

# The Trumpet of the Swan

by E. B. White

## Classroom Favorites

Teacher's Guide by Kathy Sammis

A Perma-Bound Production

### SYNOPSIS

One spring, a pair of trumpeter swans arrive at a small pond in the Canadian wilderness. There, the female—practical and full of common sense—builds a nest and lays eggs, while her husband the cob—much given to pompous, self-important speeches—glides nearby on guard. Sam Beaver, an eleven-year-old boy who loves nature and wild animals, is camping in the wilderness with his father. He discovers the swans and saves the female from a fox. In gratitude, when the five babies (cygnets) hatch out, the cob presents them to Sam; one silent cygnet tugs at Sam's shoelace.

A few weeks later, the swan and cob discuss a problem. Their son Louis has no voice. He can't communicate with his siblings and parents. Worse, if he can't say the trumpeter swan's signature ko-hoh, ko-hoh and loving endearments, he'll never be able to win the affections of a young female. The cob thinks he may have to get his son a musical instrument called a trumpet some day. Meanwhile, the cob teaches his cygnets to fly, and the family migrates to the protected Red Rock Lakes in Montana, their fall and winter home.

Louis now decides that since he can't use his voice, he will learn to read and write so he can communicate that way. He flies off and finds Sam Beaver on the boy's family's ranch in Montana, and Sam convinces the first-grade teacher at his school to accept Louis as a student. A year and a half later, Louis delights his family by returning to Red Rock Lakes. He writes messages to them using the chalk pencil and slate hanging around his neck, but his plan doesn't work—none of the other swans can read! And it's spring and Louis has fallen in love, but the swan of his desires, Serena, has no interest in a young cob who can't say, "Ko-hoh, I love you."

Louis's father takes matters into his own wings. He flies to Billings, Montana, crashes through the plate-glass window of a music store, and absconds with a brass trumpet, leaving all sorts of chaos and damage behind. The cob feels shamed and dishonored at being a thief, but knows he had to do it for love of his son. Louis is thrilled with the trumpet, which, after much effort, he learns to play. But Louis is heart-broken and restless because Serena has left Red Rock Lakes, and troubled because the trumpet and damage haven't been paid for.

Louis goes to Sam for help, and his friend comes through. Sam has a summer job as a counselor at a boys' camp in Ontario, Canada, and gets Louis a job there too, as camp bugler and assistant counselor. Louis is very popular at Camp Kookooskoos. After he saves Applegate Skinner from drowning, Louis has another object to hang around his neck—a life-saving medal. Before camp ends, Louis has Sam cut slits in his right webbed foot; now the swan can use the trumpet's valves

and play all sorts of songs. At summer's end, Louis has another possession—a waterproof money bag, which contains his camp wages.

Now Louis moves on to Boston, since he needs to earn enough money to pay the music store in Billings what his father owes. In Boston, he becomes a sensation leading the Swan Boats in the Public Garden, playing songs on his trumpet, for which the Boatman pays him one hundred dollars a week. He even stays in the Ritz Carlton Hotel the first night.

As the Swan Boat season ends, the show-business agent Lucky Lucas telegrams Louis with a job offer: the swan will play at a nightclub in Philadelphia for five hundred dollars a week (less Lucky's ten percent agent fee). Louis accepts and settles in at the Philadelphia Zoo, whose Head Man in Charge of Birds agrees not to clip Louis's wings (preventing him from flying) in return for Louis giving a free concert at the Zoo every Sunday afternoon. Louis doesn't enjoy nightclub work, but he gets rich.

One day just before Christmas, a fierce storm whips up. A trumpeter swan, carried by the storm, drops down exhausted into the Zoo. It is Serena! Louis wisely leaves her alone for a day while she revives, then wins her love by serenading her at dawn on his trumpet with "Beautiful Dreamer." Louis then fights off the Zoo's attempts to clip Serena's wings and keep her captive on Bird Lake and sends for Sam, who negotiates Serena's freedom with the Head Man: Louis and Serena can fly off to the wilderness where they want to raise their families, and in return they will from time to time supply the zoo with a trumpeter swan cygnet—one of theirs that needs some special care and protection. The visit also reveals to Sam what his career will be: working in a zoo.

Serena and Louis thrill their families when they finally arrive home at Red Rock Lakes in January. The old cob, Louis's father, causes a huge commotion when he flies back to the music store in Billings and gives the storekeeper all of Louis's remaining earnings—\$4,420.78! (The storekeeper will donate the excess to the Audubon Society.) That spring, Louis takes Serena to the little wilderness pond where he was hatched, and they have their first family of four cygnets there. For many years after, Louis and Serena will have their young at that pond, and every fall, Louis will lead his family on a long pleasure trip across the country, visiting Camp Kookooskoos, the Boat Man and the Swan Boats, and Sam Beaver at the Philadelphia Zoo.

