to depict the boy's thought processes so the reader gains insight into why Charlie—and others like him—functions as he does. If the story was related solely from Sara's point of view, Charlie's confused flight could not be described, and the reader's understanding of the boy would be much less complete, dependent on conclusions drawn from descriptions of Charlie's actions.)*

10. How does the author's use of dialogue contribute to the novel?

*(Byars has a good ear for adolescent language and takes advantage of it in her liberal use of dialogue. Readers identify with and enjoy reading about characters who sound like real teenagers when they speak. Dialogue expresses Sara's confused feelings and reactions far more effectively and directly than descriptive passages would. Sara's patience with Charlie is revealed as much by how she speaks to him as by the things she does for him. Sara's relationship with her father is made distressingly clear by her remarks to Aunt Willie. Altogether, Byars's skillful use of dialogue lends immediacy and vitality to a story that is mostly low-key and fleshes out the very simple plot.)*

### Questions 11 and 12 Creative Level

11. Finish Wanda's statement: "The truth is everyone else is so worried about what's wrong with them that—"  
*(they're not likely to notice what's wrong with you unless you point it out to them.)*
12. Describe your place on the flight of steps Sara envisions just before she gets ready for the party.  
*(Answers will vary.)*

## THE SUMMER OF THE SWANS

### STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Prepare to defend or dispute this statement of Sara's in a classroom debate: "I think how you look is the most important thing in the world."
2. Interview the people in your school in charge of the Special Education programs. Use your interview notes to prepare a written or oral report on these programs. Include such information as types of services, numbers of students and school personnel involved, legal requirements, and difficulties encountered.
3. Find out more about brain damage and mental retardation. What causes it? How is it treated? What are the prospects for those affected by it? Summarize your findings in outline form.
4. Write an essay describing a view you have seen looking down from a very high place—for example, from an airplane, a hill overlooking a valley, or a tall building.
5. Suppose your parents were unable to care for you and any brothers and sisters you may have. Who would you live with? Describe the ways in which you expect your life would change.
6. Practice writing dialogue using or imagining a situation in which you had to apologize to someone else and found it very difficult.
7. Prepare a poster display and/or a written report on strip mining showing or describing the removal of the coal, the aftermath before reclamation, and the reclaimed land.
8. Design a one- or two-page entry for a nature book on swans. Include illustrations plus such information as different types, habitat, range, feeding, calls, and mating and nesting characteristics.

### TEACHING NOTES

## THE SUMMER OF THE SWANS

### VOCABULARY TEST

Match each underlined word with its synonym listed below. Write the letter of the appropriate synonym in the space next to the sentence number.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. "That's pathetic. In people's age that dog is eighty-four years old."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Then Charlie glanced up and the illusion was broken.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Sara knew that Aunt Willie would be standing by the sink shaking her head emphatically from side to side.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. "Too old!" She faced Sara with indignation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. She held the dish towel in front of her, like a matador taunting a bull.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Her words rose into a piercing scream as Frank moved the scooter forward.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Then she stopped abruptly and clapped him on the shoulders.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The swans were fixed with such certainty in his mind that he could not even imagine that what he had seen was only the cat.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. He began to shuffle his feet impatiently back and forth on the third step.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. He walked past the next house and hesitated, suddenly confused.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Still the thought of the swans persisted in his mind and he kept walking.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Aunt Willie was prepared to chide the two children for being late to breakfast.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. She paused, said, "Yes, yes," then grudgingly, "And thank you."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. It was a relief to make this accusation to his face at last.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. "I'm tough. I'm indestructible."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. "Does not accept criticism constructively."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. "Acts impetuously and without consideration for others."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. He wailed, yielding in helplessness to his anguish.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. The only answer was the call of a bird in the branches overhead, one long tremulous whistle.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. He hurried toward her, an awkward figure in torn blue pajamas.

