



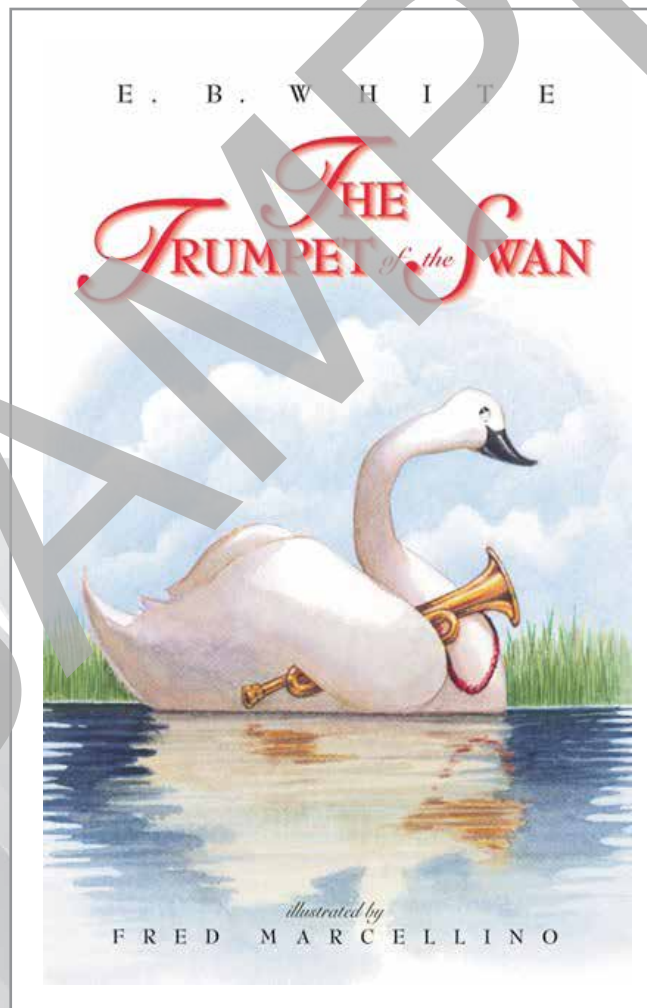
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 3-5

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

The Trumpet of the Swan

E. B. White



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

The Trumpet of the Swan

E. B. White

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Brainstorming, classifying
and categorizing, evaluating,
analyzing details

Writing

Diary, poetry, chapter titles

Vocabulary

Synonyms/antonyms,
analogies

Literary Elements

Character, setting, plot
development

Comprehension

Predicting, sequencing,
cause/effect, inference

Listening/Speaking

Participation in discussion,
dramatic activities

Summary of *The Trumpet of the Swan*:

Louis is a Trumpeter Swan that comes into the world unable to make any sounds. Sam Beaver is a young boy who befriends Louis and his family. Sam takes Louis to school, where Louis learns to read and to write. However, he remains unable to communicate with his true love, the female swan Serena. Louis' father puts his honor aside, and takes a brass trumpet from a music store to give to Louis as a voice. Louis' desire to pay for the trumpet, and to woo Serena, takes him to big cities, where he has unusual adventures, and achieves fame as well as his goals.

About the Author:

E(lwyn) B(rooks) White was born July 11, 1899, in Mount Vernon, New York. He died of Alzheimer's disease, October 1, 1985, in North Brooklin, Maine. He was an essayist, poet, editor, and author of books for adults and children. White was regarded by many as the best essayist of modern time. Early in his career, he was a reporter with the *Seattle Times*, and served as production assistant and copywriter for an advertising agency. In 1926, he joined *New Yorker Magazine*, where he wrote the editorial essays. He was a staff writer with the magazine until about 1975, and a contributing editor until his death. White is often credited with giving the *New Yorker* the writing tone that made it one of the best-written magazines in the nation. White's contribution to children's literature is also noteworthy. His first book for children, *Stuart Little*, was published in 1945, followed by *Charlotte's Web* in 1952. *Trumpet of the Swan* appeared in 1970.

Note:

Please be selective, and use discretion when choosing the activities that you will do with this unit. It is not intended that everything be done, but that discretionary choices are made wheremost appropriate for your use and group of children. A wide range has been provided, so that individuals as well as groups may benefit from these selections.