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

E. B. White was a renowned essayist who set the style and tone for the *New Yorker* magazine and who also wrote three children's books, the first two of which have become classics.

He was born in July 1899 and grew up in Mount Vernon, New York, the youngest of six children in a well-off family. He won scholarships and attended Cornell University, where he edited the college's daily paper. After graduation, White worked at various jobs in New York and on the West Coast. In 1927 he joined the staff of the recently founded *New Yorker*; he was associated with the magazine throughout his career.

White's essay style became the *New Yorker's* trademark: witty, ironic, somewhat detached, pithy, deceptively simple, superbly crafted. In 1929 White married Katharine Angell, a *New Yorker* editor and divorced mother of two; they had a son in 1930. In 1938 the Whites moved to their farm in North Brooklin, Maine, and from there White continued to write for the *New Yorker* and also contributed a monthly column to *Harper's* magazine. White published his first children's book, *Stuart Little*, in 1945, a picaresque tale of a tiny mouse-like creature. White drew on the rural farm life he lived and loved for the classic tale *Charlotte's Web* (1952). His final children's book, *The Trumpet of the Swan*, appeared in 1970.

Besides his children's books, White published a number of essay collections. He received many honors for his work, notably the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1963, the National Medal for Literature in 1971, and a special Pulitzer Prize in 1978. White died in Maine in 1985.

### CRITICS' CORNER

Critics find much to admire in *The Trumpet of the Swan*, but generally do not consider it quite as fine as White's earlier two classics. John Updike, though, wrote "E. B. White's third novel for children joins the two others on the shelf of classics....[This] is the most spacious and serene of the three." *Horn Book's* reviewer said that the story was "carried along by the author's characteristically understated style, which extracts the essential humor from the most unprepossessing of situations and often spills over into uproariously ludicrous episodes....The book lends itself to reading aloud." *Booklist's* reviewer concluded, "The author...deftly blends true birdlore with fanciful adventures in a witty, captivating fantasy." A reviewer in *School Library Journal* admired the novel because "humor abounds and beauty—of nature, of relationships, of time passing—shines through the simple, ultimately convincing narrative. Mr. White has written another story that will captivate children of all ages."

### GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To learn about forms of the animal tale genre.
2. To understand the term "episodic novel."
3. To think about the beautiful aspects of nature and what they contribute to our lives.
4. To examine the importance of friendship and family ties in our lives.
5. To look at the ways in which an author can use humor in a novel.
6. To discuss the factors that could motivate a person to go on, and continue on, a quest.

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To identify elements of the novel that are realistic, and elements that are fantasy.
2. To consider whether the novel is too implausible to be really successful.
3. To note the problems Louis has to face and overcome, and

identify the solutions he works out.

4. To identify specific humorous aspects of the novel.
5. To discuss what this book suggests are the important things in life.
6. To find the lyrical descriptions of nature in the novel.
7. To practice telling events from alternate points of view.

### 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. Mr. Beaver would hire a bush pilot (p. 4)  
(A bush pilot flies his or her plane into sparsely settled wilderness or near-wilderness areas that are difficult to get to overland. The Beaver family cabin, and the swans' pond, is in such an area, so Sam and Mr. Beaver travel to their camp by bush plane.)
2. preening her feathers (p. 21)  
(Preening is a process carried out by birds when they trim, smooth, and dress their feathers with their bills. The female swan is so busy preening herself that she doesn't notice the fox sneaking up behind her.)
3. National Wildlife Refuge (p. 37)  
(The National Wildlife Refuge System was established in 1966 under the Endangered Species Act [although state and federal wildlife refuges had existed throughout the 1900s], covering now about 34 million acres within about 420 refuges. The refuges provide protection for a nucleus of animals whose numbers have become significantly small. A refuge provides a habitat where the animals can breed and reproduce and grow in numbers. Usually, hunting, trapping, and fishing are prohibited or severely restricted, and human access is limited. Trumpeter swans live in protection at National Wildlife Refuges, like the one Louis and his family winter in, Red Rock Lakes in Montana.)
4. Sam sat in the stern and paddled, Louis stood in the bow. (p. 93)  
(The front part of a boat is called the bow, and the rear part is called the stern. Sam propels the canoe by paddling from his seat in the stern. Louis stands in the bow, although standing in a canoe isn't a good idea for people.)
5. a privy out back (p. 93)  
(A privy is an outhouse, a small building that has a bench with a hole in it that serves as a toilet, although there is no way to flush away the discharge. The boys' camp where Sam and Louis work as counselors has privies rather than toilets with automatic discharge.)
6. watercress sandwiches (p. 131)  
(Watercress is a perennial water-loving cress that mostly grows in springs or running water. It's often used in salads or as a garnish, and it's also a food swans like to eat. Louis orders a dozen watercress sandwiches for dinner on the night he stays at the Ritz—eating the watercress only. Later, on the family's annual visits to Boston, Serena, too, loves to order watercress sandwiches at the Ritz.)
7. game warden (p. 189)  
(A game warden is a government official charged with enforcing laws or regulations about wildlife—making sure people hunting or fishing have the required license, for