- |                |              |             |                |
|----------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|
| A. shaking     | F. suddenly  | K. rashly   | P. anger       |
| B. continued   | G. image     | L. sharp    | Q. misery      |
| C. forcefully  | H. reprimand | M. clumsy   | R. usefully    |
| D. baiting     | I. paused    | N. sureness | S. change      |
| E. unbreakable | J. pitiful   | O. scuff    | T. unwittingly |

## THE SUMMER OF THE SWANS

### COMPREHENSION TEST A

#### Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

Match each statement with the appropriate character in the list below. Write the letter of your answer in the space provided next to the statement number.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Helps Sara dye her orange sneakers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Is Wanda's red-headed boy friend.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Used to have black curly hair and a broken tooth.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Loans Charlie his own watch.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Promised to care for Charlie all her life.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Likes to sit in the same seat on the school bus every day.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Helps Charlie make a blanket tent.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Works at the hospital.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Watches Charlie leave the house at night.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Turns the garden hose on a girl who teases Charlie.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Wears brown felt bedroom slippers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Lives and works in Ohio.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Is nineteen years old.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Blames herself for Charlie's disappearance.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Tells Sara what really happened to Charlie's watch.

A. Sara Godfrey

D. Sam Godfrey

G. Boysie

B. Wanda Godfrey

E. Aunt Willie

H. Joe Melby

C. Charlie Godfrey

F. Mary Weicek

I. Frank

#### Part II: Matching Quotations (20 points)

Match parts of quotations. Write the letter of the quotation's ending in the space provided next to the quotation's beginning.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. "I think it is really sad
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. "How do you think it feels
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. "It won't matter if we're late.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. "I still don't know why I was invited,
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. "This is a boy, I'm telling you,
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. "But since everything's all right,
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. "Charlie, I'll tell you something.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. "When you want to hide something,
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. "My tongue should fall out on the floor
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. "Remember it was the day we were getting the stamps for letters





## THE SUMMER OF THE SWANS

### COMPREHENSION TEST B

#### Part I: Quotation Identification (20 points)

Which characters make the following statements? Write the letter of your answer in the space provided next to the statement number.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. "The peak of my whole life so far was in the third grade when I got to be milk monitor."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. "I was going to come home tonight if he hadn't been found."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. "At least it was different to be accused of something I *didn't* do for a change."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. "Then if you think it's not safe, you say to me, 'It's not safe,' and I'll take my motor scooter and ride off into the sunset."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. "I probably shouldn't tell you this, but he didn't steal that watch."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. "Anyway, I hate boys. They're all just one big nothing."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. "I am barely forty years old. May I grow a beard if I'm not."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. "And when I opened mine, there they were, two sets of double checks, on acting impetuously and on not accepting criticism."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. "I love it when he calls me Little One. Just wait till someone calls *you* Little One."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. "Where is this boy I'm taking such good care of?"

- |                    |                |              |
|--------------------|----------------|--------------|
| A. Sara Godfrey    | D. Sam Godfrey | G. Joe Melby |
| B. Wanda Godfrey   | E. Aunt Willie | H. Frank     |
| C. Charlie Godfrey | F. Mary Weicek |              |

#### Part II: Fill-In (30 points)

Write a word in each blank to make each statement true.

1. Aunt Willie is afraid Charlie has wandered into the old \_\_\_\_\_, where her uncle and brother were killed.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ finds Charlie's missing slipper.
3. Joe Melby asks Sara to go to \_\_\_\_\_'s party.
4. Aunt Willie's real first name is \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Charlie is terrified when he hears the \_\_\_\_\_ on the hill at night.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ is Sara's best friend.
7. Sara has \_\_\_\_\_ and toast for breakfast instead of the oatmeal Aunt Willie has cooked.
8. Sara taped a sign that said \_\_\_\_\_ on Joe Melby's back at school.
9. Sara uses the word \_\_\_\_\_ for the first time this summer to describe her brother.
10. Charlie does not understand what has happened when his watch \_\_\_\_\_.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ usually goes back to sleep when Sara talks to him.
12. Sara's \_\_\_\_\_ visits the family on occasional weekends.
13. Both \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ come with Sara to help search for Charlie.
14. Charlie can't get to sleep because he is bothered by a missing \_\_\_\_\_.
15. At first, Sara likes the color of her \_\_\_\_\_ sneakers.