Introductory Activities:

1. The Trumpet: Collect records, tapes, and compact discs with a variety of different kinds of trumpet music demonstrated. (See Audio-Visual Bibliography, Louis Armstrong/Trumpeters.) Play these throughout the duration of the unit. Invite a musician in to demonstrate to the children how the trumpet is played. If a musical group, that includes a trumpet player, from the junior high school/middle school, or local high school is available, invite the group to play for the class. Have a picture/poster of the trumpet on display, with the parts of the musical instrument labeled. Find out more about the trumpet. The trumpet is a popular brass instrument in orchestras, bands, and jazz groups. A player produces tones by blowing into a cup-shaped mouthpiece and vibrating the lips. The player changes notes by fingering the instrument's three valves, and changing lip tension. The largest part of the trumpet consists of a curved tube. Most trumpets used in bands are pitched in the key of B flat, and have a tube 4 1/2 feet long. Orchestras use those kinds, and ones with shorter tubes, pitched in other keys. The small diameter and cylindrical shape of its tube give the trumpet its brilliant, powerful sound. Trumpets date back to about 1200 B.C. The valve trumpet was developed in 1813. (Source: *The World Book Encyclopedia*, 1991.)

Chapter 3: "A Visitor"—Pages 15-24

Vocabulary:

intruder (15)	furious (16)	idyllic (16)	remote (16)
immense (16)	proportions (18)	onerous (19)	irksome (19)
preening (21)	ammunition (23)		

Vocabulary Activity:

Match seven of the words in the vocabulary with the word or phrase which means the same thing in the synonym box below.

charming	annoying	huge	raging
troublesome	distant	imposer	

(Answer: *imposer/intruder distant/remote troublesome/onerous raging/furious huge/immense annoying/irksome charming/idyllic*)

Discussion Questions and Activities:

1. Who is "the visitor"? (page 16, Sam)
2. How many eggs, total, does the female swan lay? (Page 18, She lays five eggs.)
3. The cob asks his wife if she ever finds her nesting duties "onerous or irksome." (page 19) What is her reply to that query? (Page 19, She tells the cob, "I can put up with a certain amount of discomfort for the sake of bringing young swans into the world.") (See Post-reading Activity #1.)
4. How does Sam win over the swans? (Page 22, He throws a stick at a fox that is about to spring upon the female swan.)

Post-reading Activities:

1. Do some research to find the answer to Sam's question in his diary. (page 24) "How does a bird know how to build a nest?" (Nest building is entirely instinctive. Although a bird gets better with practice, it needs no training, and is unable to depart from its blueprint.)
2. Make up a question of your own about birds, and do some research to find the answer. (For example: Are all bird nests the same? Answer: No. Bird nests come in all shapes and sizes. They can be tiny shelves of saliva that are glued to the walls of caves, long tunnels that run many yards into the ground, or massive piles of branches that weigh more than a family-size car. However, most familiar nests are the cup nests, which are built by the birds of woodland, hedgerows, and farmland. Some nests are simply hollows in the ground. Others are very complex, such as the nests of the Baltimore oriole, the West African weaver bird, the punduline tit, and the reed warbler.)
3. Read the short story, an aboriginal story, *How The Birds Got Their Colors*, told by Mary Albert, retold and illustrated by Pamela Lofts, and published by Mad Hatter Books of San Diego California, 1983. Design your own colorful bird.

4. The male and female swans in this story are given definite human-like characteristics by the author. Make a T-Diagram to list them, and for comparison purposes. Add to the record as more is learned about the swans. For example:

Male	Female
watchful has a good vocabulary pompous advisor protector exhibitionist poetical brave noble vain	practical hard worker patient common sense motherly protective

Chapter 4: "Cygnets"—Pages 25-34

Vocabulary:

awesome (27)	cautiously (28)	enormous (29)
vain (29)	adjacent (30)	vile (31)
stealthy (31)	offensive (31)	vigilant (31)

Vocabulary Activity:

Match each of the words in the antonym box, below, with the opposite word from the vocabulary. (Answers: *inconsequential/awesome* *unsure/vain* *agreeable/offensive* *tiny/enormous* *pleasant/vile* *unmindful/vigilant*)

inconsequential	unsure	agreeable
tiny	pleasant	unmindful

Discussion Questions and Activities:

1. With what is the swan, enclosed in the egg, equipped to enable it to get out of the egg? (Page 25, *Nature has provided it with a powerful neck muscle, and a small dagger-tooth on the tip of its bill. So that a baby bird can break out of the egg, it is equipped with an "egg tooth," a small growth on the upper bill used to chip away at the egg shell. This growth is a remnant of the birds' reptilian ancestry; snakes and lizards also have egg teeth. These teeth disappear from all three creatures soon after hatching.*)
2. The author tells us, on page 26, that the cob is feeling "poetical and proud." Read some poetry that helps to express how you feel, and/or tells about the season of the year or kind of day that you are experiencing. Share the poems with others. (For starters, see Bibliography, Janeczko, Merriam, and Prelutsky.) (See Post-reading Activity #1.)