example. When the storekeeper shoots the old cob, a game warden puts the man under arrest for shooting a trumpeter swan, a wild bird protected by law.)

8. The doctor said the [old cob's] wound was superficial (p. 195)  
(*Ever full of self-importance, the old cob is sure "superficial" means that his wound is very serious. As he tells his wife later, "You can judge how serious my wound was when I tell you that one of the doctors examined it and said it was superficial." The word, of course, means exactly the opposite of what the old cob wants it to mean—the doctor is saying the wound affects only the surface of the cob's shoulder, so it's not at all serious. As usual, the old cob's wife punctures his pomposity by replying about the wound, "It doesn't look bad to me. I think you just got nicked."*—which is exactly what the doctor was saying.)
9. the Audubon Society (p. 197)  
(*This is a nonprofit national conservation organization dedicated to preservation of wildlife and renewable natural resources. It's named for famous ornithologist and illustrator of birds, John James Audubon, which makes this the ideal "good cause" for the shopkeeper to give the extra money that the swan has brought him.*)
10. crepuscular (p. 208)  
(*At the end of a day in camp, at twilight, Sam asks his father what "crepuscular" means. Pop doesn't know, so Sam will have to look the meaning up in a dictionary when they get back to their ranch in Montana. The author doesn't give readers any hint of what the word means either, making students look the word up themselves as Sam must. They'll find out it means having to do with, or being active at, twilight—the time of day when Sam is wondering about the word and hearing Louis blow taps to let his children know the day is over.*)

### 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.

#### Literal Level

1. What challenges does Louis face as a voiceless trumpeter swan? How does Louis overcome this problem?  
(*Louis can't talk to his family and friends to communicate his thoughts and feelings to them. Worse, when he falls in love when he is older, he won't be able to win the female of his dreams if he can't say the trumpeter's signature ko-hoh or utter the usual endearments to her. To overcome this handicap, Louis attends school with human children and learns to read and write. Now he can communicate by writing on a slate—but no other swans can read, so Louis can communicate only with people by writing. Finally, Louis's father steals a trumpet for the young swan from a music store. Once Louis has learned to play the trumpet, he can make swan sounds with it.*)
  2. Why does Louis leave his family the first and second times? Where does he go?  
(*The first time, Louis goes in search of Sam Beaver to get help with his lack of speech problem. Louis stays on for a year and half with Sam and his family in the Sweet Grass*
- country of Montana, while he attends school with Sam and learns how to read and write. The second time, Louis goes off to earn money to pay for the trumpet his father took from the music store, and for the damage his father caused in the process. Louis goes to work at a summer camp in Ontario, Canada, then to Boston to work with the Swan Boats, then to Philadelphia to work at a night club. Finally, he and Serena fly back to Montana via a southerly route.)*
3. What are the natural characteristics of trumpeter swans?  
(*They are very large white birds with long white necks and black bills and feet; their wing span is up to eight feet across. They have a distinctive loud, trumpeting call. The male is a cob; the female is a swan; the babies are cygnets. They construct very large nests, a mound of grass and twigs, in which the female lays her eggs in the spring. The eggs hatch in about thirty-five days. The immature swans are a brownish-gray color, with yellow legs and feet. Trumpeter swans swim, fly, and dive strongly. The staple of their diet is pond plants. Swans lose their flight feathers in the summer, when they can't fly; the feathers grow back in by fall.*)
- #### Interpretive Level
4. How and why does Louis finally win Serena's love?  
(*When Louis was a mute young cob, Serena paid no attention to him. By the time Louis and Serena are reunited at the Philadelphia Zoo, Louis has become an accomplished trumpet player. A fierce storm has blown Serena across the country to the Zoo. She arrives dazed and exhausted, so Louis decides to leave her alone while she revives herself. Then he stays awake all night and serenades Serena at dawn, expressing his love for her by playing the sad, sweet song "Beautiful Dreamer" on his trumpet. He thinks this will awaken Serena's emotions and stir her feelings of love, and his plan succeeds completely. Serena falls hopelessly in love with this handsome, rich, talented musician.*)
  5. What does this book tell you about friendship and family ties?  
(*Both are very important aspects of life. Sam Beaver proves he is a friend to the swans by saving the mother swan from the fox. Louis counts on Sam to help him in his times of need, and Sam always responds—bringing Louis to school, helping him find his first job, coming to the Philadelphia Zoo when Serena's freedom is threatened. Family ties are the basis of life for the swans—the mother and the cob are enormously proud of their brood, the cob goes against his code of morals to steal the trumpet for his voiceless son, Louis travels across the country and works hard to earn money to pay for the damage his father caused so his father can be free of shame and dishonor, Louis eagerly looks forward to starting his own family with Serena, and Louis and Serena's return to Red Rock Lakes causes a joyful family reunion.*)
  6. Why does Louis think he needs to keep flying with each of the items he carries hanging around his neck?  
(*He has to have the slate and pencil so he can communicate with people. He has to have the trumpet so he can use it to win Serena for his wife if he ever finds Serena again, and so he can earn money by playing it. He has to carry the moneybag to hold the money he's earning to pay his father's debts. He feels he really ought to wear the medal*

