

Teacher Guide

Grades 5–6

The Summer of the Swans

Betsy Cromer Byars

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THE SUMMER OF THE SWANS

by
Betsy Byars

Teacher Guide

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Note

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Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Brainstorming, classifying
and categorizing, evaluating,
analyzing details

Comprehension

Sequencing, comparison/
contrast, using reference
materials, inference

Writing

Letter, advice column,
descriptive, figures of speech

Vocabulary

Antonyms/synonyms, word
maps, analogies

Listening/Speaking

Participation in discussion,
participation in dramatic
activities

Literary Elements

Character, setting, plot
development

- Why is Charlie's watch so important to him? (Page 35, *The watch gives him great pleasure. He likes to listen to it, and to watch the small red hand move around the dial.*)

Postreading Activities:

- Go to the library. Get some books about swans and ducks. Compare the swans, as pictured on the cover of the book, to mallard ducks. Use a T-Diagram for the comparison. For example:

	DUCKS	SWANS
Color		
Size		
Habitat		
Food		

- We are told on page 36, that the children cut across a field on their way to the pond. Why do you think that they do this? Do you think that this fact is important to the story? Why? Why not?

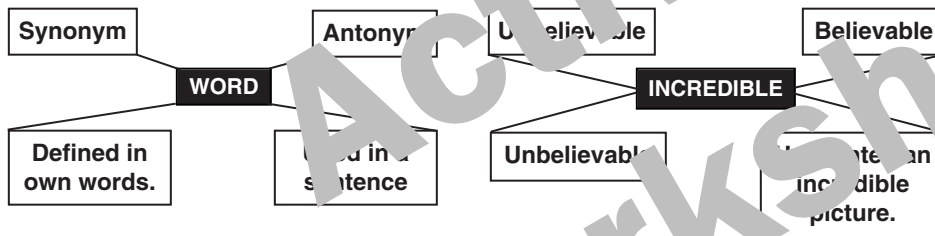
Chapter —Pages 40-46

Vocabulary:

incredible 40 awkwardly 41

Vocabulary Activity:

Using the form given, make word maps for the two vocabulary words.



Discussion Questions and Activities:

- Why is Sara so unhappy? (Page 16, *"She was filled with a discontent, an anger about herself, her life, her family, that made her think she would never be content again."*)

2. What does Sara do, to finally get Charlie to agree to go home? (Page 46, *She agrees to stay five more minutes, and shows Charlie the time on the watch that they will have to leave.*)

Postreading Activities:

1. Play some music from the ballet *Swan Lake* while the children illustrate the scene of the swans on the pond. Have different media available for use, such as craypas, chalk, watercolors, tempera paint, charcoal, poster-paint, etc. (See Audio-Visual Bibliography, Tchaikovsky.)
2. Have different versions of the story of *Swan Lake* available for the children to read. (See Teacher and Student, *Swan Lake*, and Bibliography, *Swan Lake*.)

Chapter 8—Pages 47-53

Vocabulary

- affected 48 dedicate 51 tormented 52
 persist 53

Vocabulary Activity:

Read the following sentences. Fill in each blank with a vocabulary word.

1. Frank is going to _____ a song to Wanda. (*dedicate*)
2. Charlie will _____ in ticking on wall in his bedroom. (*persist*)
3. Sara thinks that Frank is _____ because he calls Wanda Little One. (*affected*)
4. Charlie had an illness with a fever that _____ his body. (*tormented*)

Discussion Question and Activities:

1. What words did Sara use to describe herself? (page 49, *"I'm not anything. I'm not cute, and I'm not pretty, and I'm not a good dancer, and I'm not smart, and I'm not popular. I'm not anything."*)
2. Can you help Sara? Role-play a situation in which one child takes the part of Sara, and a partner is the school counselor. Switch roles after a predetermined amount of time. (See Postreading Activity #1.)

Postreading Activities:

1. Write a letter to an advice columnist in the local paper. You may take the role of Sara, or you may take a different part and have different problems. Explain your problem(s) to the columnist, and ask for some specific advice.
2. Take the role of the newspaper columnist, and give a reply to a specific problem. Be sure that the problem is stated before giving advice.

Chapter 9—Pages 54-60

Prereading Prediction:

Charlie can't sleep. What might he do? List responses.

Vocabulary:

gross 55

puce 55

minoleumed 58

Vocabulary Activity:

Describe what you *think* the color puce would look like. (*Puce: Color that is deep red to dark grayish purple.*) Mix some watercolor paint or tempera paint to achieve the color that you describe.

Discussion Questions and Activities:

1. Why is Charlie especially disturbed and unable to sleep on this particular night? (Page 54, "button is missing from his pajama.")
2. Charlie shows the place where the button belongs to Aunt Wilma. Why doesn't she fix it for Charlie? (Page 54, "Aunt Wilma is busy watching a game show on television.")
3. Why doesn't Sara help Charlie? (Page 55, "Sara is busy with her orange shoes.") What happens when Sara tries to dye her orange shoes a bright blue? (Page 55, "The shoes are colored puce.") Do you think that you would like to wear puce-colored shoes? Why? Why not?
4. Charlie is so upset by the missing button, that he pulls at the empty button hole. What eventually happens? (Page 55, "He tears the whole front of his pajama top, and it hangs open. He must reach the jacket closed with his hands.")
5. Why does Charlie like the swans so much? (Page 56, "The memory of their soft smoothness in the water came to him and warmed him"; page 57, "The beauty of them, the whiteness, the softness, the silent splendor had impressed him greatly.")
6. What does Charlie do? (Page 57, "Charlie leaves the house, to go to look for the swans.")