## THE SUMMER OF THE SWANS

### VOCABULARY TEST ANSWER KEY

- |      |       |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. J | 6. L  | 11. B | 16. R |
| 2. G | 7. F  | 12. H | 17. K |
| 3. C | 8. N  | 13. T | 18. Q |
| 4. P | 9. O  | 14. S | 19. A |
| 5. D | 10. I | 15. E | 20. M |

### COMPREHENSION TEST A ANSWER KEY

#### Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

- |      |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. C  | 11. C |
| 2. I | 7. A  | 12. D |
| 3. D | 8. B  | 13. B |
| 4. H | 9. G  | 14. E |
| 5. E | 10. A | 15. F |

#### Part II: Matching Quotations (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. H | 6. D  |
| 2. C | 7. G  |
| 3. F | 8. J  |
| 4. I | 9. B  |
| 5. A | 10. E |

#### Part III: Fill-In (20 points)

- |                   |                 |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1. pajamas        | 6. report cards |
| 2. sister         | 7. Little One   |
| 3. strip mining   | 8. television   |
| 4. motor scooter  | 9. puce         |
| 5. bread or rolls | 10. ravine      |

#### Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

1. Their mother died sometime after Charlie's illness. Before Mrs. Godfrey's death, Aunt Willie promised she would take care of Charlie all her life. The children's father withdrew from parenting after the shocks of Charlie's illness and Mrs. Godfrey's death. Although he supports the family financially, he has left the rearing of the children to his sister Willamina and only occasionally visits them.
2. A group of boys was teasing Charlie with some candy. While Charlie tried to get the candy, one of the boys slipped Charlie's watch off his wrist, unnoticed. The boys planned to tease Charlie by asking him what time it was and then watching how upset he would become when he found his

watch was missing. But Sara came out of a store, told the boys off for teasing Charlie about the candy, and hustled Charlie onto the school bus before the boys had a chance to do anything about the watch or give it back. The boys were then too scared to give the watch back. Joe Melby, although he was not part of the teasing group, found out what had happened, got the watch from the boys, and gave it back to Charlie.

### COMPREHENSION TEST B ANSWER KEY

#### Part I: Quotation Identification (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. A | 6. A  |
| 2. D | 7. E  |
| 3. G | 8. G  |
| 4. H | 9. B  |
| 5. F | 10. E |

#### Part II: Fill-In (30 points)

- |                     |                    |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1. coal mine        | 9. retarded        |
| 2. Joe (Melby)      | 10. stops (breaks) |
| 3. Bennie Hoffman's | 11. Boysie         |
| 4. Willamina        | 12. father         |
| 5. barking dogs     | 13. Joe and Mary   |
| 6. Mary (Weicek)    | 14. button         |
| 7. Kool-Aid         | 15. orange         |
| 8. FINK             |                    |

#### Part III: True/False (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. F  |
| 2. F | 7. T  |
| 3. T | 8. F  |
| 4. T | 9. F  |
| 5. F | 10. T |

#### Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

1. Sara complains that she has big feet (which is why she dyes her orange sneakers); that she is unattractive (Wanda is "a hundred times prettier"); that she is bigger than everyone she knows; that she is skinny and has a crooked nose; that she isn't a good dancer, or smart, or popular, or *anything*; that her haircut is terrible; that she acts without thinking.

## THE SUMMER OF THE SWANS

2. Aunt Willie is fortyish, has bad legs, and is outspoken. She has reared Sara, Wanda, and Charlie since their mother died six years ago, at their mother's request. Aunt Willie provides the parenting that her brother, the children's father, does not. Although Aunt Willie seems bossy and out of touch with the children at times, she cares deeply for them. In particular, her concern for Charlie is evident from her distress at his disappearance and their joyful reunion.



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