because he did actually save a life, and if he didn't wear the medal, people might think he was ungrateful that they gave it to him.)

7. In another E. B. White book, *Stuart Little* asks a class of fifth graders, "How many of you know what's important?" What does this book seem to say is important?

*(This book strongly suggests that these things are important: family ties, friendship, freedom, nature—its beauty, its peace, its cycle of seasons, its life-sustaining qualities, and growing up in touch with these aspects of nature.)*

#### Critical Level

8. Describe some of the ways the author makes parts of this book (episodes, sentences, conversations, and so on) funny. *(Answers will vary. Some situations are very funny, such as the commotion on the sidewalk when the cob returns to the music store with the money. Conversations between the old cob and his wife are quite funny, as he waxes pompous and wordy and she slices through his bombast with pithy, common-sense responses.)*

9. What parts of the book do you find especially improbable (not at all likely to happen)?

*(Answers will vary. A swan learning to read and write and then communicating with people through the written word is fantasy, of course, as is a swan playing a trumpet and people employing him to do this. You'd think such an extraordinary swan would cause a worldwide media frenzy, too. And would a summer camp employ a swan as a counselor?)*

10. Identify three of your favorite passages from the book that describe nature in a beautiful, lyrical way.

*(Answers will vary.)*

11. Comment on the author's choice of names for his characters.

*(Sam's last name, Beaver, relates to Sam's love of nature and animals. Louis is named by his parents, but the name turns out to be very fitting, as it links him to musician Louis Armstrong. Serena suggests serene beauty and the serene happiness Louis will eventually find with her. The schoolteachers' names are amusing. The boy camper who doesn't like birds gets a silly name, Applegate Skinner, that other campers will make fun of. Abe "Lucky" Lucas sounds like a flashy show-business type, which he is.)*

#### Creative Level

12. Tell parts of the story from Serena's point of view: her opinion of Louis during the spring when he was first falling in love with her, her experiences struggling to survive during the fierce storm that blows her to Philadelphia, or falling in love with Louis.

*(Answers will vary.)*

13. Write a news story about Louis, Philadelphia's amazing trumpeting swan.

*(Answers will vary.)*

14. Create a report card, complete with teacher's comments, filled out by Mrs. Hammerbotham, Louis's first-grade teacher.

*(Answers will vary.)*

15. Write a letter home to parents from one of the boys at Camp Kookooskoos.

*(Answers will vary.)*

#### LITERARY TERMS

To enhance students' appreciation and understanding of the novel, present them with these terms.

**animal story:** a fictional account of events in the lives of animals. In an animal story, the animals may act like animals, they may act like animals but are able to talk to each other, or they may behave and talk like human beings. This novel is the second type, with Louis and the other swans acting very swanlike, and able to talk to each other—with the exception that the voiceless Louis learns to communicate with human beings by reading and writing, and with other swans by playing his trumpet. When Louis lives in the human world, he still acts swanlike, as during his night at the Ritz Carlton.

**bombast:** inflated language, not in proportion to the subject. Louis's father usually speaks in a bombastic, grandiloquent way.