Postreading Activities:

1. The author tells us, on page 59, that Charlie seems to belong to the silent world of the night. Read some poetry that describes the night, and/or something happening during the night. Make up a class poem about the night. Allow the children to create their own poetry. (See Bibliography: Langston, Merriam, dePaola, Prelutsky.)
2. Make a prediction. What will happen to Charlie? Record predictions.

Origami Swan

You may use just about any kind of paper to make the swan: newspaper, typing paper, wrapping paper, recycled paper, foil-backed paper, or traditional origami paper. Thin, crisp paper gives the best results. The most important thing to remember in choosing paper is that the dimensions of the sheet should be exact. Be sure to make sure that the sheet is precisely square. Trim if necessary. Make the creases carefully, matching corners where indicated. You may burnish folds with a thumbnail, spoon, or any hard, smooth object. (For background information regarding origami, see Teacher Information section at the back of this guide.)

Remember
Keep the valley

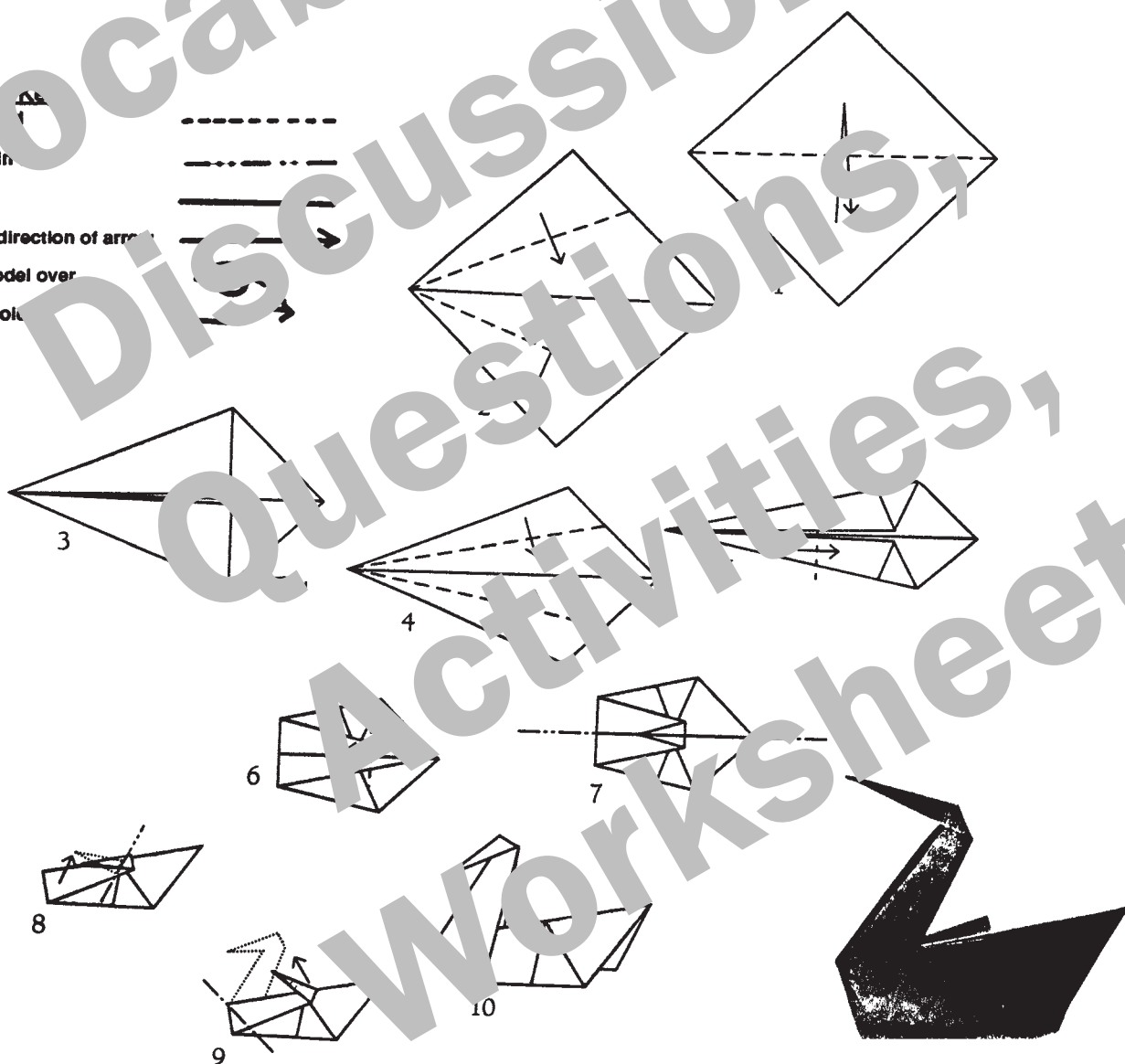
Maintain

the crease

Fold in direction of arrow

Turn model over

Please follow



Story Map



Characters _____

Time and Place _____



Problem _____



Goal _____



Beginning → Development → Outcome



Resolution _____