**episodic tale:** a narrative that consists of a loosely connected series of incidents. The portion of this novel that follows Louis on his travels as he works at his series of jobs is episodic, although the episodes are linked as part of Louis's quest to earn enough money to pay for the trumpet and the damage to the music store.

**fantasy:** a fictional work that departs radically from a realistic depiction of the world as we know it. In a fantasy, readers are expected to accept the seemingly impossible (for example, a swan who attends school with human children and learns to read and write), although the tale presents logical and meaningful characterizations (a swan who falls in love and seeks to restore the family honor) and, often, everyday activities (nest-building and the routine of a boys' summer camp).

**theme:** a controlling idea expressed through a work's events. This novel contains interconnected expressions of the themes of freedom, friendship, family ties, and the beauty and importance of nature.

#### ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

##### Art

1. What do you think the illustrations add, if anything, to the book?
2. Create some illustrations of your own of incidents from the novel.

##### Science

1. Create a class display explaining the ecology of a swamp or a small pond like the one where Louis was hatched out.
2. Explain and demonstrate to the class the use of a compass.
3. Create an illustrated field guide to the various wild animals that live around the swans' pond in the Canadian wilderness. (Also Art.)
4. Write and illustrate a report on trumpeter swans. (Also Art.)

##### Social Studies/Geography

1. On a map, locate the areas of Canada where the swans' pond and the boys' summer camp might be located. Describe these areas as they were when E. B. White wrote this novel in 1970 and as they are today.
2. Create a topographic map of Montana, with prominent

physical features identified and explained. Indicate the likely location of the novel's Red Rock Lakes wildlife refuge and of the Beaver family's ranch.

3. Trace Louis and Serena's flight west from Boston to Montana on a map of the U.S.

#### Mathematics

1. Calculate the miles Louis and Serena cover on each leg of their flight west.
2. Show Louis's earnings and expenses in ledger-book format, arriving at the final figure that the old cob gives the storekeeper. How much does the Audubon Society get?

#### Language Arts

1. Read other animal tales, and identify which type of animal story each one is (see **Literary Terms**).
2. Compare *The Trumpet of the Swan* with E. B. White's other two children's novels, *Stuart Little* and *Charlotte's Web*. What common elements do the three books share? How are they different?
3. Explain what is exaggerated about the old cob's description of his adventures in Billings on page 199 of the novel.
4. Write your own poem about a zoo or aquarium you have visited.
5. Describe someone you know in a string of adjectives, as Louis's father does for Louis on page 74 of the novel.

#### Music

1. Demonstrate to the class how to play a trumpet.
2. Play recordings for the class of the songs mentioned in the novel.
3. Play recordings for the class of trumpet music.
4. Play on a trumpet yourself, for the class, some of the songs Louis plays, especially "Beautiful Dreamer."

#### STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Visit a zoo. Take photographs of the animals you like best, and create a class display about your visit to the zoo.
2. Make a list of things you think you might like to do for a career when you're grown up. Tell why you think each thing might be suitable and interesting for you to do.
3. Keep a diary. End each day's entry with a question about something that intrigues you, as Sam Beaver does.
4. With classmates, create a list of male-female animal names, like cob and swan.
5. Answer the questions with which Sam ends his diary entries.
6. Sam packs the things he thinks he needs to take with him to summer camp. Make a list of the items you'd take to camp with you.
7. If possible, visit the Boston Public Garden and take a ride in one of the Swan Boats. Take photographs and share your experience with classmates.
8. Visit a music store and describe the different instruments for sale there. Which one would you most like to learn to play?

#### ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. This novel is an imaginary tale, and it certainly departs from reality, but there's a lot of truth in it, too. Tell what is real, or true, in the novel.

2. In your opinion, is this novel too implausible? Explain.
3. Summarize Louis's adventures as he travels across the continent. Include descriptions of the places he stays, the people he encounters there, and the jobs he works at.
4. Trace the novel's events as they occur through the cycle of nature's seasons.

#### OTHER BOOKS BY E. B. WHITE

*Stuart Little* (1945)

*Charlotte's Web* (1952)

#### RELATED READING

Arnosky, Jim. *Long Spikes*

Balaban, John. *The Hawk's Tale*

Burnford, Sheila. *The Incredible Journey*

Callen, Larry. *Pinch*

Coates, Anna. *Dog Magic*

Dahl, Roald. *Fantastic Mr. Fox*

Dana, Barbara. *Zucchini*

DeJong, Meindert. *Along Came a Dog*

Elish, Dan. *The Great Squirrel Uprising*

Grahame, Kenneth. *The Wind in the Willows*

Howe, James. *Morgan's Zoo*

Jarrell, Randall. *The Bat-Poet*

Johnson, Annabel. *I Am Leaper*

Kassem, Lou. *A Summer for Secrets*

King-Smith, Dick. *Ace: The Very Important Pig; Babe: The Gallant Pig; The Fox Busters; Martin's Mice; and Pigs Might Fly*

Larson, Robert. *Rabbit Hill* and its sequel *The Tough Winter*

Parnall, Peter. *Water Pup*

Scholes, Katharine. *The Landing: A Night of Birds*

Seidler, Tor. *A Rat's Tale*

Selden, George. *The Cricket in Times Square*

Sharp, Margery. *The Rescuers*

Steig, William. *Abel's Island; Dominic; and The Real Thief*

Stolz, Mary. *Quentin Corn*

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## VOCABULARY TEST

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

- |                     |                   |                |              |          |
|---------------------|-------------------|----------------|--------------|----------|
| a. move smoothly    | e. rich & booming | i. spotless    | m. passion   | q. slap  |
| b. pass information | f. openness       | j. face        | n. imperfect | r. fame  |
| c. smooth & elegant | g. utterly bad    | k. strong wind | o. uneager   | s. bad   |
| d. very serious     | h. conceited      | l. gave way    | p. got       | t. cross |

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The male stretched out his great wings and gave the water a mighty clout to show his strength.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. "Look out! You are in grave danger, and we must act immediately."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. "I glide, I glide, swanlike."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. "It is right for swans to feel proud, graceful—that's what swans are for."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. "You'd better not get too graceful—it might go to your head. You are quite a vain bird."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. "Welcome to danger, which you must guard against—the vile fox with his stealthy tread and sharp teeth, for example."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. "You had the finest, most powerful, most resonant voice of any of the young male swans in the National Wildlife Refuge."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. "I may be defective, but at least I can fly."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. "With my slate and pencil, I will be able to communicate with anybody who can read."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. "I am disinclined to leave these attractive lakes now, in the fall of the year, with winter coming on."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. "My son, how good it is to see your countenance again!"
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. "Master this trumpet, and you will be able to play love songs for desirable young females, filling them with ardor and surprise and longing."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. "I procured this trumpet at some personal sacrifice to myself and my pride."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. "I took the trumpet without paying for it. This was deplorable."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. "Did you ever see a cleaner guest in your whole life? Look at him! He's immaculate."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. "Your place of employment is a nightclub of great renown, across the river."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. "Candor compels me to tell you that the tip of one wing is usually removed by the management."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. One day, a great storm came up. The sky grew dark. The wind blew a howling gale.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. Serena succumbed completely to this charmer, this handsome musician, this rich and talented cob.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. A cheer went up from the crowd. The warden looked sulky. The policeman looked glum.

## COMPREHENSION TEST A

### Part I: Matching (20 points)

Read each character description. In the list below, find the character who matches the description. Write the letter of the character in the space next to the description number. You will use each name only once.

- |                   |                |                                    |
|-------------------|----------------|------------------------------------|
| a. Sam Beaver     | e. Serena      | h. the Head Man in Charge of Birds |
| b. Louis          | f. Mr. Brickle | i. Lucky Lucas                     |
| c. Louis's mother | g. the Boatman | j. Mrs. Hammerbotham               |
| d. Louis's father |                |                                    |

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The director of the boys' camp, who gets squirted by a skunk.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. A large, powerful swan who loves to make long-winded, elegant speeches.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. A shrewd and wise-looking show-business agent in a purple suit.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The man who makes a deal with Sam about Serena's freedom.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Stately, serene, graceful, and very feminine once she has smoothed herself out after the storm.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. An eleven-year-old whose black hair and eyes make him look like an Indian.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. A short, fat teacher of first grade.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. A practical, down-to-earth female who worries about her son.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. The man who gives Louis a job in Boston.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. A swan who carries a number of objects hanging from his neck.

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

Write one or two words in each blank to make each statement true.

1. Louis and his family are a particular type of swan known as \_\_\_\_\_ swans.
2. The boys' camp where Louis and Sam work as counselors is in the country (or province) of \_\_\_\_\_.
3. When he is very young Louis learns he will face very difficult problems in his life because he has no \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Louis can't hope to make any progress in courting a young female swan if he can't say the standard swan-language greeting of "\_\_\_\_\_ " [give this in swan language].
5. The swans spend the winter months in a wildlife refuge in the U.S. state of \_\_\_\_\_.
6. The wildlife refuge is named the \_\_\_\_\_ Lakes National Wildlife Refuge.
7. Louis goes to school to learn to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
8. The song that Louis plays early one morning that makes Serena fall in love with him is titled "\_\_\_\_\_."
9. At the camp, Louis plays \_\_\_\_\_ on his trumpet every night when it's time for the boys to go to sleep.
10. At the camp, Louis saves a boy camper from death by \_\_\_\_\_.
11. From the camp, Louis goes to the city of \_\_\_\_\_ to find more work.
12. At the fancy hotel, Louis sleeps in the \_\_\_\_\_.
13. In Philadelphia, Louis earns money by working in a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ six nights a week.
14. During the summer, Louis can't fly because he loses his \_\_\_\_\_.
15. A \_\_\_\_\_ tries to arrest the shopkeeper who shot Louis's father in the city.



**Part III: Word Choice (20 points)**

Underline the choice that correctly completes each of these sentences.

1. Applegate Skinner is a boy camper who doesn't like (girls, water, birds, music).
2. A young, immature swan is called a (kit, cygnet, gosling, duckling).
3. Every night, Sam ends his diary entry with a (picture, prayer, question, quotation).
4. Young swans are a (soft white, dirty gray, yellowish, reddish) color.
5. The first time Louis leaves his family, he stays away for (two months, six months, a year and a half, three years).
6. Louis's father breaks into a (bank, music store, sporting goods store, school) to get Louis what he needs to overcome his disability.
7. Sam helps a (fox, otter, coyote, skunk) in camp that is in serious trouble.
8. In Boston, Louis stays at the (Ritz Carlton, Embassy Suites, Trump Tower, Plaza) Hotel.
9. We know that the old cob's shotgun injury is not really bad because the doctor at the hospital calls it (life-threatening, superficial, graceful, crepuscular).
10. The people who run the Philadelphia Zoo agree to let Louis stay there and stay free if Louis, in return, gives the people who come to the zoo free (swimming lessons, trumpet lessons, zoo tours, concerts) every Sunday.

**Part IV: Essay (30 points)**

Choose any three to answer. Write a paragraph for each.

1. Describe Louis's experiences in Boston.
2. What jobs does Louis work at to earn money? How much is he paid for each?
3. Why does Serena pay no attention to Louis when they first know each other at the wildlife refuge? Why does she fall for Louis at the Philadelphia Zoo?
4. How is nature a part of this novel?



## COMPREHENSION TEST B

### Part I: Matching (20 points)

Read each quotation. In the list below, find the character who spoke the words. Write the letter of the character in the space next to the quotation number. Use each name only once.

- |                   |                      |                                    |
|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| a. Sam Beaver     | e. Serena            | h. the Head Man in Charge of Birds |
| b. Louis          | f. Applegate Skinner | i. Lucky Lucas                     |
| c. Louis's mother | g. the Boatman       | j. the storekeeper                 |
| d. Louis's father |                      |                                    |

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. "What about me? I don't care for birds. I've never liked birds."  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2. "That swan is a valuable bird. Make sure she doesn't get away!"  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3. "Of course you glide like a swan. How else could you glide?"  
\_\_\_\_\_ 4. "My agent's fee is ten percent, a mere bagatelle."  
\_\_\_\_\_ 5. "Your job will be to swim in front of the boat, leading the way and blowing your horn."  
\_\_\_\_\_ 6. "Louis is special. He's an old friend. We went to the same school."  
\_\_\_\_\_ 7. "I happen to know this bird. He's a thief. He's been here before."  
\_\_\_\_\_ 8. "Man, in his folly, has given me a mortal wound. The red blood flows in a steady trickle from my veins. My strength fails."  
\_\_\_\_\_ 9. "How pleasing to know that I have found a cob I can love and respect, a cob that appears to be not only musical but also quite wealthy. Look at all those things!"  
\_\_\_\_\_ 10. "Through the power of music, I will impress her with the intensity of my desire and the strength of my devotion."

### Part II: Short Answer (30 points)

Write a one- or two-word answer to each of the following questions.

1. What creature does Sam Beaver stop from killing Louis's mother? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Which musical instrument becomes a part of Louis's life? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Who is the author of this book? \_\_\_\_\_
4. In what country/province/state is the nesting pond where Louis is hatched out and later raises his own families? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What part of Sam or his clothing does the baby Louis pull when the two first meet?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. In what U.S. state do Sam and his parents live? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What is the name of the boys' camp where Louis and Sam work one summer?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. What tourist attractions does Louis work for and with in Boston? \_\_\_\_\_
9. What part of Serena's body do the zoo people want to cut off? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Where does Sam Beaver work when he grows up? \_\_\_\_\_
11. What kind of sandwiches does Louis order in his Boston hotel room? \_\_\_\_\_
12. What town in Montana does Louis's father, the old cob, return to with the money at the end of the novel?  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. What item does Louis add to the things around his neck after he is paid for his summer work at the camp?  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. What do Mrs. Hammerbotham and Miss Annie Snug do for a living? \_\_\_\_\_
15. What are the first two things Louis begins to wear around his neck? \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

**Part III: Word Choice (20 points)**

Underline the choice that correctly completes each of these sentences.

1. An adult male swan is called a (gander, rooster, cob, mallard).
2. An adult trumpeter swan's feet and bills are (yellow, black, gray, orange) in color.
3. Louis's father does (one, three, five, nine) hundred dollars worth of damage to the music store he goes to.
4. The man from Washington comes to the summer camp to give Louis a medal for (trumpeting, lifesaving, reading and writing, swimming and diving).
5. The place in the Philadelphia Zoo where the birds live is called (Water Fowl Refuge, Bird Lake, The Pond, Wildlife Home).
6. Serena is carried to the zoo by a (storm, fox, dream, fellow swan).
7. Sam and his family live in the (Bitterroot, Red Lodge, Sapphire, Sweet Grass) area of Montana.
8. Serena arrives at the zoo right around the holiday of (Christmas, Hanukkah, Easter, spring break).
9. Louis's old father flies out of the (jail, school, hospital, store) when he leaves the Montana town for the final time.
10. Louis swims while playing his trumpet in Boston's (harbor, Charles River, Public Garden, Fenway Park).

**Part IV: Essay (30 points)**

Choose any three to answer. Write a paragraph for each.

1. Compare Louis's father with Louis's mother.
2. How does Louis try to overcome his muteness? How well do these solutions work?
3. Describe Louis's experiences at the boys' summer camp.
4. How does Sam become a friend of the swans? How does he later help Louis?

## ANSWER KEY

### VOCABULARY TEST

- |       |       |
|-------|-------|
| 1. q  | 11. j |
| 2. d  | 12. m |
| 3. a  | 13. p |
| 4. c  | 14. s |
| 5. h  | 15. i |
| 6. g  | 16. r |
| 7. e  | 17. f |
| 8. n  | 18. k |
| 9. b  | 19. l |
| 10. o | 20. t |

### COMPREHENSION TEST A

#### Part I: Matching (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. f | 6. a  |
| 2. d | 7. j  |
| 3. i | 8. c  |
| 4. h | 9. g  |
| 5. e | 10. b |

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

- |                      |                     |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. trumpeter         | 9. taps             |
| 2. Canada (Ontario)  | 10. drowning        |
| 3. voice             | 11. Boston          |
| 4. Ko-hoh            | 12. bathtub         |
| 5. Montana           | 13. nightclub       |
| 6. Red Rock          | 14. flight feathers |
| 7. read, write       | 15. game warden     |
| 8. Beautiful Dreamer |                     |

#### Part III: Word Choice (20 points)

- |                   |                 |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1. birds          | 6. music store  |
| 2. cygnet         | 7. skunk        |
| 3. question       | 8. Ritz Carlton |
| 4. dirty gray     | 9. superficial  |
| 5. ear and a half | 10. concerts    |

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

Answers will vary.

### COMPREHENSION TEST B

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. f | 6. a  |
| 2. h | 7. j  |
| 3. c | 8. d  |
| 4. i | 9. e  |
| 5. g | 10. b |

#### Part II: Short Answer (30 points)

- |                |                         |
|----------------|-------------------------|
| 1. fox         | 9. wing tip             |
| 2. trumpet     | 10. Philadelphia Zoo    |
| 3. E. B. White | 11. watercress          |
| 4. Canada      | 12. Billings            |
| 5. shoelace    | 13. moneybag            |
| 6. Montana     | 14. teach school        |
| 7. Kookooskoos | 15. slate, chalk pencil |
| 8. Swan Boats  |                         |

#### Part III: Word Choice (20 points)

- |               |                   |
|---------------|-------------------|
| 1. cob        | 6. storm          |
| 2. black      | 7. Sweet Grass    |
| 3. nine       | 8. Christmas      |
| 4. lifesaving | 9. hospital       |
| 5. Bird Lake  | 10. Public Garden |

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

Answers will vary.



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